

## 'THE SUN KING'

Louis XIV had gone completely bald by the age of 23, but no-one knew, even those within his inner circle of servants. Louis had dealt with the issue by making wigs fashionable, 'Le nouveau cool' as he called it. Each morning he would put on his wig before greeting the world.

But one morning, in mid-summer, the sun was beating down so hard that Louis knew he had to act. Checking that no-one was about, he went out on to his royal balcony to remove his wig and enjoy the sun. He had only been there a short time when his most trusted servant, Rene, came to attend to his majesty, forgetting to knock before he entered.

What greeted Rene was the back of a shining, reddening pate, perched like a globe on the top of a pair of royal shoulders. Shocked, Rene blurted out, 'The sun', before the startled King spun round to meet the eyes of his unexpected intruder. In that split second, and despite the heat of the day, Rene was cool enough to say, 'Your great majesty, you shine on us all like the sun'.

In spite of his fury at his secret having been discovered, the King recognised the impact that such a statement could make. That moment of quick-wittedness had saved Rene from possible execution and created a legend that has crossed the barriers of time.

'You recognise that I have been created by God to rule over you all. You have understood my prowess, my power, my presence. From now on you shall refer to me as "Le Roi Soleil", 'The Sun King,'" announced Louis, as Rene humbly promised to tell no-one of the truth regarding the King's baldness.

'Oh, your majesty,' said Rene, 'You are indeed a genius. No-one else here on Planet Earth would have the imagination to create such a name for himself. But your deep modesty doth make all your servants humble,' he said on bended knee.

Louis smiled, before putting on his high heels, which were fashionable for men at the time. 'Even commoners recognise my true genius,' he thought.

'Do you have some powder for my royal *visage*?' he asked, and Rene duly obliged.

'You are so handsome, your majesty,' came the reply.

'This is the way the world should be,' reflected the King.

Later that day, Louis XIV addressed his subjects, announcing his new title.

'From now on you are all to refer to me as "The Sun King",' he told the assembled throng, and that name has remained to this day.

But only a few know the real truth, that the Sun King received his title because a humble servant had been unable to see properly because the King's shining pate had blinded him, just as the King was blind to his own arrogance and historians blind to the real story of how Louis XIV got his name.

We say 'merci' because things are so different for the privileged few today.

Or are they?