

# JEU DE RÔLE D E V E R S A I L L E S

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Curufea



Group Xi

Ingredients: Palace, Memory, Currency

The roleplaying game of intrigue and betrayal in the court of King Louis XV. As minor nobles of lesser families, players contend in witty repartee with the residents of the Palace of Versailles in hopes of winning their confidences or swaying them to their causes. Tarot cards determine the success or failure of every verbal encounter.

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VOLUME THE SECOND - SOURCEBOOK

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# Life in 18<sup>th</sup> Century France

Reference material compiled and sorted for your edification to further GM and player knowledge as to this period in history.

## Events

### Talk at the Court

### News

- Affiches, Annonces et Avis Divers  
A newspaper of the times, in which the advertisements of fiefs of counties were often sold.

### Wars

- 1718-20: War of the Quadruple Alliance  
a minor European war fought mostly in Italy, between Spain on the one side, and the Quadruple Alliance of The Holy Roman Empire, France, Great Britain, and the United Provinces.
- 1733-38: War of the Polish Succession  
a European war and a Polish civil war, with considerable interference from other countries, to determine the succession to Augustus II, King of Poland, as well as an attempt by the Bourbon powers to check the power of the Habsburgs in western Europe.
- 1741-48: War of the Austrian Succession  
Emperor CHARLES VI. (in German : Karl VI.) had no male heir. In order to insure the inheritance of his daughter MARIA THERESIA in all the Habsburgian possessions, the PRAGMATIC SANCTION was set up. Austrian diplomacy, by making a number of concessions, achieved the recognition of this document by most of the powers, including France. The French court, however, was determined to use the opportunity of Charles VI.' death in 1740 to weaken the Habsburg monarchy. While France herself did not take any action against Austria, she supported those who declared their candidacy for the Imperial crown (Charles of Bavaria; Charles Emmanuel III. of Savoy, Augustus III. of Saxony) and those who were to use the opportunity to conquer and annex a part of the Habsburg territories.  
Since 1737, Austria, in alliance with Russia, was involved in another war with the Ottoman Empire; in 1739, peace was concluded, at the expense of the cession of Serbia and Little Wallachia to the Ottoman Empire, to free Habsburg forces in the event of Emperor Charles' death.
- 1756-63: Seven Years' War
- 1789-99: The French Revolution
- 1792-15: The Great French War  
the period of conflict beginning on April 20, 1792 and continuing until November 20, 1815. The conflict began when France declared war on Austria following a gradual increase in tensions following the French Revolution in 1789.

### Religion

- 1745: Second Jacobite Rebellion began in Scotland.

## Literature

- Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778)

The most significant writer of France during the eighteenth century was not Voltaire but the Swiss-born Jean-Jacques Rousseau. He taught the essential goodness of human nature, the rightness of our instincts, and the corruption of civilised institutions. He was the man of feeling in an age when intellect was worshipped. He was a reformer of education, an inspirer of revolutionary ideas in government and economics, and in literature a forerunner of romanticism. He has probably had more influence on ideas than any other man of the eighteenth century.

- Voltaire (1694-1778)

Attacked bigotry and superstition, and championed the victims of religious persecution and of political injustice. More than any other man he embodies the spirit of the age of reason. But most of his voluminous writings were too much concerned with questions of his own day to endure permanently. Only his letters and a few of his tales are now much read.

- Denis Diderot (1713-1784)

Director-in-chief of the famous *Encyclopédie*, which was designed both as a storehouse of information and as an arsenal of weapons to attack ignorance, superstition, and intolerance. In purely literary matters the taste of the age was still classical. Voltaire's poetic tragedies, for instance, were modelled largely on those of Corneille and Racine. Diderot was more of an innovator. His plays, in particular, testify to the ever-increasing importance and power of the middle class.

- Pierre de Marivaux (1688-1763)

Writer of comedies.

- Pierre Beaumarchais (1732-1799)

Writer of comedies.

## Timeline of Inventions

- 1701: Seed drill: Jethro Tull
- 1709: Iron smelting using coke: Abraham Darby I  
The first piano was built by Bartolomeo Cristofori
- 1710: Thermometer: René Antoine Ferchault de Réaumur
- 1711: Tuning fork: John Shore
- 1712: Steam piston engine: Thomas Newcomen
- 1714: Gabriel Fahrenheit invents the mercury thermometer
- 1717: The diving bell was successfully tested by Edmond Halley, sustainable to a depth of 55 ft.
- 1730: The sextant navigational tool was developed by John Hadley in England, and Thomas Godfrey in America
- 1733: Flying shuttle: John Kay
- 1736: Europeans discovered rubber - the discovery was made by Charles-Marie de la Condamine while on expedition in South America. It was named in 1770 by Joseph Priestly
- 1740: Modern steel was developed by Benjamin Huntsman
- 1741: Vitus Bering discovered Alaska
- 1742: Franklin stove: Benjamin Franklin
- 1745: The Leyden jar invented by Ewald von Kleist was the first electrical capacitor
- 1750: Flatboat: Jacob Yoder  
Joseph Black describes latent heat
- 1751 - 1785: The French Encyclopédie  
Benjamin Franklin: Lightning is electrical
- 1752: Lightning rod: Benjamin Franklin
- 1755: The English Dictionary by Samuel Johnson
- 1761: The problem of Longitude was finally resolved by the fourth chronometer of John Harrison
- 1764: Spinning jenny: James Hargreaves/Thomas Highs
- 1765: James Watt enhances Newcomen's steam engine, allowing new steel technologies.
- 1767: Carbonated water: Joseph Priestley
- 1768 - 1779: James Cook mapped the boundaries of the Pacific Ocean and discovered many Pacific Islands
- 1769: Steam car: Nicolas Cugnot  
Steam engine: James Watt
- Water frame: Richard Arkwright/Thomas Highs
- 1775: new kind of Boring machine: John Wilkinson  
Submarine Turtle: David Bushnell
- 1776: Steamboat: Claude de Jouffroy  
The Wealth of Nations, foundation of the modern theory of economy, was published by Adam Smith
- 1777: Card teeth making machine: Oliver Evans  
Circular saw: Samuel Miller
- 1779: Photosynthesis was first discovered by Jan Ingenhouse of the Netherlands  
Spinning mule: Samuel Crompton
- 1780: Iron rocket: Tipu Sultan in India
- 1783: Hot air balloon: Montgolfier brothers  
Multitubular boiler engine: John Stevens  
Parachute: Jean Pierre Blanchard
- 1784: Argand lamp: Ami Argand  
Bifocals: Benjamin Franklin  
Shrapnel shell: Henry Shrapnel
- 1785: Automatic flour mill: Oliver Evans  
Power loom: Edmund Cartwright  
William Withering: publishes the first definitive account of the use of foxglove (digitalis) for treating dropsy
- 1786: Threshing machine: Andrew Meikle
- 1787: Jacques Charles: Charles' law of ideal gas  
Non-condensing high pressure Engine: Oliver Evans
- 1789: Lavoisier: law of conservation of mass, basis for chemistry
- 1790: Cut and head nail machine: Jacob Perkins
- 1791: Artificial teeth: Nicholas Dubois De Chemant
- 1793: Cotton gin: Eli Whitney  
Optical telegraph: Claude Chappe
- 1796: Georges Cuvier: Establishes extinction as a fact
- 1797: Cast iron plow: Charles Newbold
- 1798: Edward Jenner publishes a treatise about smallpox vaccination  
Lithography: Alois Senefelder  
Vaccination: Edward Jenner
- 1799: Rosetta stone discovered by Napoleon's troops.  
Seeding machine: Eliakim Spooner  
William Smith: Publishes geologic map of England, first geologic map ever, first application of stratigraphy

## Peerage

From <http://www.heraldica.org/topics/france/peerage.htm>

### Creation

The creation of a peerage involves three steps:

1. issuance of letters patent,
2. "enregistrement" (registration) of the letters in Parliament (Paris),
3. reception of the new peer by the Parliament.

The peerage exists legally once the letters had been registered; in particular, a duchy was not hereditary if the letters failed to be registered. But the holder will not be a peer until reception in Parliament. The letters have to be registered within a year, otherwise the king must issue "lettres de surannuation" to extend the validity of the letters patent.

### Transmission

In May 1711, an edict modified the rules of transmission for all peerages: the rule was henceforth presumed to be transmission in male descent from the first grantee, unless transmission by females was explicitly specified (article 4); in the latter case, a woman could transmit the peerage only if she was descended in male line from the first grantee, if her marriage was approved by the king, and if letters patent were issued confirming the transfer (article 5). This edict applied to peerages, and to duchies which were not peerages as well (article 10); it was obviously not retroactive.

A peerage was a dignity or office attached to a fief. Sometimes the transmission of the fief conflicted with that of the dignity. Suppose a duchy-peerage has been created for X. X has two sons, X2 and Y. X2 is succeeded by X3 who dies without male heirs, but leaves a daughter; meanwhile Y has a son Y2. The domains to which the title of duchy-peerage have been attached should be inherited by the daughter X3, but the peerage should go to Y2; yet the holder of the peerage must also own the lands. The solution was to use something called "retrait lignager", which was a kind of right of first refusal for collateral relatives in male line when the family estate was about to go to another family. But no one could force the collateral heirs to exercise that right; if they didn't, the peerage could become extinct.

The Edict of 1711 on the peerages, article 7, formally specified the option of retrait lignager for the heir male of the original grantee, or if he refuses his male successors, against payment within 6 months of the value of the peerage (estimated at 25 times income). It also authorized the formation of perpetual entails on the seat of the peerage as well as part of its estates up to 15,000 livres' worth of income (the amount was increased to 30,000 livres in 1788 to adjust for inflation). The ability to create perpetual entails was an important exception to the Edict of Moulins of 1566 which prohibited entails of more than four degrees of succession. Thus, although the Edict did not create a comprehensive status for estates held in peerage, it gave families the means to avoid unwanted extinctions.

### Foreigners

Foreigners could and did hold peerages, either by inheritance or by being the recipients of new creations (cf. Nevers in 1505, Aubigny in 1787). Even the six original lay peerages could go into foreign hands without anyone being unduly upset: the country-peerage of Flanders was deemed to be held by the Emperor Charles V until France renounced to sovereignty over it altogether.

## Privileges of a Peer

A peer has the following privileges:-

- the right to be tried by fellow peers
- the right to personally access the Sovereign
- the right to be exempt from civil arrest
- the right to administer manorial justice
- the right to a seat in parliament
- peers and their families have positions in the order of precedence.

## Day to Day Life

### Balls and Dances

Dances are very frequent at Versailles and elsewhere in France (nobles would often hold them in their own mansions), usually there is an opportunity to dance every 3-5 days.

- jours d'appartement  
Approximately three evenings a week in which the King opened up his apartment at the château to his courtiers. Guests are free to wander from room to room and partake in the entertainments which consisted of gambling, billiards, music, dance or lavish refreshments.
- grand bals, bals parés and bals réglés  
Major, but relatively infrequent social events. Generally held in celebration of important occasions such as weddings, births of royal infants, military victories or visits by persons of importance.
- masked balls  
The rigid rules of etiquette are more relaxed at a masked ball. They are an integral part of the Carnival season preceding Lent, but are occasionally held at other times of the year as well.

## Weights and Measures

All measurements tended to vary from province to province. But to simplify matters, I will just take the measurements as used in Paris at the time.

1 arpent = 100 perches = 34 ares

1 arpent = 100 square rods = 4066 sq. yards = .84 acres

1 perch = 1 rod = 1 pole = 5 1/2 yards = 16.5 feet (also the distance between fenceposts in good soil)

1 hectare = 100 meters squared = 10,000 square meters = 100 ares

## Travel Times

Paris to Marseilles via diligence: 11 days

Paris to Bordeaux via diligence: 6 days

Paris to Lyons via diligence: 5 days

Paris to Lille via diligence: 3 days

Mail times were slower as they tended to travel via Paris (ie Lyons to Bordeaux would go through Paris on the way).

Post riders move at 5-6 mph - 50-60 miles per day.

Coaches generally travel 30 miles per day.

