

**SELECTIONS FROM
SAINT-SIMON**

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Selections from Saint-Simon by Arthur Tilley

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ARTHUR TILLEY

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SAINT-SIMON**

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SELECTIONS FROM
SAINT-SIMON

[Saint-Simon, Louis de Rouvroy, duc de]

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P R E F A C E

It is not every lover of French literature who has the leisure or the courage to read the whole of Saint-Simon's *Mémoires*, the text of which fills eighteen and a half volumes of the edition of MM. Chéruel and Ad. Régnier *filz*. Nor is it all of equal interest. I thought, therefore, that a selection might prove acceptable to the busy or faint-hearted reader, and perhaps even whet his appetite for the work itself. In making the selection I have practically confined myself to the first two-thirds of the *Mémoires*, that is to say, to the reign of Louis XIV, and I have chosen the passages with a view to illustrating that reign during the period of its declining splendour. In the first four chapters we have the Roi-Soleil and Mme de Maintenon presented to us in their daily life. There follows the account of the review at Compiègne, which gives us some measure of Louis's boundless extravagance, and the greater part of the famous chapters on the death of Monseigneur, surely one of the greatest things in literature. Lastly there are thirteen portraits, including such masterpieces as Conti, Cardinal d'Estrées, Fénelon, the Duke and Duchess of Burgundy, and the Duke of Orléans. In my notes I have confined myself to the modest task of illustrating Saint-Simon from himself, and of supplying such other biographical details

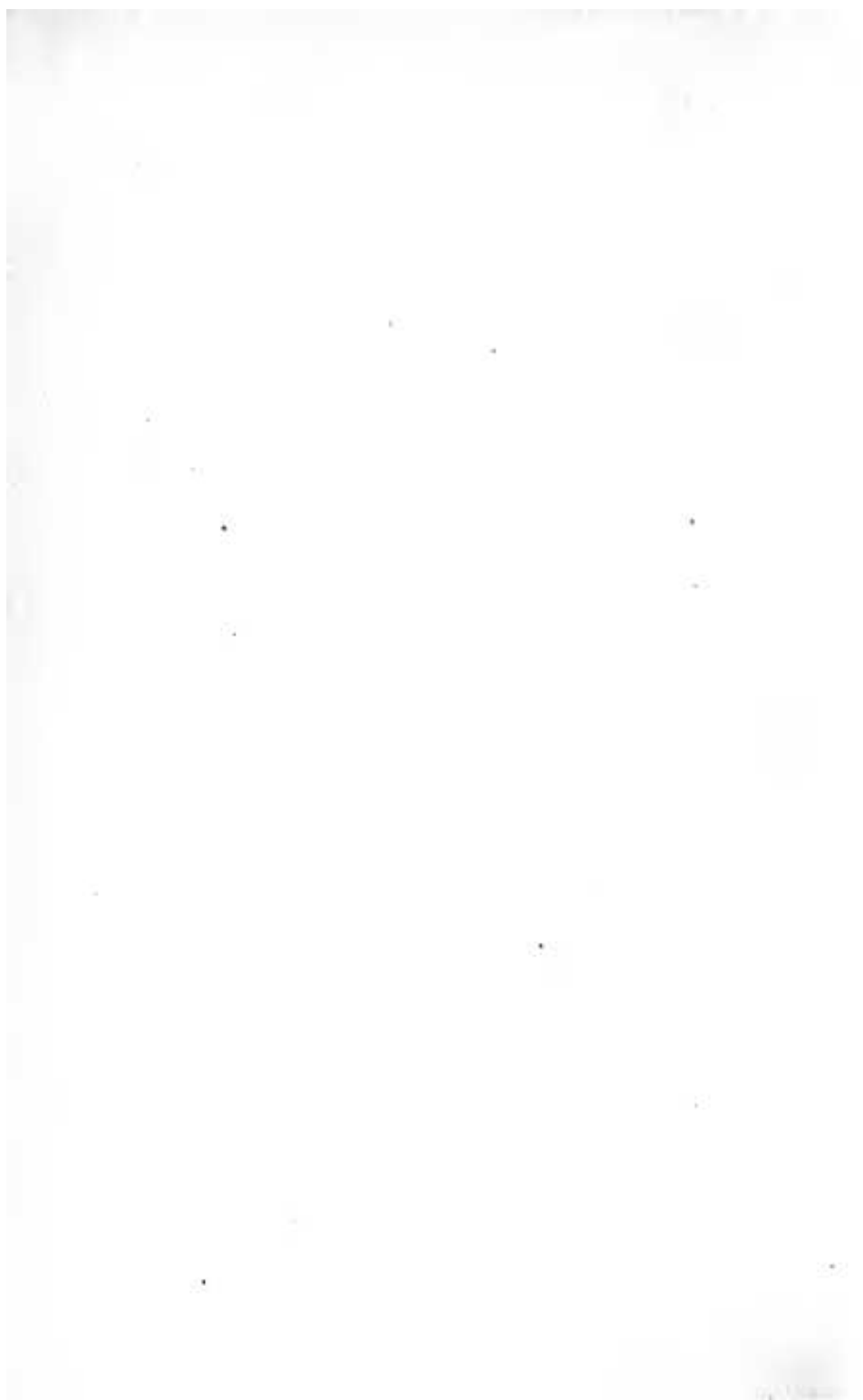
as seemed necessary. No one can annotate Saint-Simon without being indebted to M. de Boislisle's masterly edition now in progress, but for my purpose the full and careful index of MM. Chéruel and Régnier has been of even greater service. The index to vols. I.-XXVIII. of M. de Boislisle's edition appeared after my work was practically finished.

