



**Lauzun, having inspected the fortifications at Limerick, declared with an oath, that his master would take that post with roasted apples ... M. de Lauzun went to Galway with what remained of the French troops in order to embark them for France. (The Abbé Mac Geoghegan, *Histoire de l'Irlande, Ancienne et Moderne*, Paris, 1758).**

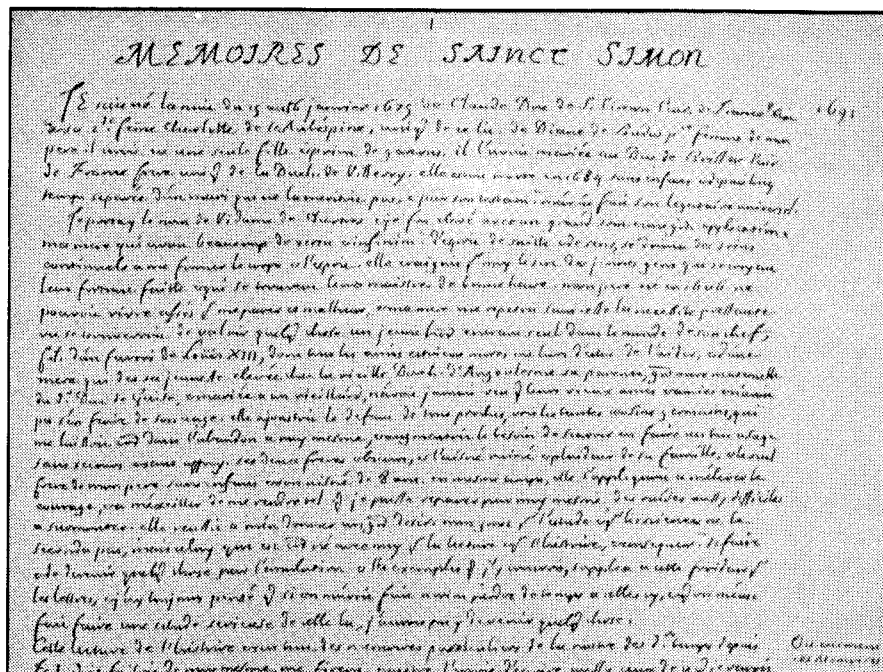
**M. de Lauzun was more fitted to play at gallantries, more capable of unravelling petty court intrigues than of distinguishing himself at the head of a brigade; in addition, he was quick, proud and so self-sufficient that he treated us as foreigners in our own country ... M. de Lauzun, seeing the small chance there was of standing a siege in Limerick, withdrew with his brigade to Galway ... whence he embarked soon after for France. (R.G. Hayes, 'Reflections of an Irish Brigade Officer', *The Irish Sword*, Vol. 1, 1949-53).**

# THE DUC DE LAUZUN

BY LOUIS DE SAINT-SIMON (TRANSLATED BY LUCY NORTON)

**O**n 19 November, 1723, the Duc de Lauzun died, at the age of ninety and six months. The very close attachment between the two sisters whom we had married, and constant residence at the Court, where we four had a pavilion permanently allotted us on all the Marly excursions, meant that we lived in one another's pockets. After the king's death, we met almost every day, and invariably dined together, either at my house or at his. He was such an extraordinary person, so eccentric in every way, that La Bruyère is right to say in *Les Caractères* that the vicissitudes of his life defy imagination. To those who knew him well, even in old age, the remark seems to fit exactly; which is why I have decided to describe him at length.

M. de Lauzun was small and fair, extremely well built, with a noble air, a countenance that sparkled with intelligence and inspired respect, but was without charm – at least, so I was told by his contemporaries. Overflowing with ambition, whims, and fancies, he was covetous of everything, always wanting more, never content with what he possessed. He had no education, no culture, no intellectual graces or refinement. By nature he was melancholy, unsociable, violent; lordly in all his ways, essentially spiteful and malicious, and made more so by jealousy and ambition; yet when he made a friend, which was rare, he himself was a good one, and a good kinsman also. Quick in making enemies, even with persons of no importance, he was cruel to their defects and in discovering and mocking their absurdities. He was courageous in the extreme and most dangerously rash. As a courtier, he was insolent, mocking, and servile to the point of cringing, ready to use any mean trick, plotting and labouring with infinite care in order to



The manuscript of the memoirs of Duc de Saint-Simon.  
Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.

gain his ends, therefore dangerous to ministers, feared by everyone at the Court, uttering biting remarks with a wit that spared no one.

When he first appeared at Court, he was poor and without prospects, a younger son, a mere boy from Gascony, who arrived fresh from the provinces with the title of Marquis de Puységur. The Maréchal de Gramont, his father's first cousin, gave him a home. Gramont was a man of the highest importance among the courtiers of his day, a friend of the queen-mother and of Cardinal Mazarin, and colonel of the guards. His eldest son, the Comte de Guiche, was the very flower of valour and chivalry, a great favourite with the king, and with the cardinal's niece the Comtesse de

Soissons, in whose drawing-room the king was permanently rooted. M. de Guiche presented the Marquis de Puységur, who in a remarkably short time became a favourite also, being given the king's dragoon regiment, quickly promoted to be brigadier-general, with the new rank of colonel-general of dragoons especially created for him.

