Duc du Maine

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(1670-1736)
Louis-Auguste de Bourbon, Duc du (duke of) Maine, illegitimate son of King Louis XIV of France who attempted without success to wrest control of the government from Philippe II, Duke d'Orl+¬ans, who was the regent (1715-23) for Louis XIV's successor, Louis XV.

The eldest surviving child of Louis XIV by the Marquise de Montespan, Louis-Auguste was legitimated and granted the title Duke du Maine in 1673. He served in the War of the Grand Alliance (1689-97), and in 1714 Louis XIV designated him a prince of the blood with right of eventual succession to the throne. The king attempted to reinforce that ruling through the provisions of his will: du Maine was to be given a place in the projected regency council and made guardian of young Louis XV and commander of the royal guards. By granting du Maine such broad powers Louis hoped to restrict the authority of his legitimate nephew Orl+¬ans, who by law was to become regent for Louis XV. Nevertheless, immediately after the death of Louis XIV (Sept. 1, 1715), Orl+¬ans had the will annulled by the Parlement (high court of justice) of Paris. Assuming control of the government, he withheld command of the guards from du Maine, and in July 1717 du Maine was deprived of his status as prince of the blood. Du Maine's wife, Louise-B+¬n+¬dicte de Bourbon-Cond+¬, was enraged by the regent's actions. In 1718 she involved du Maine in a conspiracy with the Spanish ambassador, Antonio Giudice, Prince de Cellamare, to substitute Philip V of Spain (grandson of Louis XIV) as regent instead of Orl+¬ans. Orl+¬ans learned of the plot, and in December du Maine, his wife, and Cellamare were arrested. Imprisoned for a little more than a year, du Maine then retired from public life; his wife, however, maintained her salon at their ch+óteau at Sceaux.