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François de
La Rochefoucauld
Complete Works



Series Fifteen

The Complete Works of
FRANÇOIS DE LA ROCHEFOUCAULD
(1613-1680)



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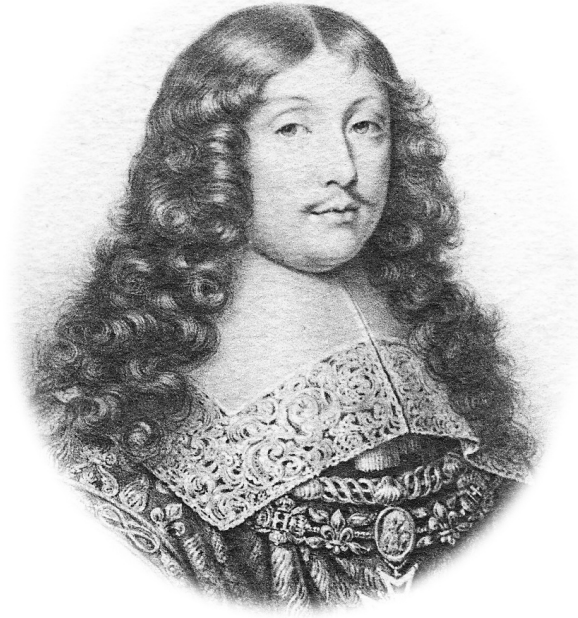
La Rochefoucauld (1918) by Edmund Gosse

The Delphi Classics Catalogue

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Le C^{te} de La Rochefoucauld". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above a decorative flourish.

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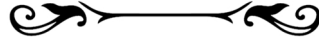
The Complete Works of
FRANÇOIS DE LA ROCHEFOUCAULD



By Delphi Classics, 2024

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Complete Works of François de La Rochefoucauld



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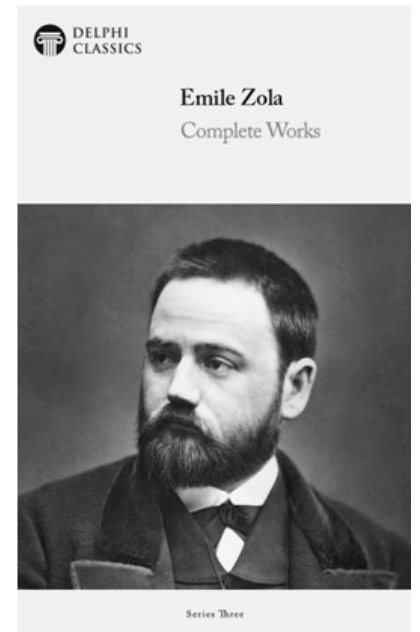
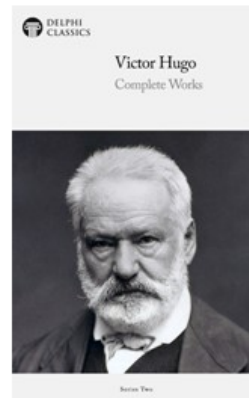
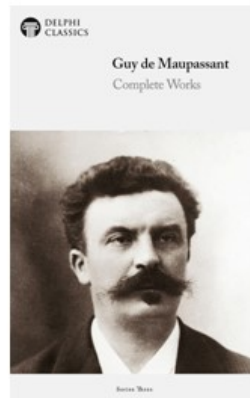
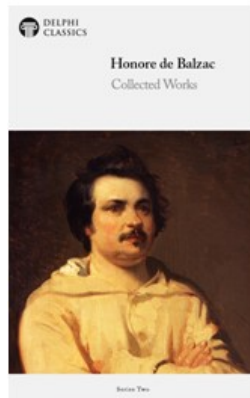
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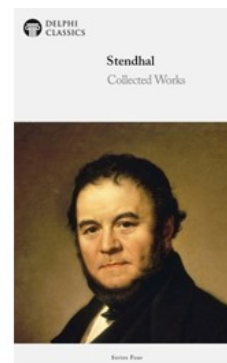
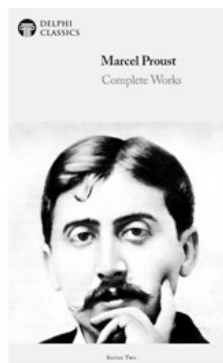
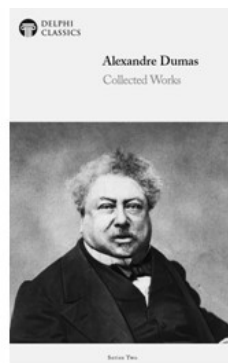
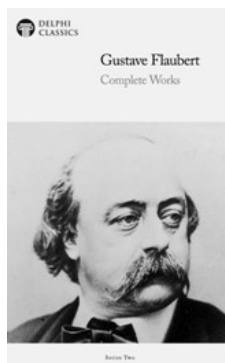
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The Novels



