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THE LIFE AND TIMES
OF
MADAME DU BARRY

BY

ROBERT B. DOUGLAS

“Χαίροις, γύναι, εκ γὰρ ακουῆς
“οικτεῖρω σέ γ’,” ἔφην, “ἦν πάρος οὐκ ἰδόμην
”Α πόσον ἠθέωη νόον ἠκακές’ ἀλλ’ ἴδε Δίθην
ναίεις, ἀγλαίην ἐν χθονὶ κατθεμένη.”

AGATHIAS.

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P R E F A C E

The ethics of comparative morality, or immorality, are not easy to understand. Why, it might be asked, are the virtuous English so tender towards the failings of Nell Gwyn, whilst the French, who do not regard concubinage as at all a heinous offence, overload with obloquy the memory of Jeanne du Barry? In birth, in circumstances of early life, and in character, the two women closely resemble one another, yet the English "general reader" still preserves a kind of sneaking regard for the one, and has learned, at second hand, to detest the other.

This is due to the fact that he has derived all his knowledge of Du Barry from French historians, who have handed down to each other—as methodically, and almost as intelligently, as a row of workmen passing bricks from a cart to a building—the statements of Pidansat du Mairobert and that industrious compiler of fictitious Memoirs, Mlle. Guénard. Translations of several of these supposed Memoirs have lately appeared, and it is to be feared have been accepted by the uncritical portion of the public as genuine. It is not improbable that the *Mémoires historiques de Jeanne Gomard de Vaubarnier* may be included in the series, and as Mlle. Guénard was indebted to her imagination for her facts in the compilation of that book, I judge this to be a good opportunity to bring out a "Life of Madame du Barry," which, despite many shortcomings, should aim at giving a truthful account of the last mistress of Louis XV.

Lest it should be imagined that I am stricken with

the prevalent mania for rehabilitating, and have tried to whitewash Jeanne du Barry, I may state in advance that I have not been so foolish as to attempt anything of the kind. I have simply tried to show that she was not as black as she was painted, and that the portraits of her which have been given by three generations of historians have been overcharged with shadows.

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