The Duc de Mazarin, who had retired from the Court in 1669, wished to sell his commission as grandmaster of artillery. Puységur was the first to hear of it, and begged it from the king, who gave his promise; but only on condition of absolute secrecy for the next few days. At the end of that time, Puységur, who had the entrées, waited for the king to leave the finance council, in the empty

room, between the council chamber and the one where all the courtiers were gathered. He there saw Nyert, the head valet on duty, who asked what he wanted. Puyguilhem, sure of success, seized the opportunity to gain a friend by confiding to this servant the news of his appointment. Nyert congratulated him, pulled out his watch, saw that there was still time to act, as he said, in a rather urgent matter for which the king had given orders. He tore four steps at a time up the narrow stairs at the top of which was the tiny room where Louvois worked – at Saint-Germain, there were so few and such small rooms that the ministers and most of the courtiers lodged at their private houses in the town. Nyert burst into this office of Louvois's to inform him that Puyguilhem was to be made grandmaster of artillery immediately after the council, and he repeated what he had been told.

Now Louvois detested Puyguilhem, the friend of his rival Colbert. It alarmed him to imagine a haughty favourite in a post so closely touching the war ministry, his own department. He therefore embraced Nyert, sent him flying back, took up a few papers to offer an excuse, went down to find Nyert and Puyguilhem in the above mentioned room. Nyert, apparently much astonished, remarked that the council was still sitting. 'No matter', said Louvois, 'I must go in, I have urgent business for the king', and so saying, he entered. King Louis was surprised; he asked what brought him, then rose and approached him. Louvois drew him aside into a window recess, and there informed him that the news had spread of Puyguilhem's new appointment, and that that gentleman was waiting in the adjoining room for the king to confirm it. Louvois continued that although his majesty was the absolute master of his favours and selections, he felt it his duty to say that Puyguilhem, so arrogant and capricious, would be sure to reorganise the entire artillery; that his post was inextricably connected with the work of the war department; that nothing would run smoothly between a grandmaster of artillery and a secretary of state who cordially disliked each other, and that one of the disadvantages would be their having constantly to refer their quarrels and arguments to the king for settlement.

The king was greatly vexed to learn that his secret had become known to the very man from whom he had most wished to hide it. He turned to Louvois saying with extreme gravity that nothing as yet was settled, dismissed him, and returned to his seat at the council. The meeting soon afterwards ended and the king went to mass; he noted Puyguilhem, but passed by without a word. That gentleman, completely mystified, waited all the rest of that day; but when the time came for the king's *petit coucher* and there was still no announcement, he brought



*Louis de Saint-Simon, aged 15-16 years, c. 1690.  
Attributed to Hyacinthe Rigaud.*

the matter up. King Louis replied that it was not yet time, but that he would see. That ambiguous answer and the curt manner of its utterance put fear into Puyguilhem's soul. He was a great stealer of hearts and had a way with the ladies; he therefore went to Mme. de Montespan and, confiding his trouble, implored her to act. She promised miracles, and with that hope kept him happy for some days longer.

At last, tired of waiting and wholly unaware of the reason for his disappointment, he took a course so rash that it would be unbelievable had it not been vouched for by the entire Court of that day. It so happened that Puyguilhem was sleeping with one of Mme. de Montespan's favourite maids – for he baulked at nothing that would serve him for warnings and protection. He now resolved upon the most hazardous enterprise ever conceived. In all his various love affairs, the king never failed to spend the night with the queen. He was sometimes late in joining her, but he never missed, and thus, for convenience, he went to bed with his mistresses in the

afternoon. Puyguilhem persuaded the above mentioned waiting-maid to hide him beneath the bed on which the king would lie with Mme. de Montespan. She did so, and by their talk he learned of how Louvois had prevented his appointment; of the king's extreme anger at the telling of his secret; of his decision to refuse Puyguilhem on that account, and more especially in order to avoid having to mediate between him and Louvois in their quarrels. Puyguilhem heard all that was said by the king and his mistress, and perceived that she who had promised him marvels was doing him every imaginable disservice. One cough, the smallest movement, the faintest noise would have revealed the presence of that daredevil; and then what would have become of him? It is the kind of thing that makes one laugh and shudder all at the same moment.

