

***FRANÇOIS
DUC
DE LA ROCHEFOUCAULD***



***REFLECTIONS;
OR SENTENCES
AND MORAL
MAXIMS***

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François duc de La Rochefoucauld

Reflections; or Sentences and Moral Maxims

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Translator's Preface.

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Some apology must be made for an attempt "to translate the untranslatable." Notwithstanding there are no less than eight English translations of La Rochefoucauld, hardly any are readable, none are free from faults, and all fail more or less to convey the author's meaning. Though so often translated, there is not a complete English edition of the Maxims and Reflections. All the translations are confined exclusively to the Maxims, none include the Reflections. This may be accounted for, from the fact that most of the translations are taken from the old editions of the Maxims, in which the Reflections do not appear. Until M. Suard devoted his attention to the text of Rochefoucauld, the various editions were but reprints of the preceding ones, without any regard to the alterations made by the author in the later editions published during his life-time. So much was this the case, that Maxims which had been rejected by Rochefoucauld in his last edition, were still retained in the body of the work. To give but one example, the celebrated Maxim as to the misfortunes of our friends, was omitted in the last edition of the book, published in Rochefoucauld's life-time, yet in every English edition this Maxim appears in the body of the work.

M. Aimé Martin in 1827 published an edition of the Maxims and Reflections which has ever since been the standard text of Rochefoucauld in France. The Maxims are printed from the edition of 1678, the last published during the author's life, and the last which received his corrections.

To this edition were added two Supplements; the first containing the Maxims which had appeared in the editions of 1665, 1666, and 1675, and which were afterwards omitted; the second, some additional Maxims found among various of the author's manuscripts in the Royal Library at Paris. And a Series of Reflections which had been previously published in a work called "Receuil de pièces d'histoire et de littérature." Paris, 1731. They were first published with the Maxims in an edition by Gabriel Brotier.

In an edition of Rochefoucauld entitled "Reflexions, ou Sentences et Maximes Morales, augmentées de plus deux cent nouvelles Maximes et Maximes et Pensées diverses suivant les copies Imprimées à Paris, chez Claude Barbin, et Matre Cramoisy 1692,"* some fifty Maxims were added, ascribed by the editor to Rochefoucauld, and as his family allowed them to be published under his name, it seems probable they were genuine. These fifty form the third supplement to this book.

*In all the French editions this book is spoken of as published in 1693. The only copy I have seen is in the Cambridge University Library, 47, 16, 81, and is called "Reflexions Morales."

The apology for the present edition of Rochefoucauld must therefore be twofold: firstly, that it is an attempt to give the public a complete English edition of Rochefoucauld's works as a moralist. The body of the work comprises the Maxims as the author finally left them, the first supplement, those published in former editions, and rejected by the author in the later; the second, the

unpublished Maxims taken from the author's correspondence and manuscripts, and the third, the Maxims first published in 1692. While the Reflections, in which the thoughts in the Maxims are extended and elaborated, now appear in English for the first time. And secondly, that it is an attempt (to quote the preface of the edition of 1749) "to do the Duc de la Rochefoucauld the justice to make him speak English."

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The description of the "ancien regime" in France, "a despotism tempered by epigrams," like most epigrammatic sentences, contains some truth, with much fiction. The society of the last half of the seventeenth, and the whole of the eighteenth centuries, was doubtless greatly influenced by the precise and terse mode in which the popular writers of that date expressed their thoughts. To a people naturally inclined to think that every possible view, every conceivable argument, upon a question is included in a short aphorism, a shrug, and the word "voilà," truths expressed in condensed sentences must always have a peculiar charm. It is, perhaps, from this love of epigram, that we find so many eminent French writers of maxims. Pascal, De Retz, La

Rochefoucauld, La Bruyère, Montesquieu, and Vauvenargues, each contributed to the rich stock of French epigrams. No other country can show such a list of brilliant writers—in England certainly we cannot. Our most celebrated, Lord Bacon, has, by his other works, so surpassed his maxims, that their fame is, to a great measure, obscured. The only Englishman who could have rivalled La Rochefoucauld or La Bruyère was the Earl of Chesterfield, and he only could have done so from his very intimate connexion with France; but unfortunately his brilliant genius was spent in the impossible task of trying to refine a boorish young Briton, in "cutting blocks with a razor."

