left him a legacy of 2000 livres to purchase a library. Having been sent to the schools of law, he was so disgusted with the dryness of the study, that he devoted himself entirely to the muses. He was admitted into the com­pany of the Abbé Chaulieu, the marquis de la Fare, the duke de Sully, the grand prior of Vendôme, Marshal Villars, and the chevalier du Bouillon ; and caught from them that easy taste and delicate humour which distinguished the court of Louis XIV. Voltaire had early imbibed a turn for satire ; and, for some philippics against the govern­ment, was imprisoned by the regent, the duke of Orleans, almost a year in the Bastille. He had before this period pro­duced the tragedy of *Oedipe,* which was represented in 1718 with great success ; and the duke of Orleans happening to see it performed, was so delighted that he obtained his release from prison. The poet waiting on the duke to re­turn thanks, “ Be wise (said the duke), and I will take care of you.” “ I am infinitely obliged (replied the young man) ; but I entreat your royal highness not to trouble yourself any further about my lodging or board.”

In 1722 he made an excursion to Brussels, where he became acquainted with Jean Baptiste Rousseau; but Rousseau was jealous of a rival, and the poets soon became disgusted with each other. On his return to Paris in the same year, he produced his tragedy of *Mariamne,* which was not very favourably received. He began his *Henriade* before he was eighteen. Having one day read several cantos of this poem when on a visit to his intimate friend, the young president de Maisons, he was so teased with objections, that he lost patience, and threw his manu­script in to the fire. The president Henault with difficulty rescued it. “ Remember (said Mr Henault to him in one of his letters) it was I that saved the Henriade, and that it cost me a handsome pair of ruffles.” Some years after, several copies of this poem having got abroad, while it was only a sketch, an edition of it was published, with many chasms, under the title of “ La Ligue.” It gave great offence to the bigots ; and the poet was considered as highly criminal for praising Admiral Coligny and Queen Elizabeth.

His reckless vivacity and frequent attacks on religion, subjected him to many mortifications ; and he was a second time imprisoned in the Bastille, in consequence of a broil with the Chevalier de Rohan. After an imprisonment of six months he was released on condition of quitting the kingdom, on which he chose England for his retreat, and took with him the *Henriade,* in order to finish the work, and republish it in a land of liberty. He was favourably re­ceived by George I., and still more so by the princess of Wales, afterwards Queen Caroline, who procured for him a great many subscriptions, which laid the foundation of his fortune ; for, on being permitted to return to France in 1728, he put the money he had acquired, into a lottery- established by Μ. Desfortes, comptroller-general of the finances, by which, and other fortunate speculations, he realized considerable property.

His *Lettres Philosophiques,* abounding in bold expres­sions and indecent witticisms against religion, having been burnt by a decree of the Parliament of Paris, and a warrant being issued for apprehending the author in 1733, Voltaire prudently withdrew, and was sheltered by the marchioness du Chatelet, in her castle of Cirey, on the borders of Champagne and Lorraine, who entered with him on the study of the system of Leibnitz, and the Principia of Newton. A gallery was built, in which Voltaire formed a good collection of natural history, and made an infinite number of experiments on light and electricity. He aboured in the mean time on his Elements of the New­tonian Philosophy, then totally unknown in France, and which the numerous admirers of Des Cartes were little desirous should be known. In the midst of these philo­

sophic pursuits he produced the tragedy of *Alzire.* He was now in the meridian of his age and genius, as was evident from the tragedy of *Mahomet,* first acted in 1741 ; but it was represented to the procureur-general as a per­formance offensive to religion ; and the author, by order of Cardinal Fleury, withdrew it from the stage. *Merape,* played two years after, 1743, is a species of tragedy, un­precedented on the French stage, being without any inter­mixture of love, yet abounding in pathos. It was at the representation of this tragedy, that the pit and boxes were clamorous for a sight of the author ; yet it was severely criticised when it came from the press. He now became a favourite at court, through the interest of Madame d’Etoiles, afterwards marchioness of Pompadour. He was appointed a gentleman of the bed-chamber in ordinary, and historiographer of France. He had frequently at­tempted to gain admittance into the Academy of Sciences, but could not obtain his wish till 1746, when he was the first who broke through the absurd custom of filling an inaugural speech with the fulsome adulation of Richelieu ; an example soon followed by other academicians. From the satires occasioned by this innovation he felt so much uneasiness, that he was glad to retire with the marchioness du Chatelet to Luneville, in the neighbourhood of King Stanislas. The marchioness dying in 1749, Voltaire re­turned to Paris, where his stay was but short. The king of Prussia now gave Voltaire an invitation to live with him, which he accepted towards the end of August 1750 On his arrival at Berlin, he was immediately presented with the Order of Merit, the key of chamberlain, and a pension of 20,000 livres. Here great respect was paid to him. His apartments were under those of the king, whom he was allowed to visit at stated hours, to read with him the best works of either ancient or modern authors, and to assist his majesty in the literary productions by which he relieved the cares of government. But a dispute which arose between him and Maupertuis soon occasioned his disgrace. Maupertuis was at some pains to have it re­ported at court, that one day while General Manstein happened to be in the apartments of M. de Voltaire, who was then translating into French the Memoirs of Russia, composed by that officer, the king in his usual manner sent a copy of verses to be examined, when Vol­taire said to Manstein, “ Let us leave off for the present, my friend ; you see the king has sent me his dirty linen to wash, I will wash yours another time.” It was about this time that Maupertuis published his very strange Philo­sophical Letters ; and Μ. de Voltaire did not fail to heighten, with his utmost powers of raillery, every thing which he found, or could make ridiculous, in the projects of Maupertuis, who was careful to unite his own cause with that of the king, and succeeded in provoking his dis­pleasure against Voltaire, who was considered as having failed in respect to his majesty ; and therefore, in the most respectful manner, he returned to the king his chamber­lain’s key, and the cross of his Order of Merit, accom­panied with four lines of verse, in which he, with great delicacy, compares bis situation to that of a jealous lover, who sends back the picture of his mistress. The king re­turned the key and the ribbon ; but this act was not fol­lowed by an immediate reconciliation. Voltaire now paid a visit to her highness the duchess of Gotha, who honour­ed him with her friendship as long as she lived. While he remained at Gotha, Maupertuis employed all his batte­ries against him : Voltaire was arrested by the king’s or­ders, but was afterwards released.

He now wished to obtain permission to reside at Paris, which might have been granted, had not his witty and licen­tious poem,“ La’Pucelle d'Orleans,” caused a great clameur against him. He therefore purchased a country house near Geneva ; but his restless disposition having afterwards in-