He was luckier than he deserved, for they did not notice him. At length the kind and his mistress rose; the king put on his clothes and returned to his apartments; Mme. de Montespan attired herself for the rehearsal of a ballet, at



which the king, the queen, and the entire Court were to be present. The maid extracted Puyguilhem, who apparently felt no need to adjust his dress, for instead of returning to his room, he posted himself outside Mme. de Montespan's door. When she emerged he offered her his wrist, asking in soft, respectful tones whether he might dare to hope that she had remembered him. She assured him that indeed she had spoken and, in the most gratifying manner possible, enumerated the various services she had rendered him. Now and again he stopped her, plying her with eager questions designed to lead her to still higher flights. After which, putting his mouth to her ear, he told her she was a liar, a trollop, a whore, a piece of dog-filth repeating to her, word for word, the whole of her conversation with the king. Mme. de Montespan was so flabbergasted she had no strength left for utterance, and only just managed to continue walking without displaying the fact that her legs and entire body were all a-tremble. When they arrived at the rehearsal room where the Court was assembled she fainted quite away. The king flew to her side in high alarm, and they had great difficulty in reviving her. She told him what had happened that same evening, vowing that only the devil himself could have informed Puyguilhem. King Louis was furious because of the injuries she had suffered, but remained completely at a loss to discover how Puyguilhem could have known.

As for Puyguilhem himself, so much incensed was he at losing the artillery that relations between him and the king



*Colbert, Louis XIV's loyal minister.*

became uncomfortably strained. It was a situation that could not have endured. At the end of a few days he used his entrées to seek the chance of a private word, and seized it when it came. He spoke of the artillery, and boldly reminded the king of his promise. The answer came that this no longer applied. The promise had been given on condition of secrecy, and Puyguilhem had blabbed. At those words Puyguilhem drew his sword and broke it across his foot, furiously exclaiming that he would not serve a prince who so basely failed to keep his word. Thereupon the king, transported with rage, took what may well have been

the finest action of his life. He turned away, opened the window, and flung out his cane, saying that it would grieve him to be obliged to strike a gentleman. Then immediately he left the room.

Next morning, Puyguilhem, who had not dared to show himself in the meanwhile, was arrested in his bedroom and taken thence to the Bastille. It so happened, however, that he was a close friend of Guitry, a great favourite for whom the post of grandmaster of the wardrobe had been especially created, and that Guitry was brave enough to intercede for him. He managed to persuade the king that Puyguilhem's disappointment was so great it had quite distracted him, with the result that King Louis's heart was softened. He presented the artillery to the Comte de Lude, a Knight of the Order whom he greatly relished because they shared the same tastes in gallantry and hunting. De Lude sold his post of first gentleman of the chamber to the Duc de Gesvres in order to pay for the artillery, and the king obliged Gesvres to offer his former post of captain of the bodyguard to Puyguilhem, as a consolation. At this incredibly swift return to favour, Puyguilhem had the hardihood to refuse Gesvres's offer, hoping for something better; but even this did not finally affront the king. Guitry saw his friend at the Bastille next day, and with enormous difficulty persuaded him to accept the king's bounty. In a moment he was freed and allowed to return to Saint-Germain, where he saluted the king, took the oath on his new appointment, and sold the colonelcy of dragoons.



*Louis XIV (seated) and his heirs: son, grandson and great-grandson and Madame de Ventadour. Commemorative portrait painted by N. de Largillière. Wallace Collection.*





He had been governor of Berry since 1665. I shall not here recount his adventures with La Grande Mademoiselle, who gives so artless a description of them in her memoirs; or his supreme folly in not immediately marrying her after gaining the king's consent – especially since his only reason for postponement was to secure the royal liveries and celebration of the wedding during the king's mass. In the event the delay proved fatal because it gave time for Monsieur and Monsieur le Prince to persuade the king to retract. Mademoiselle fumed and raged, but Puyguilhem, who by his father's death had become Comte de Lauzun, offered his marriage as a willing sacrifice to the king thereby showing more prudence than appeared altogether necessary in the circumstances. He had by then received the captaincy of the hundred *gentilshommes à bec de corbin* in succession to his father, and had been promoted to lieutenant-general.

He was in love at that time with Mme. de Monaco, a crony of the first Madame who selected her when, as a Daughter of England, she received the king's permission to appoint, like the queen, a superintendent of her household. The appointment made Lauzun wildly jealous and furiously angry with her. One afternoon, that summer, he went to Saint-Cloud and found Madame and all her court sitting on the floor for coolness in the heat, and Mme. de Monaco, half sitting, half lying, with one hand outstretched, palm upwards. Lauzun, flirting with the ladies, turned suddenly with a movement so skilful that he planted his heel on Mme. de Monaco's open palm. Then, suddenly executing upon it a neat pirouette, he departed. That lady, however, had sufficient self-command not to cry out or complain.

Shortly afterwards he did far worse, when he discovered that the king was enjoying some kind of affair with her, and the fact that at a certain hour Bontemps brought her, wrapped in a cloak, up the concealed staircase and on to the landing outside the back door of the king's offices, where also was a privy standing immediately opposite. Lauzun arrived early and went into hiding in the privy, securing himself with the hook behind the door, and able to watch through the keyhole for the critical moment when the king unlocked his door, put the key on the outside, and then re-entered closing the door after him. Lauzun waited a while listening at the king's door, then, giving the key a double turn, he swiftly withdrew it from the lock and threw it into the privy, once more enclosing himself therein. Soon afterwards Bontemps, arriving with the lady, was vastly surprised to find no key. He knocked gently but without effect, then struck harder until the king arrived. Bontemps said the lady was there, but no key, and asked him to open. The king said he had put the key outside.

