

From this day, Louis XV. lost the title of *bien aimé*; he was no longer the *well beloved*, for silent and secret detestation possessed the hearts of his subjects, and gloomy despair lowered on their countenances. Afraid to speak their sentiments on the dreadful aspect of affairs, a solemn stillness reigned throughout Paris for some days; the places of public amusement were deserted, and a sudden check put to the natural vivacity of the French. *Letters de cachet* and the *bastille* were continually before their eyes, while suspicion and dismay made every man a stranger almost to his bosom friend. Military detachments were sent to compel the other parliaments to register the king's letters-patent, in favour of the duke d'Aiguillon, and great outrages were committed in the execution of these mandates. Nothing remained to be done on the part of the oppressed parliaments, but to publish protests against this subversion of the constitution. The parliament of Paris set the example, and declared that the proceedings of the court plainly manifested a deep-laid scheme to change the form of government. This prediction we shall find verified in the course of the ensuing narrative.

LETTER VII.

View of the internal State of France, continued to the Death of Louis XV.

THE internal state of France was at this time truly calamitous: but the sequel will show that matters had not yet arrived at their crisis. The king had lived four or five years without a mistress; and had expressed an intention of relinquishing his habits of incontinence: but his resolutions of reform were momentary. He continued to gratify his licentious appetite with women of the court, wives of tradesmen, or girls of low birth; but they were soon dismissed, and had no influence on him in relation to affairs of state. The duke d'Aiguillon, and the chancellor Mirapau, however, who secretly regulated all the motions of the infatuated monarch, now brought forward upon the scene of action a new mistress, who was destined to be the scourge and curse of France.

Mademoiselle l'Ange, the female now referred to, though meanly born and destitute of the advantages of education, and, what is worse, nurtured in prostitution, fascinated by her beauty the weak monarch whom she enslaved for the rest of his life. In the prime of her youth she was reckoned extremely handsome, but at the period when she was pitched upon to fascinate the voluptuous monarch of France, the charms of her person had suffered greatly by the depredations of time, and the course of life to which she had been accustomed from fourteen to thirty years of age. The lilies and roses implanted by nature on her lovely features, had long since begun to make it necessary that art should supply the defect from the repository of the perfumer. The remaining lustre of a fine eye, with exact symmetry of shape, and a most engaging air and address, were, nevertheless, sufficient external graces to arrest the king's notice at the first interview, placed, as she purposely was, in a situation where she could not fail of being seen by him, and thoroughly instructed in the part she was to act, should his majesty accost her. It had been customary with the king, in his hunting parties, to separate from the court, and attended by one or two noblemen to ride about his parks to view the company assembled on these occasions. Madame l'Ange took her station in a private recess, where there was little danger of interruption, and the duke d'Aiguillon, who had concerted the whole scheme, conducted the king to the spot. The interview produced an assignation, and at a private *petit souper* the conquest was completed by the vivacity of her conversation, the sweetness of her temper, and the refined taste which the king professed to have discovered in her. To save appearances with his subjects, he ordered her to be married, *pro forma*, to the brother of one of her paramours, who styled himself the count de Barré, and having got this accomplished, he resolved, in defiance of decency, and the remonstrances of de Choi-

seul and others against so imprudent a step, to have her introduced at court with the usual etiquette.

The dutchess of Grammont, sister to the duke de Choiseul, had conceived the hope of becoming mistress to the king; but her advances being neglected, and the young countess preferred, she became the victim of resentment and jealousy. The duke, her brother, considering his power to be too firmly established to be shaken by this new attachment, disdained to court the favourite, and opposed her growing influence by occasional insinuations in the ears of his sovereign. The countess de Barré was not long in giving intimations that she expected to be the dauphin and dauphiness. The former, after some warm altercations with the king, found it expedient to comply; but the latter, with a noble greatness of soul, is said to have told the king, "Sire, if I had been born your subject, I must have obeyed, but as the daughter and sister of an emperor, your majesty must excuse me." The ladies of the court, however, could obtain no such indulgence; they were obliged to pay due homage to the new favourite, and one example of the effects of resistance was sufficient to induce compliance. The dutchess de Grammont, first lady of honour to the queen, being in a box at the opera, the countess de Barré came into it, and attempted to seat herself beside the dutchess; but the latter requested the countess to retire, and on her refusal, the dutchess rose, courtesying to the people, who expressed universal applause, on which she left the box and retired to another. This being reported to the king, she was favoured with a *lettre de cachet* banishing her to her country seat, at a distance from Paris, during his majesty's pleasure.