Seventeenth century Paris — La Rochefoucauld's birthplace



La Rochefoucauld was born on 15 September 1613, at Rue des Petits Champs, in Paris's 1st arrondissement neighborhood.

Maxims



OR, REFLECTIONS, SENTENCES AND MORAL MAXIMS

Translated from the editions of 1678 and 1827 by J. W. Willis Bund and J. Hain Friswell, 1871

François de La Rochefoucauld, 2nd Duke of La Rochefoucauld, was an accomplished French moralist of the seventeenth century. He was born on 15 September 1613 at Rue des Petits Champs, in the 1st arrondissement of Paris. La Rochefoucauld was given the typical education of a nobleman of his time, focusing on military exercises, hunting, court etiquette, elegance of expression and comportment, as well as developing a sound knowledge of the world. He was married at the age of fourteen to Andrée de Vivonne. Belonging to one of the most illustrious families of the French nobility, the young La Rochefoucauld, then prince of Marcillac, succeeded at the age of 16 to his uncle Benjamin de La Rochefoucauld, count of Estissac, as camp master of the Estissac regiment. He enlisted in the army the following year and almost immediately established himself as a public figure. He fought bravely in the annual campaigns, though his actions were never formally recognised.

Under the patronage of Madame de Chevreuse, the first of the three celebrated women that would greatly influence his life, he joined the service of Queen Anne of Austria. In one of Madame de Chevreuse's quarrels with Cardinal Richelieu and her husband, a scheme apparently was conceived where La Rochefoucauld was to carry her off to Brussels on horseback. Other cabals against Richelieu resulted in La Rochefoucauld being sentenced to eight days in the Bastille and he was occasionally required to leave the Court, when exiled to his father's estates. In the power vacuum following Richelieu's death in 1642, La Rochefoucauld, among others, took an active role in urging the queen and Condé to act together against Gaston, Duke of Orléans. However, the growing reputation of Mazarin impeded their ambition and La Rochefoucauld's 1645 liaison with Duchess of Longueville made him irrevocably a rebel. He was a conspicuous figure in the 1649 siege of Paris, fighting in many of the frequent military engagements and he was seriously wounded at the siege of Mardyke.

In the second Fronde (a reaction to the policies begun under Cardinal de Richelieu), La Rochefoucauld allied himself with Condé. He used the occasion of his father's funeral in 1650 to urge the attending provincial nobility to attack the royalist garrison of Saumur. In the battle of the Faubourg Saint-Antoine in 1652, he was shot through the head. It was feared that he would lose his sight, but he recovered after a year's convalescence.

He retired to his country estate of Verteuil, where he wrote his celebrated *Maximes*. Although his fortune had been much reduced, he was eventually able to restore it partly, due to the fidelity of Gourville, who had been in his service and had acquired both wealth and influence. La Rochefoucauld did not return to court life until just before Mazarin's death, when Louis XIV was about to assume absolute power, and the aristocratic anarchy of the Fronde was over.