## Money

1 English Pound Sterling = 24 livres  
 1 livre (or pound) = 20 sols (or shillings)  
 1 sol (or shilling) = 12 deniers (or pennies)

### Coin in use

Metal	Name	Equivalent	English money
Gold	double louis d'or	= 48 livres	L2 1s. 11d.
Gold	Louis d'or	= 24 livres	L1 0s. 12d.
Gold	demi-louis d'or	= 12 livres	10s. 6d.
Silver	écu	= 6 livres	5s. 2d.
Silver	1/2 écu	= 60 sols	2s. 7d.
Silver	1/4 écu	= 30 sols	1s. 3d.
Silver	1/8 écu	= 15 sols	7d.
Copper	2 sols	= 24 deniers	1d.
Copper	1 sols	= 12 deniers	
Copper	6 deniers		
Copper	1 liard	= 3 deniers	

## Prices

### Commoners

#### Food & Lodging

Meals at inns: 8-12 sols per day  
 Food to go: 8 sols per day  
 Bed at an inn: 2 sols per day  
 Horse lodgings: 1 livre 4 sols - 1 livre 16 sols per day  
 Bushel of oats: 2 livres  
 Hay for one horse: 6 sols per day

#### Guilds

To obtain the status of Master-  
 For apothecaries: 1,000 livres  
 For a keeper of a café: 800 livres  
 For a distiller: 800 livres

### Clergy

Books 400-800 livres

### Nobility

Patent of nobility 120,000+ livres

Ball gown of silver or gold cloth with Spanish lace: 1,500-2,000 livres

Brides' trousseaux: 21,000-100,000 livres

Supper for a King: 200,000 livres

Comfortable but simple furnishings for a château: 12,000 livres

Food for a château for 3 months: 4,000 livres

## Travel

### Land

Horse 120-240 livres  
 Wagon and team 960-1440 livres  
 Comfortable Stage Coach travel (diligence) two leagues/hour: 7 sols per league  
 Stage coach travel (carrosses) 8-10 leagues/day: 13 sols per day

### Water

Boat 600 livres  
 Trow 7200 livres  
 Warship 1,050,000 livres  
 Boat hire 4 livres 10 sols per day

## Salaries

### Typical salaries at the time-

#### Commoners

Foreman: 84-90 livres  
 Carter: 54-66 livres  
 Ox Driver: 30-36 livres  
 Stable Boy: 60-66 livres  
 Female Servant: 24-33 livres

#### Ships

Sailor: 144-240 livres  
 Qtr. master: 590 livres  
 Cook: 540 livres  
 Surgeon: 1000 livres  
 Gunner: 770 livres  
 Boatswain: 720 livres  
 Carpenter: 990 livres  
 2d mate: 850 livres  
 Daily rates for hire  
 Post Rider: 2 livres  
 Labourer: 2 sols  
 Road Labourer: 24-32 sols

#### Clergy

Curate: 200 livres  
 Vicar: 500 livres  
 Rector: 1000-4000 livres  
 Nobility  
 Duke: 200,000-500,000 livres  
 Marquis: 150,000 livres  
 Count 36,000-50,000 livres

## Taxes and Gifts

Nobles were expected to pay, each, between 11 and 14 percent in tithe to the King.  
 The clergy on the other hand paid one gift per year for the entire clergy of 5 million livres and were exempt from taxes.

## Property

The holdings of the nobility vary from 11 to 35 percent.  
 The holdings of the clergy vary from 1 to 29 percent.

## Art

### Painting

The great formal portraits of Largillière and Rigaud are entirely Baroque in their approach, but in the late informal portraits of these masters a new atmosphere prevails. This atmosphere goes by the name of Rococo. The turn of the century marks the victory of Rubens' influence over the severe classicism of Poussin. The evolution of the Rococo style of decoration has been traced from its emergence at the beginning of the 18th century, and it must be emphasized that the Rococo is fundamentally a decorative style. It made relatively little impact on religious painting in France, and painters such as Pierre Subleyras continued to work in a Baroque idiom until the arrival of Neoclassicism in the second half of the century. It took the genius of Antoine Watteau to put together all the ideas current in Paris and to create the new style of painting. Rubens (in particular his oil sketches), the brush drawings and etchings of Castiglione, the naturalism of the Dutch painters, and the fantasy of the French artist Claude Gillot all provided important source material for early Rococo painting. The delicate sketchlike technique and elegant figures of Watteau's wistful fantasies, called fêtes galantes, provided the models for the paintings of Jean-Baptiste Pater and Nicolas Lancret, both of whom conveyed a delicately veiled eroticism. Eroticism was more explicit in the sensuous nudes, both mythological and pastoral, of François Boucher. Another painter with whom amorous dalliance is a hallmark was Jean-Honoré Fragonard, in whose soft landscapes flirtation and even seduction are conducted with gallantry. Such paintings formed an intimate part of the decoration of Rococo interiors, and more than any earlier secular paintings they were intended as a kind of two-dimensional furniture.

The furniture role also applies to the paintings of dead game and live dogs by François Desportes and Jean-Baptiste Oudry. But in the still lifes and tranquil scenes of domestic life painted by Jean-Baptiste-Siméon Chardin there is a sobriety of colour and composition (although great richness in the handling), an often relatively homely subject matter, and a concern to order the mind rather than dazzle the eye. Some of Chardin's subjects - the labours of the servant class, the care of children - were shared by Jean-Baptiste Greuze, who was, however, more interested in narrative and sentiment. Unlike Dutch painters of lower-class life, Greuze endowed his peasants with the sensibility of their social superiors. The edifying moral sympathy he intended to inculcate was, however, often subverted by a sly erotic interest he could not resist giving expression to.

Despite his great success, Greuze was judged to have failed in his attempt at painting heroic narrative from ancient history. But then it is true that the "higher" class of painting was generally less successfully practiced in France than were the "lower" genres in the 18th century. The mythologies and altarpieces of the Coypel family, Jean-François de Troy, or Jean-Marc Nattier may have been underestimated, but their names are not as familiar as those of still-life and genre painters such as Watteau or Chardin or even those of such accomplished painters of capricious ruin pieces or of landscapes and seascapes as Hubert Robert and Claude-Joseph Vernet.

The middle decades of the 18th century saw more accomplished portrait painters flourishing in France than perhaps ever before in any country. Yet it is the informal, the convivial, and the intimate that are associated with the portraiture of Jacques-André-Joseph Aved, François-Hubert Drouais, Louis Tocqué, Louis-Michel van Loo, or Étienne Aubry. The heroic was seldom attempted and never achieved.

### Sculpture

The sculptural style was made lighter, gayer, and more ornamental, in accordance with 18th-century taste, as seen in the famous Chevaux de Marly by Guillaume Coustou now marking the entrance to the Champs-Élysées in Paris but designed for Marly, as part of the most innovative outdoor display of sculpture since the 16th-century gardens of Italy. Coustou's bust of his brother

Nicolas has a characteristic freshness and informality whereby 18th-century artists avoided the grandeur they found pompous in the Berninian tradition.

This 18th-century style that reduced the Baroque to exquisite refinement was the art of the aristocratic salon and boudoir. The little marble Mercury (1744) of Jean-Baptiste Pigalle is almost wholly Berninian, except in its intimacy and deliberate unpretentiousness; even in Pigalle's most ambitious undertakings, the relative scale of the figures is much reduced and the whole composition opened up, in contrast to Bernini's tombs. Nevertheless, the narrative and indeed the allegory of his masterpiece, the tomb of the Maréchal de Saxe (1753; Saint-Thomas, Strasbourg), is as entralling and memorable as any 17th-century sculpture, although the theme, significantly, no longer seems to be inspired by the Christian faith. At the same time, the more classical current of French sculpture continued and gained importance as the 18th century advanced. The clarified form and continuous, unbroken contours of Étienne-Maurice Falconet's marble Bather (1757) adapt the Classic tradition to a pretty and intimate Rococo ideal that is the quintessence of 18th-century taste. This Classicism was purified by Jean-Antoine Houdon, who avoided the playful air of the Rococo boudoir in his Diana (c. 1777) and his marble nude in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City (1782). His portrait sculptures are the ultimate in the 18th-century refinement of Bernini's tradition.

In the context of the rather restrained French sculpture of the 18th century, the blatant sensuality of Clodion (byname of Claude Michel) is the exception rather than the rule. Portrait busts by Jean-Baptiste Lemoyne and Pigalle follow the direction taken by Coysevox in his Robert de Cotte, but Augustin Pajou and Houdon soon abandoned the Rococo in favour of a Neoclassical approach. Edmé Bouchardon, however, flirted only briefly with the Rococo and otherwise remained firmly attached to the classicizing tradition of French sculpture.

## Notable Artists

- AUGUSTIN, Jacques-Jean-Baptiste  
French miniaturist (b. 1759, Saint-Dié, d. 1832, Paris)
- BOUCHER, Fran ois  
French painter (b. 1703, Paris, d. 1770, Paris)
- CHARDIN, Jean-Baptiste-Sim on  
French painter (b. 1699, Paris, d. 1779, Paris)
- COYPEL, Charles-Antoine  
French painter (b. 1694, Paris, d. 1752, Paris)
- COYPEL, Noel-Nicolas  
French painter (b. 1690, Paris, d. 1734, Paris)
- DESPORTES, Alexandre-Fran ois  
French painter (b. 1661, Champigneulles, d. 1743, Paris)
- DROUAIS, Fran ois-Hubert  
French painter (b. 1727, Paris, d. 1775, Paris)
- DUPLESSIS, Joseph-Sifr de  
French painter (b. 1725, Carpentras, d. 1802, Versailles)
- FRAGONARD, Jean-Honor   
French painter (b. 1732, Grasse, d. 1806, Paris)
- GILLOT, Claude  
French painter (b. 1673, Langres, d. 1722, Paris)
- GRAVELLOT, Hubert-Fran ois  
French engraver (b. 1699, Paris, d. 1773, Paris)
- GREUZE, Jean-Baptiste  
French painter (b. 1725, Tournus, d. 1805, Paris)
- LA TOUR, Maurice Quentin de  
French painter (b. 1704, Saint-Quentin, d. 1788, Saint-Quentin)
- LANCRET, Nicolas  
French painter (b. 1690, Paris, d. 1743, Paris)
- LARGILLI RE, Nicolas de  
French painter (b. 1656, Paris, d. 1746, Paris)
- LEMOYNE, Fran ois  
French painter (b. 1688, Paris, d. 1737, Paris)
- L PICI R, Nicolas-Bernard  
French painter (b. 1735, Paris, d. 1784, Paris)
- LOO, Carle van  
French painter (b. 1705, Nice, d. 1765, Paris)
- LOO, Louis  
French painter (b. 1707, Toulon, d. 1771, Paris)
- NATTIER, Jean-Marc  
French painter (b. 1685, Paris, d. 1766, Paris)
- OUDRY, Jean-Baptiste  
French painter (b. 1686, Paris, d. 1755, Beauvais)
- PATER, Jean Baptiste Joseph  
French painter (b. 1695, Valenciennes, d. 1736, Paris)
- PERRONNEAU, Jean-Baptiste  
French painter (b. 1715, Paris, d. 1783, Amsterdam)
- PESNE, Antoine  
French painter (b. 1683, Paris, d. 1757, Berlin)
- RESTOUT, Jean  
French painter (b. 1692, Rouen, d. 1768, Paris)
- RIGAUD, Hyacinthe  
French painter (b. 1659, Perpignan, d. 1743, Paris)
- ROBERT, Hubert  
French painter (b. 1733, Paris, d. 1808, Paris)
- SUBLEYRAS, Pierre  
French painter (b. 1699, Saint-Gilles-du-Gard, d. 1749, Rome)
- TOCQU , Louis  
French painter (b. 1696, Paris, d. 1772, Paris)
- TROY, Jean-Fran ois de  
French painter (b. 1679, Paris, d. 1752, Roma)
- VERNET, Carle  
French painter (b. 1758, Bordeaux, d. 1836, Paris)
- VERNET, Claude-Joseph  
French painter (b. 1714, Avignon, d. 1789, Paris)
- VIG E-LEBRUN,  lisabeth  
French woman painter (b. 1755, Paris, d. 1842, Paris)
- WATTEAU, Jean-Antoine  
French painter (b. 1684, Valenciennes, d. 1721, Nogent-sur-Marne)
- WATTEAU, Louis-Joseph  
French painter (b. 1731, Valenciennes, d. 1798, Lille)

Examples of their paintings can be found here: <http://www.wga.hu/tours/french/frame4p.html>

## The Military

### Louis XV's army

From [http://napoleonistyka.atspace.com/FRENCH\\_ARMY.htm](http://napoleonistyka.atspace.com/FRENCH_ARMY.htm)

The Royal Army was a typical 18th century force. The ranks were filled with mercenaries, volunteers, adventurers and others. The discipline was harsh (a soldier who struck an officer had his offending hand chopped off before he was hanged) and the morale low. The Royal Army used linear tactics, copied from Prussian system.

The first 20 years of Louis XV were generally peaceful, a marked contrast to the war-like disposition of Louis XIV (the Sun King).

France had a population of 25 million and maintained the largest standing army in Europe. It consisted of the following troops:

- guard cavalry
  - Life Guards (Garde du Corps) had 4 companies (350-420 each) on black horses
  - Gendarmes (Gendarmes de la Garde) had 1 company (220 men) on bay horses
  - Lighthorse of the Guard (Chevauxx-legers de la Garde) had 1 company (220 men) on bay horses
  - Horse Grenadiers (Grenadiers a Cheval de la Garde) had 1 company (140 men) on bay horses
  - Musketeers (Mousquetaire de la Garde) had 2 companies (240 men each) on black and grey horses
  - Life Guards of the King of Poland had 2 companies (75 men each) on bay horses
  - [The Queen of France was a Polish princess, whose father, King Stanislav Leszczynski, was exiled in 1737.]
- guard infantry
  - French Guards (Gardes-Francaises) had 6 battalions (1000-1200 each)
  - Swiss Guards
- cavalry
  - Gendarmes of France (Gendarmerie de France) had 16 companies
  - heavy cavalry had 60 regiments (incl. 3 German, 1 Irish, 1 Belgian)
  - carabiniers had 5 regiments called brigades
  - dragoons had 17 regiments
- line infantry
  - in 1740 were 155 battalions (on average each had 540 men)
  - in 1747 were 227 battalions
  - in 1750 were 172 battalions
  - in 1762 were 187 battalions (on average each had 630 men)

The battalions were formed in regiments. Only the senior regiments had more than one battalion, but most had a single battalion.