Madame Barré in the first years of her promotion enjoyed a plentitude of power unknown to Pompadour, and which with all her talents she never durst attempt. She solicited and obtained a power to draw on the treasury under her own signature. As soon as the news of this extraordinary instance of royal imbecility reached the ears of the duke de Choiseul, it is said he passionately exclaimed, *C'en est fait de moi,—all is over with me.* But that his adversaries might not have an easy victory to boast of, notwithstanding this presage of his disgrace, he put every stratagem in force to ruin their protectress; and among the rest, he attempted to supplant the countess by introducing a rival; this was the widow of an officer, who brought a petition to the minister, but finding her very handsome and sprightly, de Choiseul referred her to the king, and gave her an opportunity of presenting her person and her petition, but the former produced only a slight, if any, effect, and the plan totally miscarried, but not without being made known to the countess, who now entered more deeply than ever into the politics of the times, with a determined resolution to remove the two de Choiseuls: and in this she succeeded, to the great dishonour of the king, and to the regret of all the true friends of France; but as this event did not take place till 1771, it is proper to return to the remaining occurrences of the year 1770.

Another effort was made in the course of this year to revive the declining credit of the French funds: a council of state was held, and the duke de Choiseul, as prime minister, was authorized to order the king's ministers at foreign courts to declare, that their master would make good all contracts of a pecuniary nature he had entered into with foreigners, and that funds would be deposited, for that purpose, in the hands of the comptroller-general of the finances.

On the 19th of May, the nuptials of Louis XVI. with the archduchess Maria Antoinette, were solemnized at the royal chapel of Versailles, and during the rejoicings upon this happy and important event, all animosities and internal troubles seemed to have been totally forgotten; such was the general satisfaction expressed by all ranks of people, on account of this union of the ancient rival houses of Bourbon and Austria: but a dreadful catastrophe most unexpectedly put an end to the gayety and good-humour which had reigned in Paris; from the time of the arrival of the dauphiness in France.

The greatest preparations had been made for exhibiting superb fireworks in the square of Louis XV., in honour of this marriage, under the direction

of a very able engineer; but a very great oversight had been committed, for the place was not sufficiently spacious for the execution of the extensive design. This had been mentioned to the engineer, but it was too late to rectify the fatal error: the exhibition had been put off several times on account of the weather; the people grew impatient at the delay, and therefore on the 31st in the evening they were displayed; but the populace had crowded so close to the building instead of being kept at a proper distance, that the operations of some of the machines were too potent, and threw down showers of fire on the heads of the populace, who, unable to stand it, gave way, and making a precipitate retreat, had the misfortune to find two out of the three streets leading from the square, blocked up: the other, being a narrow one, was almost instantly filled by the retiring crowd, and by others who came into it in their way to the fireworks, not knowing what happened; the horror of the scene by these means was completed; the people, unable to pass, threw each other down, and thus great numbers perished by suffocation, and many who lay undermost stabbed those who were upon them, in order to disengage themselves. A large scaffold likewise broke down, and threw a prodigious number of spectators into the Seine. Upon the whole, it was computed that the killed and maimed amounted to three thousand persons.

Towards the end of this year, the scarcity of provisions became so general in all parts of France, notwithstanding the great improvements made in agriculture, that no less than four thousand persons perished in the Limosin and the Marche; emigrations took place from different quarters of the kingdom; universal discontent prevailed, and insurrections ensued, till the ports were opened, and liberty given to foreigners, as well as natives, to import corn.

With respect to the external affairs of France, we have only to observe, that the oppressed Corsicans still continued to harass the French forces, and seemed but little disposed to acquiesce in the French government. But in order to convince the world that the court of France considered Corsica as a member of its kingdom, a squadron was despatched to Tunis to demand satisfaction of the bey, for having taken several Corsican vessels under French colours. After some mischief done, by bombarding the port of Bisuta, this affair was compromised by a sum of money paid to the French, and a new treaty, by which the sovereignty of France in the island was recognised, and the coral fishery on the coast of Africa, which had been permitted to the Corsicans while they were a free people, was placed upon its ancient footing.