Of all the French epigrammatic writers La Rochefoucauld is at once the most widely known, and the most distinguished. Voltaire, whose opinion on the century of Louis XIV. is entitled to the greatest weight, says, "One of the works that most largely contributed to form the taste of the nation, and to diffuse a spirit of justice and precision, is the collection of maxims, by Francois Duc de la Rochefoucauld."

This Francois, the second Duc de la Rochefoucauld, Prince de Marsillac, the author of the maxims, was one of the most illustrious members of the most illustrious families among the French noblesse. Descended from the ancient Dukes of Guienne, the founder of the Family Fulk or Foucauld, a younger branch of the House of Lusignan, was at the commencement of the eleventh century the Seigneur of a small town, La Roche, in the Angoumois. Our chief knowledge of this feudal lord is drawn from the monkish

chronicles. As the benefactor of the various abbeys and monasteries in his province, he is naturally spoken of by them in terms of eulogy, and in the charter of one of the abbeys of Angouleme he is called, "vir nobilissimus Fulcaldus." His territorial power enabled him to adopt what was then, as is still in Scotland, a common custom, to prefix the name of his estate to his surname, and thus to create and transmit to his descendants the illustrious surname of La Rochefoucauld.

From that time until that great crisis in the history of the French aristocracy, the Revolution of 1789, the family of La Rochefoucauld have been, "if not first, in the very first line" of that most illustrious body. One Seigneur served under Philip Augustus against Richard Coeur de Lion, and was made prisoner at the battle of Gisors. The eighth Seigneur Guy performed a great tilt at Bordeaux, attended (according to Froissart) to the Lists by some two hundred of his kindred and relations. The sixteenth Seigneur Francois was chamberlain to Charles VIII. and Louis XII., and stood at the font as sponsor, giving his name to that last light of French chivalry, Francis I. In 1515 he was created a baron, and was afterwards advanced to a count, on account of his great service to Francis and his predecessors.

The second count pushed the family fortune still further by obtaining a patent as the Prince de Marsillac. His widow, Anne de Polignac, entertained Charles V. at the family chateau at Verteuil, in so princely a manner that on leaving Charles observed, "He had never entered a house so redolent of high virtue, uprightness, and lordliness as that mansion."

The third count, after serving with distinction under the Duke of Guise against the Spaniards, was made prisoner at St. Quintin, and only regained his liberty to fall a victim to the "bloody infamy" of St. Bartholomew. His son, the fourth count, saved with difficulty from that massacre, after serving with distinction in the religious wars, was taken prisoner in a skirmish at St. Yriex la Perche, and murdered by the Leaguers in cold blood.

The fifth count, one of the ministers of Louis XIII., after fighting against the English and Buckingham at the Ile de Ré, was created a duke. His son Francis, the second duke, by his writings has made the family name a household word.

The third duke fought in many of the earlier campaigns of Louis XIV. at Torcy, Lille, Cambray, and was dangerously wounded at the passage of the Rhine. From his bravery he rose to high favour at Court, and was appointed Master of the Horse (Grand Veneur) and Lord Chamberlain. His son, the fourth duke, commanded the regiment of Navarre, and took part in storming the village of Neerwinden on the day when William III. was defeated at Landen. He was afterwards created Duc de la Rochequyon and Marquis de Liancourt.

The fifth duke, banished from Court by Louis XV., became the friend of the philosopher Voltaire.

The sixth duke, the friend of Condorcet, was the last of the long line of noble lords who bore that distinguished name. In those terrible days of September, 1792, when the French people were proclaiming universal humanity, the duke was seized as an aristocrat by the mob at Gisors and put to death behind his own carriage, in which sat his mother and his wife, at the very place where, some six

centuries previously, his ancestor had been taken prisoner in a fair fight. A modern writer has spoken of this murder "as an admirable reprisal upon the grandson for the writings and conduct of the grandfather." But M. Sainte Beuve observes as to this, he can see nothing admirable in the death of the duke, and if it proves anything, it is only that the grandfather was not so wrong in his judgment of men as is usually supposed.

Francis, the author, was born on the 15th December 1615. M. Sainte Beuve divides his life into four periods, first, from his birth till he was thirty-five, when he became mixed up in the war of the Fronde; the second period, during the progress of that war; the third, the twelve years that followed, while he recovered from his wounds, and wrote his maxims during his retirement from society; and the last from that time till his death.

In the same way that Herodotus calls each book of his history by the name of one of the muses, so each of these four periods of La Rochefoucauld's life may be associated with the name of a woman who was for the time his ruling passion. These four ladies are the Duchesse de Chevreuse, the Duchesse de Longueville, Madame de Sablé, and Madame de La Fayette.