In 1662, the Dutch firm House of Elzevir secretly published what purported to be La Rochefoucauld's memoirs, bringing him both trouble and fame. Many of his old friends were offended. These memoirs were not a faithful copy of what he had

written, and while he hastened to deny their authenticity, this was not generally believed.

Three years later, La Rochefoucauld anonymously published the *Maximes*, which established his position among the men of letters of the time. At about the same date, his friendship with Marie-Madeleine Pioche de La Vergne, Comtesse de La Fayette, began, which lasted for the rest of his life. He had a circle of devoted friends and was recognised as a top-ranking moralist and man of letters. His son, the Prince de Marcillac, to whom he gave his titles and honours in 1671, enjoyed a considerable position at court. Above all, La Rochefoucauld was regarded by his contemporaries, including the king, as an exemplar of the older noblesse, the nobility that existed under the great monarch before the brilliance of his reign faded. This is a reputation that he has retained to the present day.

La Rochefoucauld's ethical views have given rise to attacks upon his works by pious moralists of later eras. Like his contemporaries, he saw politics as a chessboard for powerful players, rather than as a struggle of ideologies or a means for achieving broad social goals. He appears to have been unusually scrupulous in his personal conduct, and his lack of success in the aristocratic struggles arose more from this than from anything else.

The moralist made frequent alterations and additions to his *Maximes* and a few were added after his death. The majority consist of the 500 or so maxims are two or three lines, and hardly any of them exceed half a page. In these epigrammatic musings, he reflects on the conduct and motives of a gentleman, from the point of view of a man of the world who intends not to sugar-coat his observations. In fact, in his introduction, he advises,

...the best approach for the reader to take would be to put in his mind right from the start that none of these maxims apply to himself in particular, and that he is the sole exception, even though they appear to be generalities. After that I guarantee that he will be the first to endorse them and he will believe that they do credit to the human spirit.

La Rochefoucauld muses on honour, fate, friendship, love and the human tendency for self-delusion. His experience with the royal court during the Fronde influenced his thinking immensely. He saw firsthand the conniving and social duplicity that went on amongst members of the royal court and observed that often in life it is not the virtuous, but rather the cunning and fortunate that succeeds. Like many French classical writers, La Rochefoucauld glorified strength of body and character and despised weakness. It's no surprise then that Nietzsche was highly influenced by La Rochefoucauld and sought to imitate his aphoristic style.



La Rochefoucauld by Théodore Chassériau, 1836



La Rochefoucauld's renowned patron, Anne of Austria by Peter Paul Rubens, c. 1620. She was Queen of France from 1615 to 1643 by marriage to King Louis XIII.



Cardinal de Richelieu by Philippe de Champaigne, Musée des Beaux-Arts de Strasbourg, 1642

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Translator's Introduction

REFLECTIONS; OR, SENTENCES AND MORAL MAXIMS

REFLECTIONS.
THE FIRST SUPPLEMENT.
SECOND SUPPLEMENT.
THIRD SUPPLEMENT.

*REFLECTIONS ON VARIOUS SUBJECTS, BY THE DUKE DE LA
ROCHEFOUCAULD*

I. On Confidence.
II. On Difference of Character.
III. On Taste.
IV. On Society.
V. On Conversation.
VI. Falsehood.
VII. On Air and Manner.



Battle of the Faubourg St Antoine by the walls of the Bastille, 1652



La Rochefoucauld's rival, Gaston, Duke of Orléans, 1634



La Rochefoucauld's lover, Anne Geneviève de Bourbon by Charles and Henri Beaubrun

ROCHEFOUCAULD

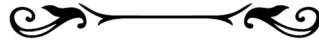
“As Rochefoucauld his maxims drew From Nature — I believe them true. They argue no corrupted mind In him; the fault is in mankind.” — Swift.

“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.

Translator's Preface.



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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