But a very singular event, which engaged the attention of all Europe (as it threatened a new war between its three principal powers) at this time, greatly embarrassed the French minister, and his conduct upon the occasion was made the ostensible cause of his dismissal. Intelligence arrived in England, on the 24th of September, by the Favourite sloop of war, that the Spaniards had forcibly taken possession of his Britannic majesty's settlement at fort Egmont, in Falkland's island; had made the garrison prisoners of war, and disgraced the British flag, by unhooking the rudder of a king's ship. Such a flagrant violation of the treaty of peace, at a time when the most cordial amity seemed to subsist between the courts of Madrid, Versailles, and London, could not well be accounted for upon any other supposition, but that of some secret engagements entered into in consequence of the family compact, by which a war was to be commenced by surprise against Great Britain. While the necessary preparations were making in England to repel force by force, in case a negotiation for satisfaction should prove unsuccessful, it is confidently asserted, that the court of Spain actually intended to break with England, if France had been ready to second her; and that the Spanish ministry applied to the court of Versailles to know her intentions, to which de Choiseul returned for answer, "without the king's knowledge," "That the king, his master, would be always ready to support the honour of the house of Bourbon, and to fulfil the solemn engagements he had entered into by the family compact." A despatch to this purport, which had been forwarded to the French ambassador at Madrid, was copied by a secretary in the interest of the duke d'Aiguillon and the chancellor, transmitted home,

and by the latter put into the hands of the countess de Barré, with instructions to show it to the king in one of his gloomy hours, and to paint to him in the strongest colours all the horrors of a war, to be commenced at a time when the finances were in great disorder, the whole kingdom in a ferment concerning the parliaments, and the poor almost famished for want of bread. At the same time, the duke d'Aiguillon circulated a general rumour without doors, that de Choiseul was going to involve the nation in a war with England, on account of a miserable island in South America. The people caught the alarm, and to testify their inclination to peace, the general cry at Paris was, *point de guerre! point de Choiseul!*—no war! no Choiseul! The dismissal of the minister was soon after resolved upon by the king, and took place in the beginning of January, 1771.

His majesty, in the *lettre de cachet* (which ordered him to resign his employments, and to retire to his seat at Chanteloux), expressed in strong terms, his disapprobation of his conduct latterly; but he was scarce gone into exile, when the eyes of all Paris were opened, and it was now plainly discovered, that he was sacrificed to the resentment of the countess, to the ambition of the duke d'Aiguillon, and to the deep-laid scheme of the chancellor, to subvert the ancient constitution of the kingdom. It was publicly known, likewise, that the despatch which had raised such a clamour against him contained instructions to the French ambassador, to dissuade the court of Madrid from breaking with England; though it was added, that France was bound in honour to support the interests of every branch of the house of Bourbon; but the former part of the letter was artfully suppressed.

The dismissal of de Choiseul was followed by the revival of the most arbitrary proceedings against the parliament of Paris, who continued their deputations, and desired the king, either to withdraw his edict, and permit the law to take its course with the duke d'Aiguillon, or to accept their employments and their lives, which they were willing to sacrifice to the preservation of the constitution. The first president boldly told the king, that his edict, being contrary to law, was in itself null and void, and therefore could not be registered. "Your edict, sire, is destructive of all law; your parliament is appointed to maintain the law, and that perishing, they should perish with it," were the last words of this officer upon the occasion; after which the presidents, counsellors, and other officers of the parliament resigned their several functions. Letters of jussion were issued by the king, commanding them to resume their employments; this they absolutely refused, and, on the 19th of January, in the middle of the night, detachments of musketeers went to the houses of most of the members, and presented to each a circular *lettre de cachet*, which ordered them to resume their usual duty, and to signify their compliance by signing their assent, or their refusal by signing a negative; or, in other words, their own banishment. The major part signed the refusal; some others would not explain their sentiments out of parliament, and a few, under the influence of fear, signed an assent, which they afterward retracted. But owing to some mistake, many of the members were not served with the *lettres de cachet*; these went in procession to the parliament-house, attended by their president, and entered a protest against this military attack upon their brethren; and in going to and coming from the house, the people, as they passed, expressed their approbation of their patriotic conduct, by continual acclamations. All the members were now banished to different villages, some near, and others at a great distance from Paris. That the public virtue of this parliament may be viewed in the most meritorious light, it is necessary to observe, that the members purchase their seats of the court on very high terms.