"Until 1718 each battalion had 1 grenadier and 14 fusilier companies, this was then reduced to 1 grenadier and 8 fusilier. This was raised again to 15 companies in 1734, then dropped to 13 companies from 1749. In 1756 the number of companies was raised to 17 per battalion."

(Chartrand - "Louis XV's Army (2) French Infantry." p 5)

The company had approx. 40 men. In 1757 each battalion going on campaign in central Europe received a light-calibre cannon with limber and 3 horses.

- militia
  - - Provincial Militia had 100-120 battalions (on average each had 600 men)
  - - Coast Guard Militia
  - - Bourgeois Militia

The Provincial Militia was drafted for garrison duty but they were also used as army reserves and

considered part of the royal forces and listed as such in the army registers.

In 1780s reaction reigned supreme over the French military administration. In 1781 the courtiers extorted from Segur, the Minister of War, against his will, a royal decree to the effect that every candidate for a commission must satisfy the court genealogist that he was possessed of 16 quarters of nobility ! The effect of this was to shut the doors of the army in the face of the rising middle class.



Louis XV. and his son, the Dauphin.

## Scenarios

Events that could be incorporated into an ongoing campaign, or could be used as a one-off.

### Madame du Pompadour

In 1745, Louis XV gave a grand ball on the occasion of the engagement of his eldest son to a daughter of the King of Spain. One participant was Jeanne Antoinette, an accomplished and beautiful actress but of humble birth. After the victory over the English at Fontenoy in May, 1745, she was given the deed to an estate at Pompadour and the title Marquise de Pompadour. She was established as a royal mistress.

### Casanova visits

Exiled from Venice for his crimes, Casanova seeks help from the French court and forgiveness from the Venetian ambassador so he may return home.



Françoise Marie von Bourbon,  
Herzogin von Orléans  
(1702).

Palais-Garde, genannt la munche,  
unter Ludwig XV. von Frankreich  
(1724).

## Notable Persons

### King Louis XV the Beloved

(1710-1774)

Louis XV, byname Louis The Well-Beloved, French Louis Le Bien-Aimé, king of France from 1715 to 1774, whose ineffectual rule contributed to the decline of royal authority that led to the outbreak of the Revolution in 1789.

Louis was the great-grandson of King Louis XIV (ruled 1643-1715) and the son of Louis, duc de Bourgogne, and Marie-Adélaïde of Savoy. Because his parents and his only surviving brother had all died in 1712, he became king at the age of five on the death of Louis XIV (Sept. 1, 1715). Until he attained his legal majority in February 1723, France was governed by a regent, Philippe II, duc d'Orléans. In 1721 Orléans betrothed Louis to the infanta Mariana, daughter of King Philip V of Spain. After the death of Orléans (December 1723), Louis appointed as his first minister Louis-Henri, duc de Bourbon-Condé, who cancelled the Spanish betrothal and married the King to Marie Leszczynska, daughter of the dethroned king Stanislaw I of Poland. Louis's tutor, the bishop (later cardinal) André-Hercule de Fleury, replaced Bourbon as chief minister in 1726; and the dynastic connection with Poland led to French involvement against Austria and Russia in the War of the Polish Succession (1733-38).

Louis XV's personal influence on French policy became perceptible only after Fleury's death in 1744. Although he proclaimed that he would henceforth rule without a chief minister, he was too indolent and lacking in self-confidence to coordinate the activities of his secretaries of state and give firm direction to national policy. While his government degenerated into factions of scheming ministers and courtiers, Louis isolated himself at court and occupied himself with a succession of mistresses, several of whom exercised considerable political influence. Already Pauline de Mailly-Nesle, marquise de Vintimille, Louis's mistress from 1739 to 1741, had sponsored the war party that brought France into the inconclusive War of the Austrian Succession (1740-48) against Austria and Great Britain. In September 1745 the king took as his official mistress (*maitresse en titre*) Jeanne-Antoinette Poisson, Marquise de Pompadour, whose political influence lasted until her death in 1764.

Louis was not, however, a totally passive monarch. His desire to determine the course of international affairs through intrigue caused him to set up, about 1748, an elaborate system of secret diplomacy known as *le Secret du roi*. Secret French agents were stationed in major European capitals and ordered by the king to pursue political objectives that were frequently opposed to his publicly announced policies. At first Louis employed his secret diplomacy in an unsuccessful attempt to win the elective Polish crown for a French candidate (a goal he officially renounced). Soon he expanded the network of agents, intending to form an anti-Austrian alliance with Sweden, Prussia, Turkey, and Poland. Because his official ministers knew nothing of *le secret*, Louis's foreign policy became paralyzed with confusion. In 1756 the king, prompted by Madame de Pompadour, temporarily abandoned the objectives of his secret diplomacy and concluded an alliance with Austria. France and Austria then went to war with Great Britain and Prussia (Seven Years' War, 1756-63), but Louis's continental commitments to the Austrians prevented him from concentrating his country's resources on the crucial colonial struggle with Great Britain, a country with greater maritime power and overseas resources. As a result, by 1763 France had lost to the British almost all her colonial possessions in North America and India. Although Madame de Pompadour's favourite, Étienne-François, Duke de Choiseul (foreign minister from 1758 to 1770), restored France's military strength, the failure of Louis's secret diplomacy in Poland enabled Russia, Austria, and Prussia to partition Poland (1772) and virtually eliminate French influence in central Europe. Although Louis had been popular as *le Bien-Aimé* (the Well-Beloved) in his youth, he had gradually earned the contempt of his subjects.

During the later years of Louis XV's reign, an attempt was made to strengthen the waning authority of the crown by withdrawing from the Parlements the privilege of obstructing royal legislation. This privilege, which had been suspended by Louis XIV, had been restored to the Parlements during the regency. The judicial magistrates had later consolidated their position as opponents of the crown by claiming, in the absence of the States General, to be defenders of the fundamental laws of the kingdom and by uniting the provincial Parlements in a close union with the Parlement of Paris. In this manner they had overthrown the financial system of John Law, had helped to procure the expulsion of the Jesuits in 1764, and had, for a time, disrupted the provincial administration of Brittany. The Parlements also stood resolutely in the way of financial reform. In 1771 the chancellor, René de Maupeou, determined to strike at this abuse by restricting the Parlement of Paris to purely judicial functions and by abolishing the sale of judicial offices. In spite of some popular opposition, the new judicial system functioned effectively until the king's death and might have saved the Bourbon monarchy from the path that led to revolution if his successor had not gratuitously abandoned the reform. Apart from this reform, Louis XV's long reign had been marked by a decline in the crown's moral and political authority, as well as by reverses in foreign and military affairs. The king died in 1774, hated as much as Louis XIV had been.

### Personality

History says, unfortunately, that while he was a good father, he remained a poor and indolent ruler who in the latter part of his reign brought absolutism into contempt.

His greatest asset as a king is his magnificent presence; from childhood to premature old age he was strikingly handsome. Yet even as a child he was both lazy and bored, and already took pleasure in inflicting pain on other people. He always remained timid, afraid of new faces and a bad public speaker. A far from edifying life did not prevent him from being extremely pious and attending all the religious services required of him; he loathed the Philosophes for their attacks on religion. He showed his courage on the field of battle, yet hated war for humanitarian reasons.

At the beginning of his reign he enjoyed considerable popularity; the news of his serious illness at Metz, when he was with his armies in 1744, aroused consternation among the general public.

His chief weaknesses as a ruler are his indolence, shyness and irresolution; he often allowed himself to be persuaded, against his better judgement, into following disastrous policies.

Above all, he was the victim of boredom; he had constantly to be amused. He was fond of the pleasures of the table and delighted in petit soupers served without valets and in the midst of a few intimates of both sexes. His great passion in life - apart from women - was hunting.

Another important ingredient in the King's life is his incessant journeyings from Versailles to the palaces, large and small, which he possessed in the Paris region, from Compiègne to Fontainebleau.

### Foreign Policy

The WAR OF SPANISH SUCCESSION had ended in 1713/1714, and France was practically bankrupt. The early years of Louis XV. reign were decades of peace; France recovered under the administration of CARDINAL FLEURY, whose policy of austerity restored the state treasury, but neglected the navy. In 1733-1735 France victoriously fought the WAR OF POLISH SUCCESSION, establishing the deposed Polish king STANISLAS LESZYNSKI (and father-in-law of Louis XV.) as Duke of LORRAINE. In 1741 to 1748, France entered the WAR OF AUSTRIAN SUCCESSION, which, despite a number of military successes, did not bring any gains for France.

Cardinal Fleury had died in 1743, and Louis XV. personally took over, soon influenced by MADAME POMPADOUR. She caused Louis XV. to give up France's traditional anti-Habsburg policy (the so-called DIPLOMATIC REVOLUTION); in the SEVEN YEARS' WAR (1756-1763) France was an Austrian ally. On paper, the coalition composed by Maria Theresia, uniting Austria,

France, Russia and Sweden against Prussia (which was supported by Britain) looked overwhelming; France, after the defeat of SOUBISE's army by Frederick the Great in the BATTLE OF ROSSBACH (1757), concentrated on fighting the English overseas. The war was lost and France had to cede major colonial possessions.

In 1766, Duke Stanislas Leszynski died and the DUCHY OF LORRAINE was annexed by France (connecting the French possessions in the Alsace with the Kingdom), as was the island of CORSICA in 1768, bought from the Republic of Genova.

Early in the 18th century the French Colonial Empire expanded considerably; in 1715 the French established MAURITIUS as the headquarters of their COMPAGNIE DES INDES; the ISLE DE BOURBON (Reunion) was French since 1642. They established factories along the coast of India (Yanaon, Mahe, Pondichery, Chandernagar). JOSEPH-FRANCOIS DUPLEX, Governor-General of the French East India Company (1741-1754), by diplomatic means allied the Indian princes of the Carnatic to France and was able to take MADRAS from the English East India Company in 1746. India, West Africa, the Caribbean and North America were areas of conflict between the world's two leading maritime powers, England and France; the decisive confrontation took place during the SEVEN YEARS WAR. Here, French General MONTCALM, on the American continent, booked early successes against the British, immortalized in J.F. Cooper's Last of the Mohicans. Yet British reinforcements and the failure of France to send both reinforcements and supplies turned the tide in favour of the British. In 1763, France ceded her possessions in CANADA (retaining only ST. PIERRE ET MIQUELON), SENEGAL, in India it was restricted to the factories of Mahe, Pondichery, Yanaon and Chandernagar. France ceded the LOUISIANE TERRITORY to Spain.

## La Maison du Roi

### The Royal Household

#### Of Offices in general

In the French monarchy, the King possessed all power and authority. He did not exercise it all himself, but delegated it to various individuals. There were three forms of delegation: fief, office, commission.

- Fief

The fief was a permanent form of delegation, establishing a contract between the king and his vassal, with obligations on both sides. The fief was hereditary, and its transmission subject to a body of rules. The fief was a form of property. The fief, as a delegation of royal authority, dated to the very beginnings of the Middle Ages, and by the end of the Old Regime it existed as a delegation of public authority mainly in vestigial form, as a minor aspect of titles of nobility.

- Commission

At the opposite, a commission was an indefinite delegation that lasted only as long as the king's pleasure; it did not create any obligations on the part of the king, and could be revoked at any time; it was not a form of property. It was a modern form of delegation of authority, and was employed for those positions that most resemble modern functions (ministers, ambassadors, administrators of provinces).

- Office

The office fell somewhere in between. Originally office-holders served at the king's pleasure, but by the late 15th century their right to serve for life, subject to good behavior, had become established. Whether it was a form of property (and if so, whether it was moveable or immovable, that is, real or personal property) was still debated by jurists at the end of the Old Regime. It was a dignity, a station in the hierarchy of society, that carried with it the exercise of public authority or power. It was used for the kinds of positions that emerged in the later part of the Middle Ages, more specialized than the earls or dukes of the High Middle Ages: those linked to justice, police, tax collection, and the king's household.

#### Composition of the Maison du Roi

The King's Household can be divided between the ecclesiastical part (priests and chapel, including, until 1761, performers of religious music) and the lay or civil part.