Bontemps searched on the floor, while the king, trying to force the door, found that it was locked and double-locked. Picture all three of them highly astonished and completely bewildered. A conversation ensued through the keyhole, trying to determine what had happened. The king became exhausted wrestling with the lock. In the end they had to bid one another farewell with the door between. And there was Lauzun listening to every word they said, and watching them through the keyhole of his privy, as safely protected by the hook as though he had been about his normal business. And all the while he was in fits of silent laughter, vastly enjoying the absurd predicament.

In 1670, the king decided to take the ladies on a triumphal journey to inspect his Flanders fortresses. He was guarded by an entire army corps and all the troops of his *Maison*, such a vast body that the alarm was raised in the Low Countries, and he had all the trouble in the world to calm their fears. He gave command of the whole to the Comte de Lauzun, with the rank of general. It was an occasion on which Lauzun shone particularly, showing himself extremely capable, gallant with the ladies, and most lavish in his spending; but such glory and the accompanying proof of high favour gave Louvois food for reflection. That minister now joined with Mme. de Montespan, who did not forgive Lauzun for his eavesdropping or his atrocious insults, and together they succeeded in reminding the king of the broken sword, and the insolent refusal of the captaincy. They made Lauzun appear as forgetting his place, enticing Mademoiselle to the point of being about to marry her, so that he might become possessor of her great wealth, a man whose headstrong nature would be a perpetual danger, and who was even attracting the devotion of the army by his open-handed bounty. They further accused him of disloyalty, in that he had continued to be friendly with the Comtesse de Soissons, even after her dismissal from the Court, under suspicion of most horrible crimes. Considering the savage treatment which they brought down upon him, they must have imputed some of those crimes to Lauzun himself.

They continued their pursuit throughout the whole of 1671 without Lauzun noticing any change in the manner of the king or Mme. de Montespan, who continued to behave to him with their wonted friendliness and consideration. He was something of an expert on precious stones and the various methods of setting them, and Mme. de Montespan often consulted him. One afternoon in mid-November, 1671, he returned from Paris, where he had been to examine some jewels for her. He stepped down from his coach and went straight to his room. The Marcéchal de Rochefort, captain of the guard, entered

upon his heels, and placed him under arrest. Lauzun, astounded, asked to know the reason, demanded to see the king or Mme. de Montespan, or at least to write to them. All was forbidden. They removed him to the Bastille, and shortly after to Pignerol, where he was confined in a dungeon. His post of captain of the bodyguard was given to M. de Luxembourg, and his governorship of Berry to the Duc de La Rochefoucauld who, after Guित्रy's death, also became master of the robes.

You may imagine Lauzun's state of mind, hurtled in the twinkling of an eye from the loftiest heights to the deepest dungeon in the fortress of Pignerol, without having been given the least notion of his offence or allowed to see anyone. He managed to keep his health for a considerable time, but at last became so ill that he felt the need for a confessor. I have often heard him tell how much he dreaded to be sent a bogus priest, and how to protect himself he had stubbornly insisted on a Capuchin. He used to say that when a friar arrived, he took a firm grip on his beard at both sides, and tugged with all his might, so as to be sure there was no trickery. He was kept at Pignerol for five years. (Nearly ten years, from December, 1671 to April 1681).

Necessity teaches prisoners new skills. There were many others in the cells above and on each side of Lauzun, and they had devised a means of communication. This had led to the boring of well-concealed holes, so as to hear better, then to increasing them in size until they were large enough for a man to pass. Fouquet, the one-time minister for finance, had been confined there since December, 1664, and when he learned of Lauzun's presence in the dungeon below, he most ardently desired to see him; for when they last had met, Lauzun had been no more than a youth, striving to become a courtier. Those prisoners who had become acquainted with Lauzun now proposed to hoist him up through one of the tunnels, which Lauzun gladly accepted, for he was no less eager to see Fouquet. Picture them together, and imagine Fouquet's stupefaction as he heard the story of this younger son who, when he last had seen him, thought himself incredibly lucky to be sheltered by the Marquis de Gramont, and who had since become colonel of dragoons, captain of the bodyguard, and an army general. Fouquet, more and more astounded, began to doubt Lauzun's sanity, and when he heard the rest, the grandmastership of artillery, so narrowly missed; the events that followed, culminating with the king's consent to his marriage with Mademoiselle; how that had miscarried, and the vast riches that would have been Lauzun's had it taken place, he became convinced of his madness. Thereupon all hopes of an attachment vanished, at least



on Fouquet's side, for he regarded Lauzun's adventures as mere fiction, and all the news he brought of the Court and Society as worthless.