A new tribunal was constituted, vested with the same powers as the late parliament, during the king's pleasure; and the chief secretary to that august body was commanded by the king to act in the same capacity under this tribunal, but he nobly refused to comply, though his place had cost him a million of livres, and produced him a hundred thousand yearly. He said, that he had taken his oath to the parliament, and was therefore under an in-

dispensable obligation not to act separately, or independent of that venerable assembly. The king persisted; and M. de Voisin, being inflexible, lost his employment, and was banished to Languedoc. Several of the officers of the late parliament fled, to avoid acting under this new court; but they were summoned to return, under the pain of imprisonment, and of rendering their children incapable to hold any public employment whatever. The king's council were compelled to plead before this extraordinary tribunal; but though they requested leave to resign, and had used their utmost efforts to avoid acting, yet the people resented their compliance, and they were obliged to have guards to attend them; but this could not preserve them or the chancellor from insults, whenever they appeared in public.

On the 22d of February, the long meditated plan of the chancellor, the author of all the mischief in the kingdom, was carried into execution. The king held a bed of justice, at which an edict was published, dividing the jurisdiction of the late parliament of Paris, which extended from Lyons to Arras, in Flanders, into six parts, under the denomination of superior courts. Each court to have an equal, separate jurisdiction, and to be established at Arras, Blois, Cleremont, Lyons, Poitiers, and Paris. Abuses arising from the too extensive jurisdiction of the late parliament, were assigned as the reason for this great alteration. The quality and appointments of the officers of each court were settled by the same edict, and the institutions of these tribunals declared to be perpetual. But never did any measure meet with more general disapprobation and resentment. The other parliaments remonstrated; the provinces that were to be subjected to the new courts represented, that it was inconsistent with the edicts of his majesty's predecessors; and that it was calculated only to tyrannize over them and their posterity. In fine, the princes of the blood, and great numbers of the other peers of France, signed a most animated protest against every step that had been taken to the prejudice of the constitutional rights of the parliaments. This protest enraged the king to such a degree, that it was proposed in council to banish the princes and peers who had signed it; but the motion was overruled, and the final resolution of the court was now taken. The chancellor had prepared a new code of laws; it was approved by the council, and notwithstanding the confusion into which the new institution had thrown the city of Paris, where all law proceedings were at a stand, and the execution of justice suspended, it was carried into execution, at a bed of justice, held on the 13th of April. The princes of the blood were summoned to attend; but as the intention of holding it was declared to be the permanent establishment of the new tribunals and of Mirapau's code of laws, they all (except the count de la Marche) wrote letters to the king, purporting, that as they could not give their votes in favour of the business proposed to be transacted, they should not be present. The king, incensed to the last degree, forbade the princes his court; and to show his subjects that he was determined, at all events, to be master, the duke d'Aiguillon, the very criminal against whom justice had been in vain demanded, and on whose account all the disputes between him and his parliaments had arisen, was made prime minister. Matters were now brought to a crisis, the rod was put into the hands of a man equally resentful and ambitious, and instead of limiting his cruelty and injustice to the province of Brittany, he had it in his power to extend it to all parts of the kingdom. Accordingly, at Paris, forty-two members of the criminal court, called the *chatelet*, were banished to different places, having only twenty-four hours allowed them to take leave of their families and friends; and, in the course of the year, the parliaments of Besançon, Bourdeaux, Aix, Toulouse, and Brittany, were suppressed; but new parliaments, disposed to acquiesce in the present system, were nominated soon after.

Thus was a revolution accomplished, which fixed a detested favourite in the seat of government, and rendered the king more absolute than ever, by a subdivision of the judicial powers immediately dependent on his royal will and pleasure; but this innovation, sensibly felt by the subjects of France, has been considered in too serious a light by most English writers. The

parliaments of France by no means resemble those of Great Britain; for, if we except the power of granting aids to the king, and of registering edicts for levying taxes, the principal part of their authority is judicial. The parliament of Paris was little more than a superior court of equity, and of criminal justice; and that abuses were sometimes committed, owing to the too extensive power and influence of this parliament, must not, for it cannot, be denied. The proceedings on the trial of Lally are sufficient to justify this remark. The incompetency of such judges, with respect to military conduct, was apparent to the whole world. A court-martial alone could properly determine the degrees of his criminality; but this is no plea for plucking up root and branch; the parliament might have been reformed, but it was overturning the ancient seat of justice to suppress it entirely; and the establishment of unlimited despotism was the result, as it had been the object, of this violent measure.