#### Maison Civile

The civil part took care of the king's needs in various ways:

- la bouche: food and wine (under the grand-maître or steward)
- la chambre: bedchamber (under the grand-chambellan or chamberlain)
- la robe: wardrobe (under the grand-maître de la garde-robe or master of the wardrobe)
- la faculté: health
- le cabinet: reading, writing, books
- la musique: musical entertainment
- garde-meuble
- menus plaisirs
- cérémonies: ceremonies
- ogements de cour et suite: lodging while travelling
- écurie: stables (under the grand-écuyer or master of the horse)
- vénerie: hunting (under the grand-veneur or master of the hounds)
- Bâtiments: the royal buildings

## Positions

## 1. le Grand Maître

The lay part of the household was headed by the Grand Maître de France (High Stewart or Master of the Household). His insignia is a staff of gilded silver ending in a crown-shaped ornament.

1740-90: Louis Joseph de Bourbon, prince de Condé (1736-1818)

## 2. Premier Maître d'hôtel (Master of the Household)

runs the seven departments under the grand maître. He brings the king's bouillon in the morning and takes the orders relative to meals for the day, handing him his napkin after taking communion at mass. When unavailable, he is replaced by the Maître d'hôtel ordinaire.

## 3. maîtres d'hôtel par quartier and 36 gentilshommes servants

## Maison Ecclésiastique

The ecclesiastical part of the Household was headed by the Grand Aumônier de France (Great Almoner), the highest ecclesiastical honor in France, and considered by some as one of the Great Officers of the Crown.

## 1. Grand Aumônier de France (the Great Almoner)

The Grand Aumônier was originally the cleric in charge of administering the king's alms, as his name indicates. Around 1550 he acquired the functions previously held by the arch-chaplain, and became head of the ecclesiastical part of the king's household.

He was the pastor of the king and the bishop of the court, wherever it might be located. He could be present for the king's morning and evening prayers, and at the king's meals for saying grace. He gave the king the sacraments, baptized his children, married the royal princes, held the Gospels for the king whenever he took a solemn oath, dispatched the oaths of loyalty to the king of all bishops.

Among his privileges were: membership ex officio in the Order of the Saint-Esprit, administration of the hospital called Quinze-Vingts in Paris (until 1671 he also supervised all leprosy houses and other hospitals), and until 1621 supervision of all abbeys and convents in France. At the king's death he received the silverware of the king's chapel.

He receives 1200L in gages, a 1200L pension, 6000L plat et livrée, 6000L as member of the Order of the Saint-Esprit.

## 2. Premier aumônier (the First Almoner)

Performing most of the duties of the Great Almoner, he receives 1200L in gages, 3000L pension, 6000L plate et livrée.

## 3. maître de l'oratoire (Master of the Oratory)

The position was created in 1523 by François Ier to head the chaplains of the Oratory (see below). His powers were transferred in 1671 to the Great Almoner, but the position survived. He received 120 livres + 3600 livres pour ses liveries and his bouche à cour (bouche of court, an allowance given to officers required to live at court).

## 4. Confesseur du Roi (King's Confessor)

## 5. Prédicateur du Roi (King's Preacher)

## 6. The rest of the clerical household consisted of aumôniers, chapelains (chaplains) and clercs de chapelle (chapel clerics).

## Kings, Queens, Regents and Consorts

### Marie (-Catherine) Leszczynska

(1703-1768)

Marie (-Catherine) Leszczynska, Polish Maria Karolina Leszczynska, queen consort of King Louis XV of France (ruled 1715-74). Although she had no direct influence on French politics, her Polish dynastic connections involved France in a European conflict that resulted in the eventual annexation of Lorraine by France.

Marie's father, Stanislaw Leszczynski, was elected King Stanislaw I of Poland in 1704. After he was deposed in 1709, he settled with Marie at Wissembourg. In the hope of quickly obtaining an heir to the French throne, Louis XV's chief minister, the Duc de Bourbon, betrothed the 15-year-old king to Marie in 1725. The marriage took place at Fontainebleau on September 5. Marie bore Louis 10 children between 1727 and 1737, but only one of her two sons--the dauphin Louis--survived infancy. In 1733 France entered the War of the Polish Succession against Austria in support of Stanislaw's claims to the Polish throne; Stanislaw was made duke of Lorraine by the treaty that ended the conflict (1738). Meanwhile, Louis XV, having lost interest in his queen, was lavishing his attentions on a succession of mistresses. Marie's marital unhappiness was intensified by the death of the Dauphin in 1765. In accordance with the treaty of 1738, Lorraine became a part of France when her father died in the following year.

### Louis XVI

(1754-1793)

Louis XVI, also called (until 1774) Louis-Auguste, Duc (duke) de Berry, the last king of France (1774-92) in the line of Bourbon monarchs preceding the Revolution of 1789. The monarchy was abolished on Sept. 21, 1792; later he and his queen consort, Marie-Antoinette, were guillotined on charges of counterrevolution.

#### Early life and accession

Louis was the third son of the dauphin Louis and his consort Maria Josepha of Saxony. At first known as the Duke de Berry, he became the heir to the throne on his father's death in 1765. His education was entrusted to the Duke de La Vauguyon (Antoine de Quélen de Caussade), who made little effort to ensure that he should be properly trained for his responsibilities. Louis nevertheless possessed an excellent memory, acquired a sound knowledge of Latin and English, and took an interest in history and geography. In 1770 he married the Austrian archduchess Marie-Antoinette, daughter of Maria Theresa and the Holy Roman emperor Francis I.

On the death of his grandfather Louis XV, Louis succeeded to the French throne on May 10, 1774. At that time he was still immature, lacking in self-confidence, austere in manner, and, because of a physical defect (later remedied by an operation), frigid in his relations with his young wife. Well-disposed toward his subjects and interested in the conduct of foreign policy, Louis had not sufficient strength of character or power of decision to combat the influence of court factions or to give the necessary support to reforming ministers, such as Anne-Robert-Jacques Turgot or Jacques Necker, in their efforts to give great stability to the tottering finances of the ancien régime. The prestige of the monarchy was also compromised early in his reign by the decision in August 1774 to restore the powers of the Parlements (judicial bodies supporting the interests of the aristocracy) whose political authority had been withdrawn in 1771. Louis XVI's reign before 1789 coincided with the increasing strength of the aristocratic reaction. It was aristocratic

opposition to the fiscal, economic, and administrative reforms of the controller general of finance, Charles-Alexandre de Calonne, in 1787 that forced the king, in July 1788, to summon the States General, the representatives of the clergy, nobility, and commoners, for the following year and thus set in motion the Revolution.

#### Louis's reaction to the Revolution

After 1789 Louis XVI's incapacity to rule, his irresolution, and his surrender to reactionary influences at court were partially responsible for the failure to establish in France the forms of a limited constitutional monarchy. Louis had at first rightly regarded the Revolution as the product of aristocratic intransigence and should, therefore, have grasped the opportunity of forming an alliance between the crown and the middle-class reformers. Instead he allowed himself, in the spring of 1789, to be dominated by the reactionary court faction surrounding his younger brother Charles, Count d'Artois (later King Charles X) and to be converted to the policy of defending the privileges of the clergy and nobility in the States General. He continued to believe, even after the increasingly radical trend of popular movements in Paris and the provinces during the summer had demonstrated the futility of such hopes, that the Revolution would burn itself out.

By this time the fundamental weakness of the king's character had become evident: lethargic in temperament, lacking political insight and therefore incapable of appreciating the need to compromise, Louis continued to divert himself by hunting and with his personal hobbies of making locks and doing masonry. He dismissed Necker in early July 1789 and showed his reluctance to sanction the achievements of the National Assembly (as the States General was now called) such as the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen and the "destruction" of the feudal regime in August.

#### Attempt to flee the country

Louis's resistance to popular demands was one of the causes of the forcible transfer of the royal family from Versailles to the Tuileries Palace in Paris on October 6. Yet he made still more mistakes, refusing to follow the secret advice tendered to him after May 1790 by the royalist deputy, the Count de Mirabeau, abdicating his responsibilities, and acquiescing in the disastrous attempt to escape from the capital to the eastern frontier on June 21, 1791. Caught at Varennes and brought back to Paris, he lost credibility as a constitutional monarch. Thenceforward he seems to have been completely dominated by the queen, who must bear the chief blame for the court's subsequent political duplicity.

From the autumn of 1791 the king tied his hopes of political salvation to the dubious prospects of foreign intervention. At the same time he encouraged the Girondin faction in the Legislative Assembly in their policy of war with Austria, in the expectation that French military disaster would pave the way for the restoration of his authority. Prompted by Marie-Antoinette, Louis rejected the advice of the moderate constitutionalists, led by Antoine Barnave, to implement faithfully the constitution of 1791, which he had sworn to maintain, and committed himself to a policy of subterfuge and deception.

The outbreak of the war with Austria in April 1792, the suspected machinations of the queen's "Austrian committee," and the publication of the manifesto by the Austrian commander, the Duke of Brunswick, threatening the destruction of Paris if the safety of the royal family were again endangered, led to the capture of the Tuileries by the people of Paris and provincial militia on Aug. 10, 1792. It also led to the temporary suspension of the king's powers by the Legislative Assembly and the proclamation of the First French Republic on September 21. In November proof of Louis XVI's secret dealings with Mirabeau and of his counterrevolutionary intrigues with the foreigners was found in a secret cupboard in the Tuileries. On December 3 it was decided that Louis, who together with his family had been imprisoned since August, should be brought to trial for treason. He himself appeared twice before the Convention (December 11 and 23).

### Condemnation to death

Despite the last-minute efforts of the Girondins to save him, Citizen Capet, as he was then called, was found guilty by the Convention and condemned to death on Jan. 18, 1793, by 387 votes (including 26 in favour of a debate on the possibility of postponing execution) against 334 (including 13 for a death sentence with the proviso that it should be suspended). When a final decision on the question of a respite was taken on January 19, Louis was condemned to death by 380 votes against 310. He was guillotined in the Place de la Révolution in Paris on Jan. 21, 1793. Louis XVI's courage on June 20, 1792, when the royal palace was invaded by the Paris mob after his dismissal of the Girondin ministry, and his dignified bearing during his trial and at the moment of execution did something to redeem, but did not reestablish, his reputation.

### Marie-Antoinette

(1755-1793)

Marie-Antoinette, in full Marie-Antoinette-Joséphe-Jeanne d'Autriche-Lorraine (Austria-Lorraine), original German Maria Antonia Josepha Joanna von Österreich-Lothringen, queen consort of King Louis XVI of France (1774-93). Frivolous, imprudent, and prodigal and an enemy of reform, she contributed to the popular unrest that led to the Revolution and to the overthrow of the monarchy in August 1792.

The 11th daughter of the Holy Roman emperor Francis I and Maria Theresa, Marie-Antoinette was married in 1770 to the dauphin Louis, grandson of France's King Louis XV. The timid, uninspiring Louis proved to be an inattentive husband; and by the time he ascended the throne in 1774, Marie-Antoinette had withdrawn into the companionship of a small circle of frivolous court favourites.

Her extravagant court expenditures contributed--though to a minor degree--to the huge debt incurred by the French state in the 1770s and 1780s, and her close associations with the more dissipated members of the court aristocracy prompted her enemies to circulate slanderous reports of her alleged extramarital affairs. These vilifications culminated in the Affair of the Diamond Necklace (1785-86), in which the Queen was unjustly accused of having formed an immoral relationship with a cardinal. The scandal discredited the monarchy and encouraged the nobles to oppose vigorously (1787-88) all the financial reforms advocated by the King's ministers.

During these crises, as in those to come, Marie-Antoinette proved to be stronger and more decisive than her husband. After a crowd stormed the Bastille on July 14, 1789, the Queen failed to convince Louis to take refuge with his army at Metz. In August-September, however, she successfully prodded him to resist the attempts of the revolutionary National Assembly to abolish feudalism and restrict the royal prerogative. As a result, she became the main target of the popular agitators, who attributed to her the celebrated and callous remark on being told that the people had no bread: "Let them eat cake!" ("Qu'ils mangent de la brioche!"). In October 1789 popular pressure compelled the royal family to return from Versailles to Paris, where they became hostages of the Revolutionary movement. Six months later Marie-Antoinette opened secret communications with the Comte de Mirabeau, a prominent member of the National Assembly who hoped to restore the authority of the crown. Nevertheless, her mistrust of Mirabeau prevented the King from following his advice. After Mirabeau died in April 1791, she turned for assistance to a group of émigrés. They arranged for the King and Queen to escape from Paris on the night of June 20, but Revolutionary forces apprehended the royal couple at Varennes (June 25) and escorted them back to Paris.

Marie-Antoinette then attempted to shore up the rapidly deteriorating position of the crown by opening secret negotiations with Antoine Barnave, leader of the constitutional monarchist faction in the Assembly. Barnave persuaded the King to publicly accept the new constitution (September

1791); but the Queen undermined Barnave's position by privately urging her brother, the Holy Roman emperor Leopold II, to conduct a counterrevolutionary crusade against France. Leopold avoided acceding to her demands. After France declared war on Austria in April 1792, Marie-Antoinette's continuing intrigues with the Austrians further enraged the French. Popular hatred of the Queen provided impetus to the insurrection that overthrew the monarchy on Aug. 10, 1792.

