

**THE DUCHESS DE LA
VALLIÈRE: A
PLAY, IN FIVE ACTS**

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The Duchess De La Vallière: A Play, in Five Acts by Edward George Bulwer-Lytton

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EDWARD GEORGE BULWER-LYTTON

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THE
DUCHESS DE LA VALLIERE:

A Play,

IN FIVE ACTS.

BY THE AUTHOR
OF
"THE LAST DAYS OF POMPEII," "RIENZA," &c.

"Ne pour les passions et pour le repentir."
VOLTAIRE, *Irene*, Act. 5, Sc. 1.

SECOND EDITION.

NEW YORK:
SAUNDERS AND OTLEY, ANN STREET,
AND CONDUIT STREET, LONDON.

1837.

DEDICATED
TO
W. C. MACREADY, ESQ.,
FOR SCIENCE AND GENIUS
UNSURPASSED IN HIS PROFESSION,
AND
FROM WHOM THE ARTISTS,
OF WHAT PROFESSION SOEVER,
MAY LEARN THAT
ART IS THE POETRY OF NATURE,
EXPRESSING
THE TRUE
THROUGH THE MEDIUM OF
THE IDEAL.

Paris.—Dec. 21st, 1835.

ADVERTISEMENT.

THIS Play (with the above Preface) was written in the autumn and winter of 1835. It was submitted to no other opinion than that of Mr. Macready, with whom the Author had the honor of a personal acquaintance; and who, on perusal, was obligingly anxious for its performance at Drury Lane. The manager of that theatre wished, naturally perhaps, to see the manuscript before he hazarded the play; the Author (perhaps no less naturally) declined a condition from a manager that he would not have listened to from a publisher. He considered that in trusting to the chance of a new experiment in literature, no risk was equal to his own. Subsequently, Mr. Morris, of the Haymarket Theatre, was desirous of the right of performing the play, and acceded at once to the terms proposed. A difficulty with respect to the actors obliged the author, however, to break off the negotiation, and to decide upon confining the publication of his Drama to the press. The disinterested and generous zeal of Mr. Macready, (to whose genius the character allotted to him is by no means adequate,) with the very prompt and liberal accedence, on the part of the present manager of Covent Garden, to the conditions of the author, have induced him, however, to alter his intention, and to rank himself with the Neophytes of that great class of writers whose rights, some years ago, when he little thought he should ever be one of so illustrious a fraternity, it was his fortune to protect and to extend.

Albany, October, 1836.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

Louis the Fourteenth.
The Duke de Lauzun,
Count Grammont, } (*Courtiers.*)
Marquis de Montespan,
The Marquis de Bragelone (*betrothed to Mademoiselle de
la Valliere.*)
Bertrand, (*the Armorer.*)
Courtiers, Gentlemen of the Chamber, Priests, &c.

Madame de La Valliere.
Mademoiselle (afterwards Duchess) de la Valliere.
Madame de Montespan.
The Queen.
Abbeas:
Nuns, Ladies, Maids of Honor, &c.

PROLOGUE.

To paint the Past, yet in the Past portray
Such shapes as seem dŕm prophets of To-Day ;—
To trace, through all the garish streams of art,
Nature's deep fountain—woman's silent heart ;—
On the stirr'd surface of the soften'd mind
To leave the print of holier truths behind ;—
And, while through joy or grief—through calm or strife,
Bound the wild Passions on the course of Life,
To share the race—yet point the proper goal,
And make the Affections preachers to the Soul ;—
Such is the aim with which a gaudier age
Now woos the brief revival of the stage ;—
Such is the moral, though unseen 't flows,
In Lauzun's wiles and soft La Valliere's woes ;
Such the design our Author boldly drew,
And, losing boldness, now submits to you.

Not new to climes where dreamy FABLE dwells—
That magic Prospero of the Isle of Spells—
Now first the wanderer treads with anxious fear,
The fairy land whose flowers allured him here.
Dread is the court our alien pleads before ;
Your verdict makes his exile from the shore.
Yet ev'n if banish'd, let him think, in pride,
He trod the path with no unballow'd guide ;
Chasing the light, whose face, though veil'd and dim,
Perchance a meteor, seem'd a star to him,
Hoping the ray might rest where TRUTH appears
Beneath her native well—your smiles and tears.

When a wide waste, to Law itself unknown,
Lay that fair world the DRAMA calls its own ;
When all might riot on the mines of Thought,
And Genius starv'd amidst the wealth it wrought

PROLOGUE.

He who now ventures on the haunted soil
 For nobler laborers won the rights of toil,
 And his the heast—that Fame now rests in ease
 Beneath the shade of her own laurel trees.
 Yes—if, with all the critic on their brow,
 His clients once, have grown his judges now,
 And watch, like spirits on the Elysian side,
 Their brother ferried o'er the Stygian tide,
 To where, on souls untried, austerely sit
 (The triple Minns)—Gallery—Boxes—Pit—
 'Twill soothe to think, how'er the verdict end,
 In every rival he hath served a friend.

But well we know, and, knowing, we rejoice,
 The mightiest Critic is the swain's voice.
 Aw'd, yet resigned, our novice trusts in you,
 Hard to the practis'd, gentle to the new.
 Whate'er the anxious strife of hope and fear,
 He asks no favor—let the stage be clear.
 If from the life his shapes the Poet draws,
 In man's deep breast lie all the critic's laws:
 If not, in vain the nicely-pois'd design,
 Vain the cold music of the labored line,
 Before our eyes behold the living rules;—
 The soul has instincts wiser than the schools!
 Yours is the Great Tribunal of the Heart,
 And touch'd Emotion makes the test of Art.
 Judges august!—the same in every age,
 While Passions weave the sorcery of the Stage,—
 While nature's sympathies are Art's best laws,—
 To you a stranger has referred his cause:—
 If the soft tale he woos the soul to hear
 Bequeaths the moral, while it claims the tear,
 Each gentler thought, to faults in others shown.
 He calls in court—a pleader for his own.

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DUCHESS DE LA VALLIERE.