La Rochefoucauld's early education was neglected; his father, occupied in the affairs of state, either had not, or did not devote any time to his education. His natural talents and his habits of observation soon, however, supplied all deficiencies. By birth and station placed in the best society of the French Court, he soon became a most finished courtier. Knowing how precarious Court favour then was, his

father, when young Rochefoucauld was only nine years old, sent him into the army. He was subsequently attached to the regiment of Auvergne. Though but sixteen he was present, and took part in the military operations at the siege of Cassel. The Court of Louis XIII. was then ruled imperiously by Richelieu. The Duke de la Rochefoucauld was strongly opposed to the Cardinal's party. By joining in the plots of Gaston of Orleans, he gave Richelieu an opportunity of ridding Paris of his opposition. When those plots were discovered, the Duke was sent into a sort of banishment to Blois. His son, who was then at Court with him, was, upon the pretext of a liaison with Mdlle. d'Hautefort, one of the ladies in waiting on the Queen (Anne of Austria), but in reality to prevent the Duke learning what was passing at Paris, sent with his father. The result of the exile was Rochefoucauld's marriage. With the exception that his wife's name was Mdlle. Vivonne, and that she was the mother of five sons and three daughters, nothing is known of her. While Rochefoucauld and his father were at Blois, the Duchesse de Chevreuse, one of the beauties of the Court, and the mistress of Louis, was banished to Tours. She and Rochefoucauld met, and soon became intimate, and for a time she was destined to be the one motive of his actions. The Duchesse was engaged in a correspondence with the Court of Spain and the Queen. Into this plot Rochefoucauld threw himself with all his energy; his connexion with the Queen brought him back to his old love Mdlle. d'Hautefort, and led him to her party, which he afterwards followed. The course he took shut him off from all chance of Court favour. The King regarded him with coldness, the Cardinal with

irritation. Although the Bastille and the scaffold, the fate of Chalais and Montmorency, were before his eyes, they failed to deter him from plotting. He was about twenty-three; returning to Paris, he warmly sided with the Queen. He says in his Memoirs that the only persons she could then trust were himself and Mdlle. d'Hautefort, and it was proposed he should take both of them from Paris to Brussels. Into this plan he entered with all his youthful indiscretion, it being for several reasons the very one he would wish to adopt, as it would strengthen his influence with Anne of Austria, place Richelieu and his master in an uncomfortable position, and save Mdlle. d'Hautefort from the attentions the King was showing her.

But Richelieu of course discovered this plot, and Rochefoucauld was, of course, sent to the Bastille. He was liberated after a week's imprisonment, but banished to his chateau at Verteuil.

The reason for this clemency was that the Cardinal desired to win Rochefoucauld from the Queen's party. A command in the army was offered to him, but by the Queen's orders refused.

For some three years Rochefoucauld remained at Verteuil, waiting the time for his reckoning with Richelieu; speculating on the King's death, and the favours he would then receive from the Queen. During this period he was more or less engaged in plotting against his enemy the Cardinal, and hatching treason with Cinq Mars and De Thou.

M. Sainte Beuve says, that unless we study this first part of Rochefoucauld's life, we shall never understand his maxims. The bitter disappointment of the passionate love,

the high hopes then formed, the deceit and treachery then witnessed, furnished the real key to their meaning. The cutting cynicism of the morality was built on the ruins of that chivalrous ambition and romantic affection. He saw his friend Cinq Mars sent to the scaffold, himself betrayed by men whom he had trusted, and the only reason he could assign for these actions was intense selfishness.

Meanwhile, Richelieu died. Rochefoucauld returned to Court, and found Anne of Austria regent, and Mazarin minister. The Queen's former friends flocked there in numbers, expecting that now their time of prosperity had come. They were bitterly disappointed. Mazarin relied on hope instead of gratitude, to keep the Queen's adherents on his side. The most that any received were promises that were never performed. In after years, doubtless, Rochefoucauld's recollection of his disappointment led him to write the maxim: "We promise according to our hopes, we perform according to our fears." But he was not even to receive promises; he asked for the Governorship of Havre, which was then vacant. He was flatly refused. Disappointment gave rise to anger, and uniting with his old flame, the Duchesse de Chevreuse, who had received the same treatment, and with the Duke of Beaufort, they formed a conspiracy against the government. The plot was, of course, discovered and crushed. Beaufort was arrested, the Duchesse banished. Irritated and disgusted, Rochefoucauld went with the Duc d'Enghein, who was then joining the army, on a campaign, and here he found the one love of his life, the Duke's sister, Mdme. de Longueville. This lady, young, beautiful, and accomplished, obtained a great