Marie-Antoinette spent the remainder of her life in Parisian prisons. Louis XVI was executed on orders from the National Convention in January 1793, and in August the Queen was put in solitary confinement in the Conciergerie. She was brought before the Revolutionary tribunal on Oct. 14, 1793, and guillotined two days later.

### Duke of Orléans, Philippe II

(1674-1723)

Duc d'Orléans, Philippe II, also called (until 1701) Duc de Chartres, regent of France for the young King Louis XV from 1715 to 1723.

The son of Philippe I, duc d'Orléans, and Elizabeth Charlotte of the Palatinate, Philippe d'Orléans was known as the duc de Chartres during his father's lifetime. Although he served with the French army against the English and Dutch in the War of the Grand Alliance (1689-97), his uncle, Louis XIV, excluded him from the high military commands to which he considered himself entitled. The Duc de Chartres retaliated by studiously neglecting his wife, Françoise-Marie de Bourbon, the King's favourite legitimized daughter. His irreverence, habitual drunkenness, and licentious behaviour had earned him an unsavoury reputation by the time he succeeded to his father's title in 1701. Nevertheless, he was given military commands in Italy (1706) and Spain (1707-08) during the War of the Spanish Succession (1701-14).

As premier prince of the blood royal, Orléans became regent for the five-year-old Louis XV upon the death of Louis XIV (Sept. 1, 1715). Through the provisions of his will, however, Louis XIV had left the effective power in the hands of his own two legitimized bastard sons in order to prevent Orléans from dismantling the system of absolute royal despotism. If the sickly Louis XV had died, the legitimized princes would have rejected Orléans's claim to the throne in favour of the claim of Louis XIV's grandson, King Philip V of Spain. Hence, in order to assert his authority as regent and advance his dynastic ambitions, Orléans induced the Parlement (high court of justice) of Paris to annul Louis XIV's will (Sept. 12, 1715). He then proceeded to institute an experimental system of conciliar government--known as *la polysynodie*--designed to destroy the authority of the secretaries of state and restore political power to the high nobility. The new system proved so cumbersome and inefficient that the Regent dissolved it in September 1718 and reinstated the secretaries of state.

Orléans's foreign policy was also tied to his dynastic interests. In 1716 he had his minister, the abbé (later Cardinal) Guillaume Dubois, concluded with Great Britain, France's traditional enemy, an alliance that secured British support against Philip V's claim to the succession to the French throne. France and Great Britain went to war with Spain in 1719, and in the following year Philip V was forced to renounce his French claims and recognize Orléans as Louis XV's heir.

Meanwhile, Orléans had to grapple with the acute fiscal problems that had resulted from the costly wars of Louis XIV. In 1717 he entrusted the reform of French finances to a Scottish banker, John Law, whose innovations led to a financial disaster three years later that severely discredited Orléans's regime.

Orléans's regency ended when Louis XV came of age in February 1723. The following August, the Duc himself became first minister, but he died only four months later. Philippe Erlanger's biography of Orléans, *Le Régent*, was published in 1938.

## The King's Mistresses

### Comtesse du Barry

(1743-1793)

Comtesse du (countess of) Barry, (Marie-) Jeanne Bécu, last of the mistresses of the French king Louis XV (reigned 1715-74). Although she exercised little political influence at the French court, her unpopularity contributed to the decline of the prestige of the crown in the early 1770s.

She was born Marie-Jeanne Bécu, the illegitimate daughter of lower-class parents. After a convent education, she was a shop assistant, under the name Jeanne Vaubernier, in a fashion house in Paris. While there she became the mistress of Jean du Barry, a Gascon nobleman who had made a fortune as a war contractor. He introduced her into Parisian high society, and her beauty captivated a succession of nobly born lovers before she attracted Louis XV's attention in 1768. She could not qualify as official royal mistress (*maîtresse en titre*), a position vacant since the death of Madame de Pompadour in 1764, unless she was married to a noble. Hence, du Barry arranged a nominal marriage between Jeanne and his brother, Guillaume du Barry; in April 1769 she joined Louis XV's court.

The comtesse immediately joined the faction that brought about the downfall of Louis XV's powerful minister of foreign affairs, the Duke de Choiseul, in December 1770; and she then supported the drastic judicial reforms instituted by her friend the chancellor René-Nicolas de Maupeou, in 1771. She spent much of her time on the estates that Louis had given her near Louveciennes, where she earned a reputation as a generous patron of the arts. On the death of Louis XV (May 1774) and the accession of Louis XVI, Madame du Barry was banished to a nunnery; from 1776 until the outbreak of the Revolution she lived on her estates with the Duke de Brissac. In 1792 she made several trips to London, probably to give financial aid to French émigrés. Condemned as a counter-revolutionary by the Revolutionary Tribunal of Paris in December 1793, she was guillotined.

### Marquise de Pompadour

(1721-1764)

... she had an oval face, very regular features, a magnificent complexion, quite superb hands and arms, eyes which were pretty if on the smallish side, yet which possessed a fieriness, an intelligence and a brilliance that I have never seen in any other woman.

Another admirer recounted excitedly that he had encountered in the young Madame d'Étiolles 'one of the prettiest women I have ever seen', going on to rhapsodise on her accomplishments:

... she understands music perfectly, sings with all the gaiety and good taste imaginable, knows by heart a hundred songs and takes part in plays [staged in her private residence].

Marquise de (marchioness of) Pompadour, Jeanne-Antoinette Poisson, byname Madame de Pompadour, also called (1741-45) Jeanne-Antoinette le Normant d'Étoiles, influential mistress (from 1745) of the French king Louis XV and a notable patron of literature and the arts.

### Early years

Her parents were on the fringes of a class gaining in importance, speculators in the world of finance. Some of these people made immense fortunes, but many ended in the gutter if not in

prison. Her father, François Poisson, involved in a black-market scandal, had to flee the country in 1725; his beautiful wife and two small children were then looked after by a more fortunate colleague, Le Normant de Tournehem. Both children were clever, and the girl was fascinating; she was educated to be the wife of a rich man. In those days rich men, even if they came from a low class, were interested in art and literature, and they expected their wives to share these interests.

By the time Mademoiselle Poisson was of an age to marry, she could hold her own in any society and had made friends with many distinguished men, including Voltaire. Le Normant de Tournehem arranged a match for her with his own nephew, Charles-Guillaume Le Normant d'Étoiles, a rising young man; they had a little girl, Alexandrine. Madame d'Étoiles became a shining star of Parisian society and was admired by the King himself. In 1744 Louis XV's young mistress, the Duchesse de Châteauroux, died suddenly. She was soon replaced by Madame d'Étoiles, who obtained a legal separation from her husband and was created marquise de Pompadour.

Nineteenth-century historians thought that Madame de Pompadour had complete ascendancy over Louis XV. These post-Revolution writers were concerned with portraying the Bourbon monarchs as poor creatures; it is now generally admitted that Louis XV was a much more able man than he has been painted. Shy and introspective, he had difficulty in communicating with people whom he did not know well. Madame de Pompadour acted as his private secretary, but, although she gave the orders, the decisions were made by the King.

She began her reign at Versailles modestly. She was lodged in a few rooms under the roof; she set out to make herself agreeable to all those who counted for anything in the palace, beginning with Queen Marie (Maria Leszczynska). Marie could hardly have been a more unsuitable wife for the handsome, artistic, sensual, and pleasure-loving Louis XV. Eight years older than he, she was preoccupied with the welfare of her father (a deposed king of Poland), with childbearing, and with religion. After giving birth to an heir to the throne (and eight or nine other children between 1727 and 1737), she let the King understand that she had no wish to remain sexually intimate with him.

After five romantic years in her attic, Madame de Pompadour moved downstairs to a regal apartment. Louis XV now began to take other mistresses, but Madame de Pompadour was more firmly established than ever before; favours, promotions, and privileges could be obtained only through her good offices.

#### Artistic and political collaboration with Louis

Her collaboration with the King was twofold, artistic and political. The artistic side was wholly successful. On her suggestion, her brother was appointed director of the King's buildings and created marquis de Marigny; the brother, the sister, and Louis XV, working in perfect harmony, planned and built the École Militaire and the Place Louis XV (now the Place de la Concorde) in Paris, most of the palace of Compiègne, the Petit Trianon Palace at Versailles, a new wing at the palace of Fontainebleau, and the exquisite Château de Bellevue, as well as many pavilions and summer houses. He and his mistress patronized all forms of decorative art: painters, sculptors, cabinetmakers, and craftsmen worked under the royal eye; the famous porcelain factory was built at Sèvres. Madame de Pompadour's 20 years of power marked the very apogee of taste in France. The protector of most of the authors and the editor of the Encyclopédie, she would have liked to do for literature what she did for the arts, but the King had no literary interests and disliked the intellectuals whom he knew.

The political collaboration between the King and his mistress was much less successful than the artistic, mainly because the French politicians and generals of the day were of such poor calibre. The Duc de Choiseul, by far the ablest of the ministers, was Madame de Pompadour's protégé. He was brought in to implement the famous Reversal of Alliances, which allied France with its old enemy Austria against the German Protestant principalities. This was a statesmanlike conception,

but it was unpopular and led to the Seven Years' War, disastrous to France. Frederick the Great crushed the huge, incompetently led French and Austrian armies, while the English were driving the French out of Canada. All these defeats were laid at the door of Madame de Pompadour. She fell prey to melancholy, and soon after the end of the war she died, in the spring of 1764, probably of cancer of the lung, in her apartment at Versailles. One of her last actions was to get Louis XV's support for the revision of the Calas case, a gross miscarriage of justice in which Voltaire was interested. Voltaire said of her:

I mourn her out of gratitude . . . Born sincere, she loved the King for himself; she had righteousness in her soul and justice in her heart; all this is not to be met with every day.

## Statesmen

### Calonne, Charles-Alexandre de

(1734-1802)

French statesman whose efforts to reform the structure of his nation's finance and administration precipitated the governmental crisis that led to the French Revolution of 1789.

The son of a magistrate of Douai, Calonne held various posts in French Flanders and in Artois before becoming intendant of Metz (1768) and of Lille (1774). His financial genius and court connections led to his appointment as controller general of finance in November 1783. At that time the French government was heavily in debt from the aid that it had provided the colonists during the American Revolution (1775-83). Calonne reconstituted a sinking fund (1784) to pay off the debt, and in 1785 he reformed the gold coinage. He soon discovered, however, that major reforms were necessary to save France from bankruptcy. In August 1786 he submitted to King Louis XVI a far-reaching plan of reform that involved increasing the taxation of the privileged noble and clerical orders through a proportional tax on land.

Recognizing that the Parlements (high courts of justice) would reject his proposals, Calonne submitted them instead to a special Assembly of Notables--nobles, clergy, and magistrates--which convened on Feb. 22, 1787. Nevertheless, the intrigues of his political opponents and the antagonism of the higher clergy and magistrates in the assembly thwarted his efforts. His revelation of the annual deficit of more than 100,000,000 livres and the failure of his reform schemes ensured the summons of the Estates-General in August 1788, which in turn led directly to the French Revolution. In April 1787 Louis XVI dismissed Calonne from office, and four months later he withdrew to England.

After the Revolution began, Calonne devoted himself to the cause of counterrevolution. From exile he criticized the National Assembly's efforts to abolish most of France's feudal institutions. He was chief adviser to the émigrés (nobles in exile) from December 1790 until the fall of the monarchy in August 1792. In 1802, during Napoleon Bonaparte's Consulate regime, Calonne returned to France; he died soon thereafter.

### Duc de Choiseul

(1719-1785)

Duc de (duke of) Choiseul, Étienne-François de Choiseul, also called (until 1758) Comte (count) de Stainville, French foreign minister who dominated the government of King Louis XV from 1758 to 1770.

Choiseul, the son of François-Joseph de Choiseul, Marquis de Stainville, adopted the title Count de Stainville, entered the French army, and served with distinction against the British and Austrians in the War of the Austrian Succession (1740-48). At the end of the conflict, he joined the circle of nobles around Louis XV, and in 1752 he earned the undying favour of the king's mistress, Mme de Pompadour, by preventing her from falling victim to a court intrigue. The following year Mme de Pompadour had Stainville appointed ambassador to the Vatican, where he persuaded Pope Benedict XIV to help reduce the tensions within the French church between the Gallicans (who favoured independence from the papacy) and the Society of Jesus (Jesuits). As a result of his successful mission, Stainville was made ambassador to the Austrian court (March 1757) and was instructed to develop the newly formed Austrian alliance. By that time France and Austria had entered the Seven Years' War.

In November 1758 Stainville was made Duke de Choiseul. The following month Louis XV recalled him to Versailles and designated him secretary of state for foreign affairs. The appointment came

at a critical moment when French forces were being defeated by the Prussians on the European continent and by the British in North America and India. In August 1761 he concluded with Spain a military alliance that was known as the Pacte de Famille ("Family Compact") because both countries were under Bourbon rule. The subsequent entry of Spain into the war (1762) gave Choiseul leverage in his negotiations with the British. By the Treaty of Paris (1763) France surrendered most of its North American and Indian colonies to Great Britain, but Choiseul's diplomatic maneuvers had enabled France to avoid even more humiliating terms.