During these transactions, the king of Sweden died suddenly in the 62d year of his age, and the prince who ascended the throne was at Paris when he received the news of his accession. The just apprehension that the distracted state of the domestic affairs of France, of which this young monarch had been an eye-witness, might induce him to withdraw his alliance, made the French ministry, with their usual policy, instantly terminate a negotiation, which had been the chief cause of his journey, and of his long residence at Paris: this was, the payment of the arrears due from France on the subsiding treaty with Sweden; they amounted to six millions of livres. Upon the news of this event, the court of Versailles tendered one-fourth of the whole sum in specie, promised payment of the remainder, in three successive annual payments, and renewed the treaty with the young king, who left Paris, thoroughly satisfied with the success of his secret expedition, which had been announced to the world as merely a journey of amusement.

The year 1773 commenced with a strong suspicion entertained by Great Britain and the empress of Russia, her only powerful ally on the continent, that France was on the point of taking an active part in favour of the Turks, and likewise that she entered too deeply into the affairs of Poland.

A report was circulated, that the French were equipping a fleet at Toulon, and another at Brest, to oppose the Russians in the Mediterranean, and that a Spanish fleet would join them. This opened a new scene of political speculation at London; for, by a secret article in the last treaty of commerce between Great Britain and Russia, it was stipulated, that the former should assist the latter, in case she should be attacked at sea by the fleets of France or Spain. In consequence of this article, a fleet of observation was got ready, and sent to the Mediterranean, to watch the motions of the French and Spaniards; but the alarms of war all subsided towards the end of the year; and at the opening of the parliament (in January last), the king gave his subjects the strongest assurances of the pacific disposition of the courts of Versailles and Madrid. However, private letters from Paris, received in England, attributed this change at the court of Versailles to the interposition of the duke d'Aiguillon; for it was confidently asserted, that the marshal duke de Broglio, and the count de Guignes, had taken measures to get the king into their power, to remove d'Aiguillon, and to force his majesty to break with England; but little credit was given to such intelligence, by persons who knew the situation of the domestic affairs of France; tumults and insurrections were happening every day on account of the dearness of bread; the ministry were universally detested; the king despised, on account of his arbitrary proceedings against the parliaments, and his attachment to his mistress; and the finances still in so poor a condition, as to be unable to make good the king's royal promise, to discharge the demands of foreigners on the royal treasury, particularly the Canada reconnoissances; though the tedious negotiation for their final payment had been concluded by lord Rochford, the British ambassador at Paris, in 1772.

The high price of corn at this inauspicious moment occasioned numerous insurrections among the people in the provinces. At Tours they rose to

such a height, that the lieutenant of police was thrown into the river by the populace, in the month of March. Twenty-seven villages in the Lower Auvergne were soon after in arms on the same account; and these disturbances were not yet entirely quelled, when the sudden illness of the king took off the attention of the government from all other objects. His majesty was seized with shivering fits, sickness, and pains in his back, on the 27th of April, being then at Trianon; the next day he was removed, by his own desire, to Versailles, but it does not appear that the physicians of his court had the least suspicion of the small-pox at the commencement of his illness, for his disorder was treated contrary to all the established rules of modern practice in such cases. No wonder, therefore, that nature sunk under the operations of copious bleeding and blisters, which had been advised, on a supposition that the disease was a putrid fever. The eruption of the small-pox appeared on the 29th, in the evening, to the surprise of the whole court, and from this moment, little hopes were entertained of his recovery; every preparation, therefore, was made for the approaching awful change. The last rites of the Romish church were administered, in the presence of the princes of the blood and the great officers of state; and the heralds were summoned to approach the chamber of the dying monarch, two to announce his decease, which happened on the 10th, and two to proclaim the accession of his successor.

Thus died Louis the XV., in the sixty-fourth year of his age, and the fifty-ninth of his reign. He was the absolute master of every individual in his extensive dominions, but was himself the slave of two base and intriguing women, whom he permitted to gain an entire ascendancy over him, and to place and displace the great officers of state, the generals of his armies, and even the magistrates, at their pleasure. When we reflect upon the sovereign of a great nation, which under his immediate predecessor had made such a conspicuous figure in the annals of Europe, betraying such mental imbecility, as to grant his entire confidence to the dependants of his favourite mistresses, and thereby occasioning a succession of commotions and revolutions in the internal state of his kingdom, we lament that such blemishes should tarnish the reputation of a prince who was a patron of the polite arts, and the founder of several useful establishments.

The reign of Louis XIV. was the era of military glory in France; that of Louis XV. was as remarkable for successful negotiations. The treaties of Aix-la-Chapelle, in 1748, and of Versailles, in 1763, the alliance with the house of Austria, and the family compact, in all of which France, by sound policy, indemnified herself for the ravages of unsuccessful wars, will be durable monuments of the superior talents of her negotiating ministers, while they reflect but little lustre on those of the other powers of Europe. (1)

LETTER VIII.

