

STORY OF A JEWELLED PIN.

Asserted to Have Changed the Destinies of France.

In the very scarce memoirs of an officer of the household troops—Les Charles Françaises—of Louis XVI, there is told the story of a pin which, as the Duke de Choiseul said, "changed the destinies of France." It should be remembered that the allusion to Mme. du Barry in the narrative, of which only a very veiled summary is given, exhibits the strong prejudice against her by almost all writers of the eighteenth century.

In her earlier career Mme. Maintenon was closely associated with the famous Ninon de l'Enclos. This intimacy was continued even after the secret marriage of the former with Louis XIV, when she became intolerant of any deviation from strict morality.

It was just previous to Mme. de Montespan's decline in favor that the Abbe Goebelin, confessor of De Maintenon, presented her with a pincushion. On a certain day, soon after, when the latter was calling upon Ninon, this dropped from her pocket. At the very moment Ninon was inserting into a ribbon about her neck a pin of an odd design that once seen it could never be forgotten. What would be more piquant than to transfer this pin, with its suggestions, to the pincushion of the now conventional De Maintenon, by the most famous courtesan of the world? The transfer was made and De Maintenon carried off with her a jewel that was destined to play an important part in many dramatic events, according to the narrative to which I have referred.

Shortly after, on a warm summer's day, De Montespan and De Maintenon were walking in the park at Versailles with Louis XIV. To fasten a gauze scarf Montespan asked the loan of a pin, and catching sight of the one given by Ninon, in the flush of her desire she had embroidered a device. To fasten this a pin was needed, whereupon the king ordered his valet de chambre to go to his jewel box and bring the one which recalled the incident in the garden of Versailles. At the conclusion of the ceremonies attending the reception of James II and his family, the pin was returned to the cabinet of Louis XIV, where it remained undisturbed until near the close of the reign of Louis XV, who had inherited it along with all else belonging to his grandfather.

WORN BY LOUIS XIV.

When Louis XIV was about to set out to greet the exiles and make them welcome, De Maintenon, who looked upon this as the most interesting episode in the life of her unacknowledged husband, desired to add to the clasp of diamonds ornamenting his hat a chain of white plumes tied with a ribbon upon which she had embroidered a device. To fasten this a pin was needed, whereupon the king ordered his valet de chambre to go to his jewel box and bring the one which recalled the incident in the garden of Versailles. At the conclusion of the ceremonies attending the reception of James II and his family, the pin was returned to the cabinet of Louis XIV, where it remained undisturbed until near the close of the reign of Louis XV, who had inherited it along with all else belonging to his grandfather.

One day after dinner, weary of monotonous association with Louis XV—so the story goes—Mme. de Barry, for diversions, opened the private cabinet where he kept his inheritance of precious objects, important papers, miniatures and jewels. These were tossed over, against the protests of the king, who, unable to check the pillage, resigned himself to the devastation of all he held most dear. Among other articles forming the collection was an emerald ring once worn by Mme. de Maintenon. There was also a little cross of violet wood, made in commemoration of the revocation of the Edict of Nantes. On it were engraved the names of the Jesuits Lefebvre and Lachaise, with the date, Oct. 10, 1685. In one corner of the jewel box was the ribbon with the device embroidered by De Maintenon, the ends fastened together forming the famous pin. Attached, in the handwriting of Louis XIV, was a paper describing the use to which the two had been put on an occasion memorable in his life.

Louis XV protested against the desecration, but Du Barry, who would tolerate no opposition to her desires, appropriated the pin to her own use.

BARREY AND DE CHOISEUL.

This incident happened just at the time when M. d'Aligillon was about to consummate the plot he was reputed to have formed with Mme. du Barry to bring about the disgrace of the Duke de Choiseul. This minister, reckless and adroit and feeling secure in his necessity to the king, had allowed the intrigue to culminate, notwithstanding the repeated warnings of his friends, who by their imprudence had not a little contributed to the peril that menaced him. At last, awakened to the impending crisis, he consented to take a step repugnant to his self-respect—to endeavor to placate the all-powerful Du Barry, of whom, through every avenue of publicity, he had circulated the most scandalous stories. He made conciliatory advances to Mme. du Barry, and appeared to ingratiate himself so warmly in her good opinion that the Duke d'Aligillon and the Abbe Terray became alarmed.