Choiseul immediately began to rebuild French military power with the intent of striking back at the British. While serving as naval minister (1761-66) he dramatically increased the number of French warships, and as minister of war (1766-70) he initiated a period of army reforms that continued until the outbreak of the Revolution.

Choiseul did not, however, display the same boldness in domestic affairs. He was unwilling to challenge the authority of the Parlements (high courts of justice), which rejected all proposals for urgently needed financial reforms. He even stood by as the Parlement of Paris, against the will of the king, dissolved the Society of Jesus in 1762. In 1768-69 Louis XV brought into the ministry two men who were eager to take the offensive against Choiseul and the Parlements. When Choiseul called for war against Great Britain (1770), these ministers convinced the King that the government was too heavily in debt to finance such a venture. Louis dismissed Choiseul from office on Dec. 24, 1770, and exiled him to his estates at Chanteloup. Allowed to return to Paris in 1774 after the death of Louis XV, Choiseul never recovered political power.

### Dubois, Guillaume

(1656-1723)

French cardinal, leading minister in the administration of Philippe II, duc d'Orléans (regent for King Louis XV from 1715 to 1723), and architect of the Anglo-French alliance that helped maintain peace in Europe from 1716 to 1733.

The son of a country doctor, Dubois studied for the priesthood before serving as tutor to the children of nobles who lived at the court of King Louis XIV. Among his pupils was Philippe, duc de Chartres, who succeeded to the title duc d'Orléans in 1701. When Orléans became regent for the five-year-old King Louis XV on the death of Louis XIV (Sept. 1, 1715), he made Dubois his secret adviser and envoy for foreign affairs.

Capable and unscrupulous, Dubois devoted himself to promoting the dynastic interests of Orléans, whose claim to the succession to the crown of the sickly Louis XV was disputed by a rival claimant, King Philip V of Spain, a grandson of Louis XIV. In order to gain support against Philip, Dubois concluded in 1716 an alliance with France's traditional enemy, Great Britain. He pledged to back the British king George I against the Jacobites (supporters of Stuart claims to the British throne), and in return he obtained a guarantee of British support for the dynastic rights of Orléans. In 1717-18 Dubois made similar agreements with the Dutch and Austrians, thereby forming the Quadruple Alliance (Aug. 2, 1718). He was officially designated secretary of state for foreign affairs in September 1718.

When the chief minister of Spain, Giulio Alberoni, tried to further Spain's territorial ambitions by unilaterally invading Sardinia and Sicily in 1717-18, Dubois joined the British in attacking Spain (1719). In June 1720, Philip V was forced to renounce his claims to the French throne and to dismiss Alberoni. Four months later, however, a severe financial crisis in France discredited Orléans's regime and jeopardized Dubois' position. The foreign minister saved himself by pursuing a pro-Spanish policy that was popular in France because both countries were under Bourbon rule. The result was the Franco-Spanish treaty of March 1721 and the betrothal of Louis XV to the infanta Mariana, daughter of Philip V. At the same time, Dubois remained faithful to the British alliance.

In spite of his disreputable personal life, Dubois acquired the support of the French Roman Catholic Church by opposing the Jansenists, a dissident church faction. Owing to this stance, as well as to his lavish bribery at the papal curia, he was made a cardinal in July 1721. He became premier ministre ("first minister") in August 1722, a year before his death.

### Duc du Maine

(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'Orléans, 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 legitimized 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 Orléans, who by law was to become regent for Louis XV. Nevertheless, immediately after the death of Louis XIV (Sept. 1, 1715), Orléans 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-Bénédicte de Bourbon-Condé, 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 Orléans. Orléans 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 château at Sceaux.

### Count of Maurepas

(1701-1781)

(Comte de (count of) Maurepas, Jean-Frédéric Phélypeaux, secretary of state under King Louis XV and chief royal adviser during the first seven years of the reign of King Louis XVI. By dissuading Louis XVI from instituting economic and administrative reforms, Maurepas was partially responsible for the governmental crises that eventually led to the outbreak of the French Revolution.

Maurepas's father, Jérôme Phélypeaux, comte de Pontchartrain, was a secretary of state under King Louis XIV. In 1718 Maurepas was made secretary of state for the king's household, thereby gaining authority over ecclesiastical affairs and the administration of Paris. Appointed to the additional office of secretary for the marine in 1723, he undertook the immense task of reorganizing the severely demoralized French Navy.

Maurepas remained in office until 1749, when, as a result of a personal quarrel with Louis XV's mistress, Madame de Pompadour, he was disgraced and banished to his estates at Pontchartrain. In 1774 he was recalled from exile and made chief adviser to the newly crowned young monarch, Louis XVI. Maurepas proved unwilling to continue the reforming trend that had begun with the abolition of the political powers of the Parlements (high courts of justice) in 1771, and he persuaded Louis to restore the full authority of the Parlements (August 1774), which sought to protect the interests of the nobles and the wealthy bourgeoisie. Although Maurepas secured the appointment of Anne-Robert Turgot as controller general of the finances, he refused to support

Turgot's efforts to shift the burden of taxation to the privileged orders. In May 1776 he persuaded Louis to dismiss Turgot. Maurepas then had Jacques Necker put in charge of government finances, but he became jealous of Necker's popularity and forced him to resign in May 1781.

### Comte de Mirabeau

(1749-1791)

Comte de (count of) Mirabeau, Honoré-Gabriel Riqueti, French politician and orator, one of the greatest figures in the National Assembly that governed France during the early phases of the French Revolution. A moderate and an advocate of constitutional monarchy, he died before the Revolution reached its radical climax.

#### Troubled youth

Mirabeau was the elder son of the noted economist Victor Riqueti, marquis de Mirabeau, by his unhappy marriage to Marie-Geneviève de Vassan. Disfigured by smallpox at the age of three, the precocious Honoré-Gabriel suffered even in early childhood the disfavour of his formidable father. At the age of 15 he was sent as a pupil to the strict Abbé Choquard in Paris, and at 18 he went as a volunteer to serve in a cavalry regiment at Saintes, where his father hoped that military discipline would curb him. His misbehaviour, however, led to his imprisonment on the Île de Ré, under a lettre de cachet, a written order permitting imprisonment without trial. Released to serve in Corsica with the rank of sublieutenant in the army, he distinguished himself there in 1769.

Reconciled with his father, he married a rich Provençal heiress, Émilie de Marignane, in 1772, but his heavy spending and further misconduct led his father to have him imprisoned under another lettre de cachet in order to put him out of reach of his creditors. He was detained first at the Château d'If (1774), then at the Fort de Joux, near Pontarlier. Having obtained permission to visit the town of Pontarlier, he there met his "Sophie"--who, in fact, was the marquise de Monnier, Marie-Thérèse-Richard de Ruffey, the young wife of a very old man. He eventually escaped to Switzerland, where Sophie joined him; the couple then made their way to Holland, where Mirabeau was arrested in 1777.

The tribunal at Pontarlier had meanwhile sentenced him to death for seduction and abduction, but Mirabeau escaped execution by submitting to further imprisonment under a lettre de cachet. In the château of Vincennes he composed the *Lettres à Sophie*, some erotic works, and his essay *Des lettres de cachet et des prisons d'état* ("Of Lettres de Cachet and of State Prisons"). Released in December 1780, he finally had to surrender himself to arrest at Pontarlier in order to have the death sentence revoked, but by August 1782 he was entirely free. He now became involved in a lawsuit against his wife, who wanted a judicial separation. Pleading on his own behalf, he gained the sympathy of the public but lost his case (1783). Rejected by his wife and by his father, he had to renounce the aristocratic society into which he had been born.

For the next five years Mirabeau lived the life of an adventurer. He was employed sometimes as a hired pamphleteer, sometimes as a secret agent. He came into contact with Louis XVI's ministers Charles-Alexandre de Calonne; Charles Gravier, comte de Vergennes; and Armand-Marc, comte de Montmorin-Saint-Hérem. He also made an enemy of the Swiss banker Jacques Necker, at that time director of the finances, and engaged the playwright Pierre-Augustin Caron de Beaumarchais in controversy.

His activities necessitated much travelling. In London he was introduced into the best Whig society by Gilbert Elliot (later 1st earl of Minto), who had been his fellow pupil under the Abbé Choquard; he had to take refuge in Liège when his *Dénonciation de l'agiotage* (against stockjobbing) annoyed Calonne; and he undertook a secret mission to Berlin in 1786. With the

active assistance of a Brunswick friend, Jakob Mauvillon, he wrote *De la monarchie prussienne sous Frédéric le Grand* (1788; "The Prussian Monarchy Under Frederick the Great"), which he dedicated to his father; but *Histoire secrète de la cour de Berlin* ("Secret History of the Court of Berlin"), in which he made unscrupulous use of material derived from his mission in Germany, created a scandal in 1789.

#### Election to the States General

Within France, affairs were moving toward a crisis. The country, bankrupted by its 18th-century wars, was burdened with an archaic system of taxation and social privilege. The States General, an assembly of the three estates of the realm--the clergy, the nobility, and the commons--was summoned to meet in Paris in May 1789 in an attempt to implement the necessary reforms. It was that meeting that set in motion the great French Revolution of 1789.

When the States General were summoned, Mirabeau hoped to be elected as a deputy for the nobility of Provence. For this he needed his father's support. Pleased by the book dedicated to him, the Marquis had summoned Mirabeau to Argenteuil in the autumn of 1788 but had not given him any real help. Mirabeau presented himself in the chamber of the nobility in the estates of Provence in January 1789 and uttered violent diatribes against the privileged classes but was not elected deputy, as he held no fief. Turning reluctantly to the Third Estate, he was elected to represent both Marseilles and Aix-en-Provence, choosing to represent Aix.

Mirabeau came to the States General without any precise constitutional doctrine. An avowed enemy of despotism (he had written *Essai sur le despotisme* ["Essay on Despotism"] before he was 25), he was, nevertheless, a firm supporter of the monarchy and of the executive power. Without expressly adhering to the English system, he wanted representative government. A nobleman rejected by his class, he opposed the idea of an aristocratic second chamber. Like most of his contemporaries, he had no political experience, but his intelligence and his knowledge of men made him supremely capable of acquiring such experience rapidly. Lack of money, however, exposed him to pressure and to temptation.

From May to October 1789 Mirabeau played a decisive part in the battle between the Third Estate and the privileged orders. His aim was to become the spokesman of the nation to the King and at the same time to moderate the expression of the nation's wishes. Thus, on June 15 and 16 he was careful not to suggest the name National Assembly, which was the rallying cry of the Third Estate in its revolutionary debate of June 17, when it set itself up as representative of the whole nation. Yet, at the ending of the "royal session" of June 23, when Henri Évrard, marquis de Dreux-Brézé, in the King's name ordered the assembled estates to return each to its separate chamber, Mirabeau's answer did much to confirm the deputies in their resolution to disobey and establish the National Assembly, and, in the feverish atmosphere of the early days of July, his speeches inspired the Assembly to demand the dispersal of the troops concentrated around Paris.

After the fall of the Bastille (July 14), he urged the Assembly to demand the dismissal of the ministers who were to blame for the disorders. His popularity in Paris was then considerable. On the other hand, he disapproved of the Assembly's precipitate action in abolishing feudalism (on the night of August 4) and of the abstract Declaration of Rights, and, while he was openly against a second chamber, he yet wanted the king to have an absolute veto. In October, when the Parisians marched on Versailles and took Louis XVI back to Paris, Mirabeau's attitude was ambiguous and gave rise to the suspicion that he might be plotting against the King. To clear himself and to keep open the door to the court's favour, he addressed a memorandum to the King, advising him to leave Paris for Rouen, to secure the support of a small army, and to appeal to the provinces.

Mirabeau's prime concern, however, was to win "the battle of the ministry." Ostensibly a supporter of Necker, Mirabeau, in fact, did his utmost to destroy him: his brilliant speech on the bankruptcy of the nation was a masterstroke against this minister. Furthermore, he tried skillfully to induce the Assembly to grant to the king the option of choosing members of it to be his ministers, but

the Assembly's decree of Nov. 7, 1789, which precluded all deputies from the ministry for the duration of the session, frustrated his hopes of ministerial office for himself.

#### Intrigue with the court

From November 1789, notwithstanding his oratorical triumphs of January-April 1790 in the cause of the Revolution, Mirabeau was a prey to despondency and aimlessness until his friend Auguste, prince d'Arenberg, comte de La Marck, with the approval of Florimund, Graf Mercy d'Argenteau, Austrian ambassador to Paris and confidant of the queen, Marie-Antoinette, approached him with the proposal from Louis XVI and the Queen that he should become their secret counsellor. Mirabeau accepted with delight: "I shall make it my chief business to see that the executive power has its place in the constitution" (letter of May 10). Part of the promised remuneration was to be the paying off of his debts.