The lot of the unfortunate Fouquet was shortly afterwards much improved, for his wife and some of the officers of the garrison received permission to visit him. One of his first remarks was to pity poor, unhappy Lauzun, once so full of promise, who had evidently been imprisoned to conceal his madness. You may imagine his feelings when they told him that Lauzun's stories were no more than the truth. After a time, Lauzun also was moved from his dungeon to a bedroom, and was given the same privileges as Fouquet, which meant that they could visit one another at their pleasure. I never learned what occurred, but when Lauzun left Pignerol he was Fouquet's enemy, and thereafter did him all the harm possible, even to persecuting his family after Fouquet's death, which everyone considered most reprehensible. (The rumour was that Lauzun, who could not leave any woman unseduced, had exerted undue pressure on the Fouquets' youngest daughter when she visited the prison with her mother - L.N.).

No one had expected Lauzun to be confined for long, but he was not released until 1681, and even then was not allowed to emerge from Anjou and Touraine. Some considerable time later, he received permission to return to Paris, on condition of never coming within two leagues of whenever the king was in residence. Once established there, boredom led him to gambling for vast sums in which he proved amazingly lucky, and a most daring and skilful player. Monsieur, who occasionally paid short visits to Paris, invited him sometimes to play at the Palais Royal, then in the summer months to Saint-Cloud. Lauzun lived for several years after that fashion, winning a fortune, and lending with great generosity. Yet, though he dwelt so near the Court and mingled with the best people, he was strictly forbidden to approach more closely. At last, unable to endure this restriction, he begged the king's leave to go to England where huge fortunes were made playing for the highest imaginable stakes. The king consented, and Lauzun departed, furnished with so much money that he became extremely popular, and was no more miserable than he had been in Paris.

King James, ruling in England at that time, gave him a most honourable welcome. The revolution was already impending, and erupted eight or ten months after Lauzun's arrival. It would almost seem that it had been arranged on purpose to serve him, for everyone knows how much it profited him. James II, uncertain of his fate, betrayed by his friends and his ministers, forsaken by his people, with the Prince of Orange the idol of the army and the fleet, entrusted



*Madame de Maintenon.*

his family to the care of Lauzun who brought the queen and the Prince of Wales in safety to Paris. The queen in her letter of thanks to King Louis included a passage to the effect that her joy at being safe under the king's protection was somewhat tempered by being forbidden to present the man who had rescued her. The king's answer was that he, too, was grateful to the Comte de Lauzun, and would testify as much by receiving him forthwith and restoring him to favour. And so it was indeed, for when she presented him at Saint-Germain, he was treated with the utmost graciousness, given back his entrées, and promised a lodging at the Château de Versailles, which he immediately received. You may imagine his feelings at that triumphant return from outer darkness. He also received a lodging in the Château de Saint-Germain, when that became the residence in France of King James.

Lauzun, skilful courtier that he was, drew the maximum of profit from both courts, using his connection with the English one as a pretext for speaking often to our king, and for bearing his messages. In the end, he succeeded so well that he was permitted to receive the Order of the Garter from the hands of the King of England, at a ceremony at Notre-Dame. King Louis also gave him leave to serve King James with the rank of general, and entrusted the French contingent to his command when that monarch made his second expedition to Ireland. In that campaign the Battle of the Boyne was lost; but in spite of that defeat, the Comte de Lauzun received on his return the letters patent of a dukedom, which were registered at the Parlement in May, 1696. What a marvel! But not even that would have compared with a royal marriage to La Grande Mademoiselle, the ownership of most enormous wealth, and the rank and

privileges of a Duke and Peer of Montpensier! What a pedestal to have scaled and, had there been children, to what heights might he not have risen!

He was in every way a most extraordinary man, and he delighted in emphasizing his strangeness, even among his family or with his valets. He would often pretend to be blind and deaf, so as to see or hear more than people imagined, and diverted himself by teasing fools (even those of high rank) by jabbering nonsense at them. His manner was deceptively quiet, restrained, gentle, even humble-seeming; but in that honeyed voice of his he made remarks of devastating aptness, either angrily or mocking, never more than a word or two, with a look sometimes of such innocence that he appeared not to be aware of what he had said. Everyone feared him, and though he had a vast acquaintance, he had few or no friends. Yet he deserved to have friends because of his eagerness to oblige when he could be of service, and his readiness to open his purse. He loved to entertain distinguished foreigners and to do the honours of the Court; but ambition was the canker that ruined his entire career. He was, all the same, a very good and dependable kinsman.