ascendancy over Rochefoucauld, and was the cause of his taking the side of Condé in the subsequent civil war. Rochefoucauld did not stay long with the army. He was badly wounded at the siege of Mardik, and returned from thence to Paris. On recovering from his wounds, the war of the Fronde broke out. This war is said to have been most ridiculous, as being carried on without a definite object, a plan, or a leader. But this description is hardly correct; it was the struggle of the French nobility against the rule of the Court; an attempt, the final attempt, to recover their lost influence over the state, and to save themselves from sinking under the rule of cardinals and priests.

With the general history of that war we have nothing to do; it is far too complicated and too confused to be stated here. The memoirs of Rochefoucauld and De Retz will give the details to those who desire to trace the contests of the factions—the course of the intrigues. We may confine ourselves to its progress so far as it relates to the Duc de la Rochefoucauld.

On the Cardinal causing the Princes de Condé and Conti, and the Duc de Longueville, to be arrested, Rochefoucauld and the Duchess fled into Normandy. Leaving her at Dieppe, he went into Poitou, of which province he had some years previously bought the post of governor. He was there joined by the Duc de Bouillon, and he and the Duke marched to, and occupied Bordeaux. Cardinal Mazarin and Marechal de la Meilleraie advanced in force on Bordeaux, and attacked the town. A bloody battle followed. Rochefoucauld defended the town with the greatest bravery, and repulsed the Cardinal. Notwithstanding the repulse, the burghers of

Bordeaux were anxious to make peace, and save the city from destruction. The Parliament of Bordeaux compelled Rochefoucauld to surrender. He did so, and returned nominally to Poitou, but in reality in secret to Paris.

There he found the Queen engaged in trying to maintain her position by playing off the rival parties of the Prince Condé and the Cardinal De Retz against each other. Rochefoucauld eagerly espoused his old party—that of Condé. In August, 1651, the contending parties met in the Hall of the Parliament of Paris, and it was with great difficulty they were prevented from coming to blows even there. It is even said that Rochefoucauld had ordered his followers to murder De Retz.

Rochefoucauld was soon to undergo a bitter disappointment. While occupied with party strife and faction in Paris, Madame de Chevreuse left him, and formed an alliance with the Duc de Nemours. Rochefoucauld still loved her. It was, probably, thinking of this that he afterwards wrote, "Jealousy is born with love, but does not die with it." He endeavoured to get Madame de Chatillon, the old mistress of the Duc de Nemours, reinstated in favour, but in this he did not succeed. The Duc de Nemours was soon after killed in a duel. The war went on, and after several indecisive skirmishes, the decisive battle was fought at Paris, in the Faubourg St. Antoine, where the Parisians first learnt the use or the abuse of their favourite defence, the barricade. In this battle, Rochefoucauld behaved with great bravery. He was wounded in the head, a wound which for a time deprived him of his sight. Before he recovered, the war was over, Louis XIV. had attained his majority, the gold of

Mazarin, the arms of Turenne, had been successful, the French nobility were vanquished, the court supremacy established.

This completed Rochefoucauld's active life.

When he recovered his health, he devoted himself to society. Madame de Sablé assumed a hold over him. He lived a quiet life, and occupied himself in composing an account of his early life, called his "Memoirs," and his immortal "Maxims."

From the time he ceased to take part in public life, Rochefoucauld's real glory began. Having acted the various parts of soldier, politician, and lover with but small success, he now commenced the part of moralist, by which he is known to the world.

Living in the most brilliant society that France possessed, famous from his writings, distinguished from the part he had taken in public affairs, he formed the centre of one of those remarkable French literary societies, a society which numbered among its members La Fontaine, Racine, Boileau. Among his most attached friends was Madame de La Fayette (the authoress of the "Princess of Cleves"), and this friendship continued until his death. He was not, however, destined to pass away in that gay society without some troubles. At the passage of the Rhine in 1672 two of his sons were engaged; the one was killed, the other severely wounded. Rochefoucauld was much affected by this, but perhaps still more by the death of the young Duc de Longueville, who perished on the same occasion.

Sainte Beuve says that the cynical book and that young life were the only fruits of the war of the Fronde. Madame de