In May 1790, when the Assembly was debating the king's right to make war and peace, Mirabeau successfully opposed the left-wing orator Antoine Barnave, whom he challenged with the words: "Tell us that there should be no king, do not tell us that there should only be a powerless, superfluous king." He impeded the progress of the Jacobins but risked his own popularity, and a pamphlet accusing him of treason was circulated ("Trahison découverte du comte de Mirabeau" ["The Uncovered Treason of the Comte de Mirabeau"]).

From June to October he had to work to recapture his prestige. This was the more necessary because the King and the Queen, despite their secret interview of July 3 with Mirabeau at Saint-Cloud, took little notice of his advice and continued to be influenced by his rival for court favour, the Marquis de Lafayette, who had scorned Mirabeau's offer of alliance. In October 1790 the Assembly further disappointed Mirabeau by refusing, after more discussion, to revoke the decree of November 1789 on the noneligibility of its members for the ministry.

While the court was displeased by some of Mirabeau's outbursts and by his "incurable mania of running after popularity," Mirabeau, for his part, was enraged to see a new ministry formed under the influence of his rivals Lafayette and Alexandre, comte de Lameth. By the end of November 1790 his relations with the court were severely strained. He restored them by submitting to the King's adviser Montmorin a "Plan" concocted for bringing pressure to bear by various means on the Assembly, on Paris, and on the provinces so as to coordinate "the means of reconciling public opinion with the sovereign's authority."

The plan was perfect in theory but very difficult to put into practice. From January 1791 it was clear that Mirabeau had no intention of doing anything that might compromise his own popularity, though he was willing enough to sabotage the Assembly by getting it to adopt ill-considered measures of religious persecution and was eagerly and adroitly working to discredit Lameth's faction at court. His popularity rose to its zenith, and the eyes of all Europe were on him.

As spokesman of the diplomatic committee, on Jan. 28, 1791, he made a speech that bore the unmistakable stamp of statesmanship. Anxious to avoid anything that might compromise France's relations with neighbouring countries, particularly with England, he yet would not repudiate any of the Revolution's political victories or allow any necessary military precautions to be overlooked. On the following day he at last became president of the Assembly for a fortnight. In this office, from which he had been so long excluded, his control of the debates was masterly.

Mirabeau's problem was to know how and for how long his Machiavellian game could be continued before his intrigue with the court would be exposed. The people of Paris were restless, worried by rumours. Mirabeau's position was made difficult by his intervention on behalf of the King's aunts (who had fled from Paris), by his hostility to the law against the émigrés, and by his harsh words against the Lameths and their satellites in the Assembly ("Silence to the factious! Silence to the 33!"). On February 28 he was sorely pressed to justify himself to the Jacobins after a pitiless attack by Alexandre, comte de Lameth. The newspapers of the left redoubled their

accusations of treason against him, and in March he experienced some notable reverses in the Assembly.

Death may have saved him from political defeat. Gravely ill since his presidency of the Assembly, he worsened his condition by excessive indulgence. He took to his bed on March 27, 1791, and died a week later. The people's grief for him was boundless; he was given a magnificent funeral; and it was for him that the new church of Sainte-Geneviève was converted into the Panthéon, for the burial of great men. In the insurrection of Aug. 10, 1792, however, papers proving Mirabeau's relations with the court were found in an iron chest in the Tuileries Palace, and on Sept. 21, 1794, his remains were dislodged from the Panthéon by order of the Convention.

#### Assessment

As a statesman, Mirabeau failed in his main object, that of reconciling the monarchy with the Revolution and a strong executive with national liberty. He was too much of a monarchist for the Revolution, too revolutionary for the monarchy. As an orator he was unsurpassed. Even though his eloquence was fed by material gathered from every quarter and by a "workshop" of collaborators, it was Mirabeau who found the striking images and expressions that give to his speeches their brilliant individuality. Generally bad at extemporizing, Mirabeau could be moved by anger or by injured pride to an impassioned tone that would carry the Assembly with him.

#### Turgot, Anne-Robert-Jacques

(1727-1781)

Turgot, Anne-Robert-Jacques, Baron de l'Aulne, French economist, who was an administrator under Louis XV and served as the comptroller general of finance (1774-76) under Louis XVI. His efforts at instituting financial reform were blocked by the privileged classes.

#### Youth

Turgot was born into an old Norman family whose members had already held some important administrative posts. (His father, Michel-Étienne [1690-1751], was to be "provost of merchants," the head of the Paris municipality, from 1729 to 1740.) Destined for the church, he entered the Seminary of Saint-Sulpice (1743) and the Sorbonne (1749), exhibiting both as a schoolboy and as an advanced student a precocious but sound maturity of intellect. He was influenced from his adolescence by all the fashionable ideas of his day: scientific curiosity, liberalism, tolerance, and an interest in social evolution. In 1751, on the threshold of ordination, he drew back, explaining to his relatives that it would have been impossible for him always to have lived under false pretenses, being, in fact, a deist. His occasional attendance at mass was necessitated by his rank.

From that time on, Turgot's friends comprised such philosophes as the Marquis de Condorcet and Pierre-Samuel du Pont de Nemours, who were both attached to the famous physiocratic school of thought, which generally has been regarded as the first scientific school of economics. Late in 1751 he announced his intention of seeking a career in the royal administration and entered the law, becoming a deputy solicitor general in January 1752 and later a counselor magistrate to the Parlement (supreme court of law) in Paris (December 1752).

#### Early career

In 1753 he bought, as was the custom, the office of examiner of petitions, thus entering the branch of the magistracy that provided officials for the bureaucracy and that upheld the royal authority. With 39 other examiners he was called upon to serve in the Royal Chamber, which acted as a supreme court in 1753-54, when the Parlement was exiled for defying the crown. He

combined his duties with other forms of intellectual activity. In 1753 he translated into French Josiah Tucker's *Reflections on the Expediency of a Law for the Naturalization of Foreign Protestants* (1752) and the following year published *Lettres sur la tolérance* (Letters on Tolerance). Between 1753 and 1756 Turgot accompanied J.-C.-M. Vincent de Gournay, the mentor of the physiocratic school and an intendant of commerce, on his tours of inspection to various French provinces.

By 1761 Turgot had drawn enough attention to himself for Louis XV to accept his nomination as intendant to the administrative region of Limoges. He occupied this post, then considered one of the least desirable available, for 13 years and there displayed his extraordinary capacities as an administrator, reformer, and economist. In 1766 he published his best-known work, *Reflections on the Formation and Distribution of Wealth*, to which he was to add--among other famous works--*Lettres sur la liberté du commerce des grains* (1770; "Letters on the Freedom of the Grain Trade"). He introduced new methods to the peasant region he administered, substituting a small tax in money for the corvée (unpaid work required of peasants for the upkeep of roads); compiling a land register (cadastre) for tax purposes; and combatting the famine of 1770-71, during which--despite opposition--he maintained the free commerce in grain. He was appointed comptroller general by Louis XVI on Aug. 24, 1774.

#### Ministry

Turgot was all that a successful courtier should not be. Large and fat, with regular and quite distinguished features, he was nevertheless a shy and awkward bachelor who blushed easily, spoke with hesitation, and was rarely convivially gay. Though his customary serious manner was tinged with humour, he was not persuasive and could irritate a questioner with the brusqueness of his statements, his theoretical cast of thought, and the suppressed irony of his half smile.

Realizing that the young king was inexperienced and wishing to avoid political storms, Turgot temporized during the first days of his ministry, but later, feeling himself threatened by his adversaries, a frenzy for public service drove him to accumulate reforms. He introduced his Six Edicts in 1776. Four of them (suppressing certain dues and offices) were of no great importance, and the fifth (suppressing the guilds of Paris) encountered no serious opposition. It was against the sixth edict, that abolishing the corvée, that his enemies, who defended privilege, concentrated their attack. Appealing in vain to the good sense and courage of the young king from whom he had been alienated by a coalition of financiers, place-holders, privileged classes, and the religious party at court, he saw his reforms abandoned and, after his dismissal on May 12, 1776, forgotten. Five years later, having published nothing since his public disgrace, he died in Paris attended by a few friends.

## Philosophers

Diderot, Denis

(1713-1784)

French man of letters and philosopher who, from 1745 to 1772, served as chief editor of the *Encyclopédie*, one of the principal works of the Age of Enlightenment.

Youth and marriage

Diderot was the son of a widely respected master cutler. He was tonsured in 1726, though he did not in fact enter the church, and was first educated by the Jesuits at Langres. From 1729 to 1732 he studied in Paris at the Collège d'Harcourt or at the Lycée Louis-le-Grand or possibly at both these institutions, and he was awarded the degree of master of arts in the University of Paris on Sept. 2, 1732. He then studied law as an articled clerk in the office of Clément de Ris but was more interested in languages, literature, philosophy, and higher mathematics. Of his life in the period 1734 to 1744 comparatively little is known. He dropped an early ambition to enter the theatre and, instead, taught for a living, led a penurious existence as a publisher's hack, and wrote sermons for missionaries at 50 écus each. At one time he seems to have entertained the idea of taking up an ecclesiastical career, but it is most unlikely that he entered a seminary. Yet his work testifies to his having gone through a religious crisis, and he progressed relatively slowly from Roman Catholicism to deism and then to atheism and philosophical materialism. That he led a disordered and bohemian existence at this time is made clear in his posthumously published novel, *Le Neveu de Rameau* (*Rameau's Nephew*). He frequented the coffeehouses, particularly the Régence and the Procope, where he met the philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau in 1741 and established a friendship with him that was to last for 15 years, until it was broken by a quarrel.

In 1741 he also met Antoinette Champion, daughter of a linendraper, and in 1743 he married her--secretly, because of his father's disapproval. The relationship was based on romantic love, but the marriage was not a happy one owing to incompatible interests. The bond held, however, partly through a common affection for their daughter, Angélique, sole survivor of three children, who was born in 1753 and whom Diderot eventually married to Albert de Vandeul, a man of some standing at Langres. Diderot lavished care over her education, and she eventually wrote a short account of his life and classified his manuscripts.

## Mature career

In order to earn a living, Diderot undertook translation work and in 1745 published a free translation of the *Inquiry Concerning Virtue* by the 3rd Earl of Shaftesbury, whose fame and influence he spread in France. Diderot's own *Pensées philosophiques* (1746; *Philosophic Thoughts*), an original work with new and explosive anti-Christian ideas couched in a vivid prose, contains many passages directly translated from or inspired by Shaftesbury. The proceeds of this publication, as of his allegedly indecent novel *Les Bijoux indiscrets* (1748), were used to meet the demands of his mistress, Madeleine de Puisieux, with whom he broke a few years later. In 1755 he met Sophie Volland, with whom he formed an attachment that was to last more than 20 years. The liaison was founded on common interests, natural sympathy, and a deepening friendship. His correspondence with Sophie, together with his other letters, forms one of the most fascinating documents on Diderot's personality, enthusiasms, and ideas and on the intellectual society of Louise d'Épinay, F.M. Grimm, the Baron d'Holbach, Ferdinando Galiani, and other deistic writers and thinkers (*Philosophes*) with whom he felt most at home. Through Rousseau, Diderot met Étienne Bonnot de Condillac, the philosopher, and for a time the three friends dined together at the Panier Fleuri.

## The Encyclopédie

In 1745 the publisher André Le Breton approached Diderot with a view to bringing out a French translation of Ephraim Chambers' *Cyclopaedia*, after two other translators had withdrawn from the project. Diderot undertook the task with the distinguished mathematician Jean Le Rond d'Alembert as coeditor but soon profoundly changed the nature of the publication, broadening its scope and turning it into an important organ of radical and revolutionary opinion. He gathered around him a team of dedicated litterateurs, scientists, and even priests, many of whom, as yet unknown, were to make their mark in later life. All were fired with a common purpose: to further knowledge and, by so doing, strike a resounding blow against reactionary forces in church and state. As a *dictionnaire raisonné* ("rational dictionary"), the *Encyclopédie* was to bring out the essential principles and applications of every art and science. The underlying philosophy was rationalism and a qualified faith in the progress of the human mind.