I have spoken of his moods, his unforgettable jibes, his unlikeness to other men. Let me now give you an example of his uncertain temper. In the year before the king died, we had arranged a marriage between a great-niece of the Maréchale de Lorges and the Comte de Poitiers, last survivor of that illustrious house, immensely rich, and with vast estates. Both were orphans. The wedding was from Lauzun's house, and he entertained us all. A year later, almost at the moment of the king's death, the bridegroom died, which was a thousand pities for he was full of promise. In the following summer, M. le Duc d'Orléans reviewed the *Maison du Roi* on the plain that bounds the Bois de Boulogne, on the side opposite to Passy, where M. de Lauzun owned a very pretty house. He made an excursion there with a number of distinguished guests, and I joined them on the night before the review. Mme. de Poitiers, being very young and having seen nothing, was dying to watch the parade; but she dared not appear in public during this the first year of her mourning. The company eagerly discussed ways and means, and concluded at last that Mme. de Lauzun might safely take her concealed at the back of her coach, and that was how the matter was decided. Amid the ensuing laughter, M. de Lauzun returned from Paris, where he had spent the day, and everyone turned to tell him the joke. No sooner had they spoken than he flew into such a violent temper that he lost all control, forbidding the whole plan, his mouth almost frothing, uttering most scathing things to his wife, not only in



harsh terms, but furiously, most hurtlingly, almost raving. She began quietly to mop her eyes. Mme. de Poitiers sobbed, and the entire company was in extreme discomfort. The evening seemed to take a year to pass and, compared with the supper, the most solemn refectory meal was an occasion of merriment. Lauzun sat grim and furious in the midst of profound silence. No one uttered, save for a word at long intervals to an immediate neighbour. At dessert he left the table and retired to his bedroom. Thereafter people endeavoured to find excuses for him, or to say something calculated to relieve the tension; but Mme. de Lauzun very wisely and politely discouraged them, and promptly arranged for card-tables so as to prevent further discussion.

Next morning, I went to M. de Lauzun's room, expressly to give my opinion of the scene on the previous evening. He allowed me no time to do so. No sooner did he see me than he stretched out both arms, exclaiming that he was mad and did not deserve a visit, but should rather be sent to the Petites Maisons (the lunatic asylum of Paris - L.N.). He went on to praise his wife to the skies (as she truly deserved), declaring that he was unworthy of her, not fit to kiss the ground beneath her feet, proceeding to call himself by every name under the sun, and then, with tears in his eyes, assuring me that he merited pity rather than anger. He was more than eighty years old, he said, with neither kith nor kin; he had been captain of the guard, but were he to become so once more he could not fulfil the duties; yet to his shame and sorrow he must confess that he kept reminding himself of the old days, and in all the years since he had lost that appointment, he had never managed to forget it, console himself, or pluck the dagger from his heart. (Yet when he was 90, Lauzun was still breaking in horses. L.N.). Whenever the memory returned it put him in a temper, and to hear that his wife proposed taking Mme. de Poitiers to see a review of the bodyguard, in which he no longer had any place, had quite turned his head and reduced him to the frenzy which I had witnessed. He dared not appear after such an exhibition; he begged me on his knees to ask his wife to forgive a foolish old man who was dying with misery and shame. This sincere and most painful confession touched my heart. My only thought was how to comfort and set him up again. Reconciliation was not hard; but it was not without difficulty that we persuaded him to leave his room, and for days afterwards he appeared shamefaced - or so they told me, for I left that same evening, my occupation in those days allowing me very little leisure.

I have often reminded myself of that occasion, reflecting on how disastrous it is to become intoxicated with social success, and the wretched plight of this

man, whom neither wealth nor domestic bliss, nor the attainment of high rank, nor old age, nor yet bodily weakness could separate from the cares of this world, and who, far from tranquilly enjoying his gains and contemplating his great good fortune, exhausted himself with vain regrets and profitless resentment. Lauzun could never persuade himself that, with death so near, the regaining of the post which he so passionately longed for would be a mere delusion, binding him still more firmly to the life he was about to leave. People die as they have lived; it rarely happens otherwise. How vitally important it therefore is to try to live so as to be done with worldly ambition before it and life both forsake us, and to exist trying and hoping always to make a good end. Lauzun's foolish longing to be once more captain of the bodyguard so ruled his existence that he frequently wore a blue uniform trimmed with silver lace that, without being an exact copy of the full dress of a guards' officer, approached it as closely as he dared. Yet, though no one had the temerity to say so, it was far more like the livery of the royal hunt-servants, and might have made him look very silly had not his eccentricities become familiar to Society, where he was greatly feared.