At last the moment arrived for the promised interview with De Choiseul. The hour fixed was 6 o'clock in the evening. The king was out hunting and would not return until late. De Choiseul had dismissed all his attendants, and at the prearranged moment Mme. du Barry presented herself, with a bunch of flowers fastened at her breast with the

fated pin. Seating herself with him on the sofa, she earned De Choiseul that she was very angry, and that if he did not respect her the king would punish him; but just then the pin, destined to play a great part at critical moments, caught in his lace cuff and cut a deep gash across his hand; he uttered an exclamation of pain and drew back impetuously. Mme. du Barry fled with a precipitation that a bleeding hand could not arrest.

Two days later De Choiseul was exiled to his country seat at Canteleup. He would give no other reason for his disgrace than that "the pin had changed the destinies of France."

Barely had Mme. du Barry arrived from the interrupted interview with De Choiseul when the king returned from hunting. She met him with more than accustomed demonstrations of affection, and the king took advantage of her amiable mood to ask the return of the pin. It was gladly surrendered. With other belongings of his predecessors it passed to Louis XVI, in whose possession it remained until chance subverted it to another use.

GIVEN TO AN ACTRESS.

Mlle. de Contat, a charming actress of the French theater, had turned the head of the Count de Narbonne, the spoiled child of the royal family. She craved possession of the famous pin locked in the jewel box of the king, for she conceived the notion of using it to fasten the letter to Susanne in the "Mariage de Figaro," which was to have a first representation in a few days. De Narbonne was at his wit's end to discover some way of securing the treasure before the first performance of the play, only four days distant. Chance offered a solution of the difficulty. Quadrilles were then the fashion, and of those who took part in them a special costume was required. The count, by adroit questioning of M. la Borde, the custodian of the king's cabinet, gained a fair knowledge of its contents, and then pretended to need diamonds with which to decorate his coat for the quadrille at the approaching court ball. Louis XVI, who could refuse nothing to De Narbonne, gave him permission to draw upon the resources of the jewel box. After a brief search he discovered the pin.

The court was just in time; the performance had begun. The pin after being put to the use intended passed from hand to hand, and when needed for the second performance was nowhere to be found. The actress was little disturbed by the loss, but the count was confronted with a perilous situation, for La Borde had discovered the theft. A large sum of money purchased his silence.

The famous pin was found by a dancer in the muck of the stage. She was as a lover M. d'Arlande, the first person to accompany Filate de Rozier in his balloon ascension. On his initial voyage in the air d'Arlande wore upon the breast of his coat a lock of his mistress's hair fastened with the fated pin. A gust of wind tore in half the small flag carried by the aeronauts. The pin was used to mend it.

Among the spectators present when the balloon descended was M. Bailli, a celebrated astronomer. De Rozier presented him with the flag fastened with the pin, and it was put away in the closet of the scientist.

SPEEDING TO THE END.

On the memorable day when Louis XVI was conducted by the people from Versailles to Paris, M. Bailli, named mayor of the city by acclamation, was at his home awaiting the moment to go to the Hotel de Ville to receive the king, who, arriving sooner than was expected, a messenger on horseback was dispatched to summon Bailli. In his haste he forgot his official badge. He returned to his cabinet to get it, and not knowing how to attach it to his coat, he caught sight of the fated pin, which was still on the flag. With it he affixed his badge and hurried to the Hotel de Ville.

Fate was now speeding the pin to its last and predestined end. At the moment when, as mayor, Bailli presented the national cocarde to Louis XVI, there was no other way to fasten it to the king's hat except with the historical pin, once his property, but now destined to hold in place the symbol of a revolution that was to deprive him of his throne and of his life.

Again the pin was lost for a long time, when a undertaker's assistant, preparing for burial the body of Morabau—the great orator of the revolution—in search of something to fasten his winding sheet, found it in the sweepings of a room at the Louvre.

Its chronology is remarkable: first serving on the toilet of Ninon de l'Enclos; then to close the fishu of De Maintenon; now in the jewel box of Louis XVI; then to hold the plume on his hat at his meeting with James II of England; in the wig of the Chancellor of France; to fasten the bouquet of Mme. du Barry; in the jewel box of Louis XV and Louis XVI; purloined by the Count de Narbonne; given to Mlle. Contat; lost by her and found by a dancer and used to attach a lock of her hair to her lover's breast; to mend a torn flag; then hidden in the closet of M. Bailli; then to pin the revolutionary cocarde to the hat of Louis XVI, and finally to disappear forever in the grave of Mirabeau.—Paris Letter to the New York Sun.

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