Reflections; or Sentences and Moral Maxims

François duc de La Rochefoucauld

MUNDO DE LIBROS

Vista previa gratuita · Mundo de Libros · tiendamundodelibros.com

Reflections; or Sentences and Moral Maxims

François duc de La Rochefoucauld

Edición digital de dominio público.
Texto original: Project Gutenberg.
Mundo de Libros

Produced by An Anonymous Volunteer

REFLECTIONS; OR SENTENCES AND MORAL MAXIMS

By Francois Duc De La Rochefoucauld, Prince de Marsillac

Translated from the Editions of 1678 and 1827 with introduction, notes, and some account of the author and his times.

By J. W. Willis Bund, M.A. LL.B and J. Hain Friswell

Simpson Low, Son, and Marston, 188, Fleet Street.

1871.

{TRANSCRIBERS NOTES: spelling variants are preserved (e.g. labour instead of labor, criticise instead of criticize, etc.); the translators' comments are in square brackets [...] as they are in the text; footnotes are indicated by * and appear immediately following the passage containing the note (in the text they appear at the bottom of the page); and, finally, corrections and addenda are in curly brackets {...}.}

ROCHEFOUCAULD

"As Rochefoucauld his maxims drew From Nature--I believe them true. They argue no corrupted mind In him; the fault is in mankind."--Swift.

"Les Maximes de la Rochefoucauld sont des proverbs des gens d'esprit."--Montesquieu.

"Maxims are the condensed good sense of nations."--Sir J. Mackintosh.

"Translators should not work alone; for good Et Propria Verba do not always occur to one mind."--Luther's Table Talk, iii.

CONTENTS

Preface (translator's)
- Introduction (translator's)
- Reflections and Moral Maxims
- First Supplement
- Second Supplement
- Third Supplement
- Reflections on Various Subjects
- Index

Preface.

{Translators'} 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. Aime 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 pieces d'histoire et de litterature." 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, augmentees de plus deux cent nouvelles Maximes et Maximes et Pensees diverses suivant les copies Imprimees a 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."

Introduction

{Translators'} 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 "voila," 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 Bruyere, 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 Bruyere 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 Angounois. 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 Francais 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 Re, 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 Sable, 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

Hasta aqui llega la vista previa gratuita.

Sigue leyendo este libro completo en tu biblioteca:

compralo por $20 MXN o leelo con la Membresia ($149 / 30 dias).

tiendamundodelibros.com