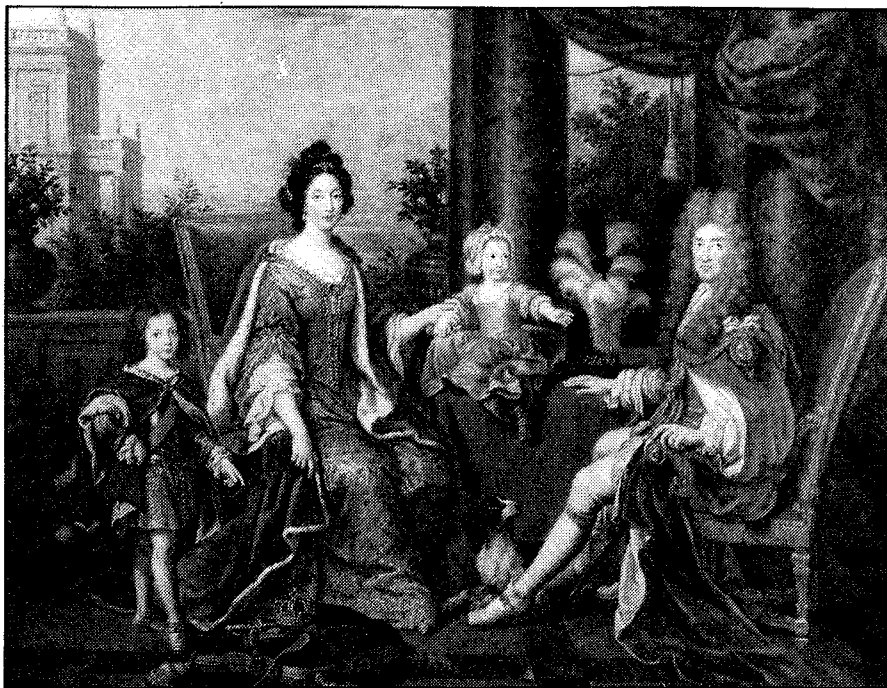
Despite all his scheming and servility, he was ready to turn on anyone with a blistering remark uttered in the gentlest of voices. Ministers, generals, rich and successful persons and their families were most often maltreated. He, as it were, assumed the right to say and do what he pleased, and no one dared to attack him. Only the Gramonts were safe, for he never forgot the hospitality and protection they had given him in earlier days, and he loved them, cared for them and treated them with respect. The old Comte de Gramont took advantage of this immunity, and did vengeance for the entire Court by railing at him on every possible occasion; Lauzun never replied in kind nor took offence, but he did quietly avoid his company. He was of great assistance to his sisters' children, for example that most worthy priest, the Bishop of Marseilles, who gave such notable service in the time of the plague, sparing neither his strength nor his fortune. Lauzun asked M. le Duc d'Orléans to give him an abbey, but when benefices were shortly afterwards distributed, Monsieur de Marseilles was forgotten. Lauzun, feigning ignorance, asked the Regent if he had been so good as to remember him. The Regent appeared discomfited. M. de Lauzun, as though helping him out of a difficulty, murmured in soft, respectful tones, 'Never mind, Sire, next time he will do better', a piece of sarcasm that left M. le Duc d'Orléans speechless, as Lauzun smilingly retired.

On one occasion he prevented a whole series of promotions to the rank of Marshal of France, merely by ridiculing the nominees. He said to the Regent in

those same quiet tones that if, as was rumoured, only decrepit generals were to be advanced, might he mention that he himself was the oldest and most decrepit of all and, moreover, had commanded armies as a full general. They could not proceed after that. He was actuated by envy and spite; but because his remarks were so apt and so bitter, people often repeated them.

We were very closely associated in our lives; he even rendered me, of his own volition, some real and very friendly services, and I treated him always with every care and consideration, as he did me. Yet I did not altogether escape his malicious tongue, and one jest of his bid fair to ruin me. I still cannot imagine how I escaped. The king's health was failing; he knew it; he was beginning to think of times to come. Society did not smile on M. le Duc d'Orléans; but the time of his greatness was visibly approaching. All eyes were upon him, and watching him suspiciously. They were watching me also, who for so long had been the only courtier publicly attached to him, and plainly enjoying his entire confidence. M. de Lauzun came to dine with me, but found me already at table with guests who apparently were not to his liking. He went on to Torcy, with whom at that time I had no acquaintance. He also was at table, with many guests unfriendly to M. le Duc d'Orléans, including Tallard and Tessé. 'Monsieur', said Lauzun to Torcy, with the gentle deprecating air he so often assumed, 'have pity on me, pray; I tried to dine with M. de Saint-Simon, but found him at table with a large gathering, whom I took good care not to join. I had no wish to be at the centre of a Cabal, and thus I come to you in the hope of dinner'. Everyone burst out laughing, and in the twinkling of an eye the tale had reached Versailles, so that Mme. de Maintenon and M. du Maine heard it within the hour; yet nothing was ever said. It was of no use to be angry; I took the whole matter as though a cat had scratched me, and never let Lauzun see that I knew anything.

Three or four years before he died, he had a malady that put him *in extremis*. We all visited him assiduously; but he would see no one except Mme. de Saint-Simon, and her only once. One day when he was very bad, Biron and his wife had the temerity to enter his room on tiptoe, and conceal themselves behind the curtains of his bed; but although they felt sure of being unobserved, Lauzun had seen them in the mirror over the fireplace. Now he did not mind Biron, but the wife he detested, notwithstanding that she was his niece and his heiress. He thought her self-seeking and inquisitive, and her manners in other ways deplorable, in which matter Society agreed with him. Their surreptitious entry shocked him deeply, for he realized that in her anxiety to inherit, she could not wait to learn how ill he really was.