A. T.

CAMBRIDGE,
December, 1919.

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INTRODUCTION

"PEOPLE who are old enough to write memoirs have usually lost their memory." This epigrammatic remark with which a recent writer, not old enough to have lost his memory, opens his reminiscences, has considerable truth in it. Historians now recognise that "memoirs do not supply the certainty of history," for if the writers have dim memories, they have also lively imaginations. Saint-Simon, the prince of memoir-writers, did not, it is true, begin to transcribe his memoirs till he was well past sixty, but from the age of twenty he had collected materials and made systematic notes. His memoirs were not merely the pastime of his old age but the serious business of his whole life. The result is that he has left us a picture of the Court of Versailles at the close of the seventeenth century and the beginning of the eighteenth which is unsurpassed in interest. This interest is above all things human. The men and women who fill his canvas are vividly alive. With a few powerful and incisive strokes he first sketches their lineaments and then with merciless penetration proceeds to lay bare their souls. But his memoirs are also coloured by his own alert and energetic personality. They not only portray his age, but they reveal himself; to judge of the fidelity of the picture, we must know something of the man.

Saint-Simon came of an ancient stock, being descended in the direct male line from Matthieu de Rouvroy, surnamed Le Borgne, who fought at Crécy and Poitiers, and Marguérite de Saint-Simon. His immediate ancestors, a branch of the family which dropped the name of Rouvroy for that of Saint-Simon, if not exactly illustrious, followed their monarchs loyally in war and administered their estates successfully in peace. His father, Claude de Saint-

Simon, who was born in 1607, chiefly owing to his address in the hunting field rose into high favour with Louis XIII, who created him a *duc et pair* in 1636. But he fell into disgrace soon afterwards and was ordered by Richelieu to retire from the Court to the fortress of Blaye on the Gironde, of which he was governor. His vacillating attitude on the outbreak of the Fronde made him acceptable neither to Mazarin nor to the rebellious princes, and he did not return to Paris till after the troubles were over. In 1672 he married as his second wife Charlotte de l'Aubespine, by whom he had an only son, born on January 16, 1675, and christened Louis after his royal godfather. At the age of seven, the young Vidame de Chartres, according to the custom of many noble families, was put under the charge of a governor, but his character and opinions were largely moulded by his father and mother. The latter, a highly virtuous woman of method and good sense, applied herself assiduously to the development of his mind and body. From his father he imbibed a profound antipathy for Mazarin, the families of Lorraine, Bouillon, and Rohan, and all Secretaries of State.

In December, 1691, when he was nearly seventeen, he was formally presented to the King, and enrolled as a cadet in the regiment of the Grey Musketeers. In this capacity he took part in the siege of Namur, which is the first event recorded in his memoirs. In 1693, having been given the command of a company of cavalry, he fought at Neerwinden, and at the end of the campaign bought the colonelcy of a regiment. Shortly before this he had succeeded his father as governor of Blaye and Senlis. He was only nineteen, when he gave a signal proof of his energy and of the importance which he attached to matters of precedence, by helping to organise a resistance to the claim of the Maréchal de Luxembourg to take precedence of all *ducs et pairs* except the Duc d'Uzès. The Dukes lost their case, largely, Saint-Simon alleges, owing to the partiality of the First President of the *Parlement*, Achille de Harlay.