View of the Spanish Monarchy—its Government—and Resources, A. D. 1763—1780.—Glance at Naples and Switzerland.

SPAIN is less extensive than France by only about fifteen hundred square miles, while its population is only one-third as great; and yet the climate of Spain is serene, and the air almost universally salubrious. There are but few districts that are not at least fit for pasturage; the number of rivers is considerable; some canals have been executed and others are practicable: but the policy pursued by the Ferdinands and the Philips has destroyed the life of the Spanish nation.

As the productions of Spanish authors are subjected to six censures; as nothing is allowed to pass through the press without having been examined by the synodal examiner, the chronist of Castile, an official, a royal secre-

(1) See Voltaire's Age of Louis XV.—La Vie privée de Louis XV.—and Doddsley's Annual Register.—Journal Historique, &c.

tary, the corrector-general, and even the royal council; the truth respecting a number of circumstances will be as little known to posterity as it is to the kings themselves; but the effects of this miserable system of policy are evident to the eyes of all.

The court was obliged by its necessities to seek for new financial resources; and, during the administration of the marquis of Ensenada, procured a *concordat* at Rome, by which it was determined, that such estates as the clergy might in future acquire should not be exempted from taxation on that account; that in great public emergencies the church should bear its share of the burden; and that the nomination to the inferior benefices should belong to the king. The court thus obtained an extraordinary degree of influence over the clergy; because, as the number of such benefices is extremely great, and those who have once experienced the extension of favour in this manner, are usually disposed to look for farther promotion, this regulation produced a very *loyal* disposition in that class of ecclesiastics which is most immediately in contact with the mass of the people. The pope retained four hundred and fifty-two benefices in his own gift; and the court of Spain deposited one hundred and thirteen thousand scudi in the apostolic chamber, at the ratification of this *concordat*.

The tribunal of faith remained, although the dissension which took place between the courts of Spain and Rome under Charles III. gave occasion to a peremptory command, that it should publish no papal bull or letter which had not previously received the exequator, or royal assent; which was "the apple of the eye of authority." The king nominates the grand inquisitor and the six counsellors; besides whom, the confessor, two members of the council of Castile, a royal secretary, alguazil-major, and the inferior servants of the tribunal, constituting the remaining persons. Eighteen offices in the provinces, the Balearic and Canary islands, and America, all of which are subordinate to the supreme tribunal, are found sufficient to maintain the prudential maxim, that "it is better to believe than to inquire!" as the fundamental principle of education, and of written and oral intercourse.

Don Carlos III., in the beginning of his reign, caused the estates to take an oath of their belief in the immaculate conception: a negotiation was also undertaken, the object of which was to elevate the holy virgin, by means of a formal bull, to the dignity of tutelary saint of all Spain, A. D. 1761; but this attempt was foiled by the cathedral chapter of St. Jago de Compostella, who represented the ingratitude of deposing their great apostle, who had so frequently shown himself, mounted on his white horse, at the head of the armies of Spain!

The twenty-two provinces of Castile contained upwards of ninety thousand secular priests and monks, and twenty thousand nuns: according to Ustariz, one-thirtieth of the whole nation belonged to the ecclesiastical body. The clergy of the superior classes were generally sensible and benevolent persons; those of the inferior sort, too numerous not to be formidable when offended: the monks, as a body, were avaricious, and were the support of absolute power, as long as it could be rendered subservient to their interests.

Under Philip V. and Ferdinand VI., Alberoni, Patinho, Ensenada, Valparayso, and Wäll, successively enjoyed the highest authority as ministers. Don Carlos raised to that dignity the marquis di Squillace, a Sicilian, with whom he had become acquainted at Naples, where he had been employed as commissary at war. This nobleman was ruined by the influence of the clergy, whose wealth he is said to have regarded as the means of repairing the dilapidated finances. Other ministers, remarkable for their intelligence, but perhaps too incautious, were equally incapable of maintaining their posts.

This court was always inclined to slow measures; which at least afforded ground to hope, that if it should at length adopt good maxims, it would retain them with proportionate tenacity. But the government was deprived of the guidance of public opinion; for the national voice was stifled by the terrific institutions which we have before described, and the convocation of the cortes was discontinued. The supreme direction of affairs, under the king, was