*James II with his family in exile at St. Germain.*

He therefore resolved to give her cause for repentance, and himself some amusement. Picture him then talking aloud, as though he were alone, uttering fervent prayers to God, entreating forgiveness of his past life, seemingly quite convinced of death's approach, vowing that since pain and fatigue barred him from doing penance, he would at least ensure that all his worldly goods should go to the hospitals, to atone for his sins. He ended with a thanksgiving to God for showing him this, the only means by which he might gain salvation after a long life without religion. All this was uttered in a voice so penitent, so sincere, so resolute, that Biron and his wife were fully convinced of his intention to cut them out of their inheritance and fulfil his pious purpose. They had no desire to hear more; but went quite panic-stricken to tell the Duchesse de Lauzun of their cruel disappointment, and beg her to gain them some concessions. The patient, however, had already summoned the lawyers, and Mme. de Biron was at the end of her tether. You may well imagine that such was Lauzun's intention. He kept the lawyers waiting, then bade them enter and dictated a new will that was a death blow to Mme. de Biron. Yet he would not sign it at that time, not did he ever do so. He enormously enjoyed the drama, and laughed over it with his cronies when he was better, for despite his age and the gravity of his illness, he recovered completely.

He had the strength of iron with the deceiving appearance of delicate health. He dined and supped heartily every day, eating excellent viands and many dainty

dishes, always in cheerful company both morning and evening. He partook of everything, both fish and meat, guided only by his appetite, and with no curb put on that. In the morning he drank chocolate, and in his room there were always on some table or other dishes of the fruits in season, sweet cakes (in earlier days), along with beer, cider, lemonade, and frozen drinks of various kinds. During the afternoon, he ate and drank continually and encouraged others to do likewise. He went to bed each night immediately after getting up from table. I remember one occasion of many when he dined with us after the above-mentioned illness. He then ate so heartily of fish, so many vegetables, so very much of everything else provided, despite all our protests, that when evening came we sent to discover tactfully whether he had not a bad attack of indigestion. He was at table; again eating heartily!

His last illness came on suddenly, almost instantaneously, with cancer of the mouth, that most dreadful of all maladies. He bore it until the end with almost incredible patience and fortitude, without complaint, ill-humour, or outbursts against anyone – he who normally had been irritated even by himself. When he saw that the disease was growing worse, he retired to rooms he had rented for that purpose in the monastery of the Augustine friars, which could be entered from his house. There he was able to die in peace, safe from Mme. de Biron and all other ladies except his wife who, with one of her maids, had permission to go to him at any time. His only thought in this last place of retirement was to turn to good account

his terrible plight, devoting his remaining days to pious talk with his confessor and some of the friars, reading books of devotion, doing all that is best calculated to prepare for death. When we saw him, there was no unpleasantness, no misery, no suffering; only courtesy, peace, and quiet conversation. He appeared indifferent to events in the outside world, though he sometimes talked of them, but only, it seemed, for something to discuss, as he spoke little and with difficulty. He moralized very rarely, still more seldom mentioned his illness; but over and above all, during those two long months, his quiet courage never faltered. In the last ten or twelve days, however, he would no longer receive his brothers-in-law or his nephews, and very quickly sent his wife away. He received the Last Sacraments in a highly edifying manner, retaining his consciousness until the very end.

On the morning before his death, he sent for Biron and informed him that he had done for him all that Mme. de Lauzun had desired, bequeathing to him all his possessions apart from a modest legacy to Castlemoron, his other sister's son, and rewards for his servants. He emphasized the fact that whatever he had done for Biron since his marriage, and all that was in his will, was due entirely to Mme. de Lauzun, to whom Biron should be eternally grateful. As his uncle and as testator, Lauzun charged him never to cause her the smallest pain or anxiety; never to obstruct her wishes, nor ever to sue her in the courts for any cause whatsoever. Biron himself told me all this on the following morning, in the same words which I use here. He said that Lauzun, as soon as he was finished, had bidden him farewell in a firm voice, and had dismissed him. Very rightly he had refused all pomp for his funeral, and was buried quietly at the church of the Petits-Augustins. He had held none of the king's appointments, excepting his ancient captaincy of the *becs-de-corbin*, a post that was abolished two days after his death. A month earlier, he had sent for Dillon, King James's chargé d'affaires, a general with a distinguished record (Arthur, Lord Dillon (1670-1733), an Irishman in the service of the Old Pretender - L.N.) and had given back to him the collar of the Order of the Garter, and an onyx Saint George surrounded by large and perfect diamonds, asking for them to be returned to King James.

I perceive, at this point, that I have let my pen run on in describing this personage. The violent extremes of his life, and the close acquaintance brought about by our kinship appeared to warrant my making him better known, more especially since he figured too little in public affairs to be mentioned in the later histories.

(Reprinted from the *Historical Memoirs of the Duc de Saint-Simon* Vol. III, edited and translated with footnotes, by Lucy Norton, London, 1972).