In 1749 Diderot published the *Lettre sur les aveugles* (An Essay on Blindness), remarkable for its proposal to teach the blind to read through the sense of touch, along lines that Louis Braille was to follow in the 19th century, and for the presentation of the first step in his evolutionary theory of survival by superior adaptation. This daring exposition of the doctrine of materialist atheism, with its emphasis on human dependence on sense impression, led to Diderot's arrest and incarceration in the prison of Vincennes for three months. Diderot's work on the *Encyclopédie*, however, was not interrupted for long, and in 1750 he outlined his program for it in a *Prospectus*, which d'Alembert expanded into the momentous *Discours préliminaire* (1751). The history of the *Encyclopédie*, from the publication of the first volume in 1751 to the distribution of the final volumes of plates in 1772, was checkered, but ultimate success was never in doubt. Diderot was undaunted by the government's censorship of the work and by the criticism of conservatives and reactionaries. A critical moment occurred in 1758, on the publication of the seventh volume, when d'Alembert resigned on receiving warning of trouble and after reading Rousseau's attack on his article "Genève." Another serious blow came when the philosopher Helvétius' book *De l'esprit* ("On the Mind"), said to be a summary of the *Encyclopédie*, was condemned to be burned by the Parlement of Paris, and the *Encyclopédie* itself was formally suppressed. Untempted by Voltaire's offer to have the publication continued outside France, Diderot held on in Paris with great tenacity and published the *Encyclopédie*'s later volumes surreptitiously. He was deeply wounded, however, by the discovery in 1764 that Le Breton had secretly removed compromising material from the corrected proof sheets of about 10 folio volumes. The censored passages, though of considerable interest, would not have made an appreciable difference on the impact of the work. To the 17 volumes of text and 11 volumes of plates (1751-72), Diderot contributed innumerable articles

partly original, partly derived from varied sources, especially on the history of philosophy ("Eclectisme" ["Eclecticism"]), social theory ("Droit naturel" ["Natural Law"]), aesthetics ("Beau" ["The Beautiful"]), and the crafts and industries of France. He was moreover an energetic general director and supervised the illustrations for 3,000 to 4,000 plates of exceptional quality, which are still prized by historians today. Philosophical and scientific works. While editing the *Encyclopédie*, Diderot managed to compose most of his own important works as well. In 1751 he published his *Lettre sur les sourds et muets* ("Letter on the Deaf and Dumb"), which studies the function of language and deals with points of aesthetics, and in 1754 he published the *Pensées sur l'interprétation de la nature* ("Thoughts on the Interpretation of Nature"), an influential short treatise on the new experimental methods in science. Diderot published few other works in his lifetime, however. His writings, in manuscript form, were known only to his friends and the privileged correspondents of the *Correspondance littéraire*, a sort of private newspaper edited by Baron Grimm that was circulated in manuscript form. The posthumous publication of these manuscripts, among which are several bold and original works in the sciences, philosophy, and literature, have made Diderot more highly appreciated in the 20th century than he was in France during his lifetime.

Among his philosophical works, special mention may be made of *L'Entretien entre d'Alembert et Diderot* (written 1769, published 1830; "Conversation Between d'Alembert and Diderot"), *Le Rêve de d'Alembert* (written 1769, published 1830; "D'Alembert's Dream"), and the *Eléments de physiologie* (1774-80). In these works Diderot developed his materialist philosophy and arrived at startling intuitive insights into biology and chemistry; in speculating on the origins of life without divine intervention, for instance, he foreshadowed the evolutionary theories of Charles Darwin and put forth a strikingly prophetic picture of the cellular structure of matter. Though Diderot's speculations in the field of science are of great interest, it is the dialectical brilliance of their presentation that is exceptional. His ideas, often propounded in the form of paradox, and invariably in dialogue, stem from a sense of life's ambiguities and a profound understanding of the complexities and contradictions inherent in human nature.

#### Novels, dialogues, and plays

Four works of prose fiction by Diderot were published posthumously: the novel *La Religieuse* (written 1760, published 1796; *The Nun*); the novel *Jacques le fataliste et son maître* (written 1773, published 1796; *Jacques the Fatalist*); *Le Neveu de Rameau* (written between 1761 and 1774, published in German 1805; *Rameau's Nephew*), a character sketch in dialogue form; and *Supplément au voyage de Bougainville* (written 1772, published 1796; "Supplement to *Bougainville's Voyage*").

*La Religieuse* describes the distressing and ultimately tragic experiences of a girl who is forced to become a nun against her will. In *Jacques le fataliste*, Jacques, who believes in fate, is involved in an endless argument with his master, who does not, as they journey along retelling the story of their lives and loves. Diderot's philosophical standpoint in this work is ambivalent, as is his ethical standpoint in *Le Neveu de Rameau*. The latter work is a dialogue between Diderot and a bohemian musician who is based partly on the nephew of the French composer Jean-Philippe Rameau. This work may properly be called a satire, since it challenges the cant of contemporary society and the hypocrisy of its morality. Rameau's nephew is depicted as a shamelessly selfish parasite, an eccentric, and a musician who is gifted yet unable to make his mark through insufficient talent. His dialogue with Diderot is spontaneous and witty, and there are digressions, a lengthy disquisition on contemporary musical controversies, and diatribes against Diderot's own enemies. This brilliantly conceived, highly original and entertaining divertissement reveals the complexity of Diderot's personality and of his philosophical ideas. In the *Supplément au voyage de Bougainville* Diderot, in discussing the mores of the South Pacific islanders, emphasizes his conception of a free society based on tolerance and develops his views on sexual freedom.

Diderot's major plays, *Le Fils naturel* (1757; "The Illegitimate Son") and *Le Père de famille* (1758;

"The Father of the Family"), make tedious reading today. His theories on drama, however, expounded in *Entretiens sur le fils naturel* (1757; "Discussion on the Illegitimate Son") and *Discours sur la poésie dramatique* ("Discourse on Dramatic Poetry"), were to exercise a determining influence on the German dramatist Gotthold Lessing. Taking as his starting point the *comédie larmoyante*, Diderot stressed the need for greater realism on the stage and favoured the serious bourgeois drama of real life. Characters should be presented against their milieu and belong to specific professions, so that the moral and social implications of the play, which he considered to be of primary importance, should have greater impact. In his *Paradoxe sur le comédien* (written 1773, published 1830), Diderot argued that great actors must possess judgment and penetration without "sensibility"--i.e., without actually experiencing the emotions they are portraying as characters on the stage. Although Diderot wrote literary criticism, it is as the first great art critic, covering the Paris Salons, or annual art exhibitions, for the *Correspondance littéraire*, that he is best remembered. His analysis of art, artists, and the technique of painting, together with the excellence of his taste and his style, have won him posthumous fame; his *Essai sur la peinture* (written 1765, published 1796; "Essay on Painting"), especially, was admired by Goethe and later by the 19th-century poet and critic Charles Baudelaire.

#### Late life and works

The completion of the *Encyclopédie* in 1772 left Diderot without a source of income. To relieve him of financial worry, Catherine the Great of Russia first bought his library through an agent in Paris, requesting him to retain the books until she required them, and then appointed him librarian on an annual salary for the duration of his life. Diderot went to St. Petersburg in 1773 to thank her for her financial support and was received with great honour and warmth. He wrote for her the *Plan d'une université pour le gouvernement de Russie* ("Plan of a University for the Government of Russia"). He stayed five months, long enough to become disillusioned with enlightened despotism as a solution to social ills.

In 1774 Diderot, now old and ill, worked on a refutation of Helvétius' work *De l'homme* (1772; "On Man"), which was an amplification of the destroyed *De l'esprit*. He wrote *Entretien d'un philosophe avec la Maréchale* ("Conversation with the Maréchale") and published in 1778 *Essai sur les règnes de Claude et de Néron* ("Essay on the Reigns of Claudius and Nero"). Usually known as *Essai sur la vie de Sénèque* ("Essay on the Life of Seneca"), the work may be regarded as an apologia for that Roman satirist and philosopher. Diderot's intimate circle was dwindling. Mme d'Épinay and d'Alembert died, leaving only Grimm and Baron d'Holbach. Slowly Diderot retired into the shell of his own personal and family life. The death of Sophie Volland in February 1784 was a great grief to him; he survived her by a few months, dying of coronary thrombosis in the house in the rue de Richelieu that Catherine the Great had put at his disposal. Apocryphally, his last words were: "Le premier pas vers la philosophie, c'est l'intré" ("The first step toward philosophy is incredulity"). Through the intervention of his son-in-law, he was buried in consecrated ground at Saint-Roch.

#### Rousseau, Jean-Jacques

(1712-1778)

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, the least academic of modern philosophers, was in many ways the most influential. His thought marked the end of the Age of Reason and the birth of Romanticism. He propelled political and ethical thinking into new channels. His reforms revolutionized taste, first in music, then in the other arts. He had a profound impact on people's way of life; he taught parents to take a new interest in their children and to educate them differently; he furthered the expression of emotion rather than polite restraint in friendship and love. He introduced the cult of religious sentiment among people who had discarded religious dogma. He opened men's eyes to the beauties of nature, and he made liberty an object of almost universal aspiration.

#### Formative years

Rousseau was born in Geneva--the city of Calvin--on June 28, 1712. His mother died in childbirth and he was brought up by his father, who taught him to believe that the city of his birth was a republic as splendid as Sparta or ancient Rome. Rousseau senior had an equally glorious image of his own importance; after marrying above his modest station as a watchmaker, he got into trouble with the civil authorities by brandishing the sword that his upper-class pretensions prompted him to wear, and he had to leave Geneva to avoid imprisonment. Rousseau, the son, then lived for six years as a poor relation in his mother's family, patronized and humiliated, until he, too, at the age of 16, fled from Geneva to live the life of an adventurer and a Roman Catholic convert in the kingdoms of Sardinia and France.

Rousseau was fortunate in finding in the province of Savoy a benefactress named the Baronne de Warens, who provided him with a refuge in her home and employed him as her steward. She also furthered his education to such a degree that the boy who had arrived on her doorstep as a stammering apprentice who had never been to school developed into a philosopher, a man of letters, and a musician.

Mme de Warens, who thus transformed the adventurer into a philosopher, was herself an adventuress--a Swiss convert to Catholicism who had stripped her husband of his money before fleeing to Savoy with the gardener's son to set herself up as a Catholic missionary specializing in the conversion of young male Protestants. Her morals distressed Rousseau, even when he became her lover. But she was a woman of taste, intelligence, and energy, who brought out in Rousseau just the talents that were needed to conquer Paris at a time when Voltaire had made radical ideas fashionable.

Rousseau reached Paris when he was 30 and was lucky enough to meet another young man from the provinces seeking literary fame in the capital, Denis Diderot. The two soon became immensely successful as the centre of a group of intellectuals--or "Philosophes"--who gathered round the great French Encyclopédie, of which Diderot was appointed editor. The Encyclopédie was an important organ of radical and anticlerical opinion, and its contributors were as much reforming and even iconoclastic pamphleteers as they were philosophers. Rousseau, the most original of them all in his thinking and the most forceful and eloquent in his style of writing, was soon the most conspicuous. He wrote music as well as prose, and one of his operas, *Le Devin du village* (1752; *The Cunning-Man*), attracted so much admiration from the king and the court that he might have enjoyed an easy life as a fashionable composer, but something in his Calvinist blood rejected this type of worldly glory. Indeed, at the age of 37 Rousseau had what he called an "illumination" while walking to Vincennes to visit Diderot, who had been imprisoned there because of his irreligious writings. In the *Confessions*, which he wrote late in life, Rousseau says that it came to him then in a "terrible flash" that modern progress had corrupted instead of improved men. He went on to write his first important work, a prize essay for the Academy of Dijon entitled *Discours sur les sciences et les arts* (1750; *A Discourse on the Sciences and the Arts*), in which he argues that the history of man's life on earth has been a history of decay.

This Discourse is by no means Rousseau's best piece of writing, but its central theme was to inform almost everything else he wrote. Throughout his life he kept returning to the thought that man is

good by nature but has been corrupted by society and civilization. He did not mean to suggest that society and civilization were inherently bad but rather that both had taken a wrong direction and become more harmful as they had become more sophisticated. This idea in itself was not unfamiliar when Rousseau published his Discourse on the Sciences and the Arts. Many Roman Catholic writers deplored the direction that European culture had taken since the Middle Ages. They shared the hostility toward progress that Rousseau had expressed. What they did not share was his belief that man was naturally good. It was, however, just this belief in man's natural goodness that Rousseau made the cornerstone of his argument.

Rousseau may well have received the inspiration for this belief from Mme de Warens; for although that unusual woman had become a communicant of the Roman Catholic Church, she retained--and transmitted to Rousseau--much of the sentimental optimism about human purity that she had herself absorbed as a child from the mystical Protestant Pietists who were her teachers in the canton of Bern. At all events, the idea of man's natural goodness, as Rousseau developed it, set him apart from both conservatives and radicals. Even so, for several years after the publication of his first Discourse, he remained a close collaborator in Diderot's essentially progressive enterprise, the Encyclopédie, and an active contributor to its pages. His speciality there was music, and it was in this sphere that he first established his influence as reformer.

#### Controversy with Rameau

The arrival of an Italian opera company in Paris in 1752 to perform works of opera buffa by Pergolesi, Scarlatti, Vinci, Leo, and other such composers suddenly divided the French music-loving public into two excited camps, supporters of the new Italian opera and supporters of the traditional French opera. The Philosophes of the Encyclopédie--d'Alembert, Diderot, and d'Holbach among them--entered the fray as champions of Italian music, but Rousseau, who had arranged for the publication of Pergolesi's music in Paris and who knew more about the subject than most Frenchmen after the months he had spent visiting the opera houses of Venice during his time as secretary to the French ambassador to the doge in 1743-44, emerged as the most forceful and effective combatant. He was the only one to direct his fire squarely at the leading living exponent of French operatic music, Jean-Philippe Rameau.

Rousseau and Rameau must at that time have seemed unevenly matched in a controversy about music. Rameau, already in his 70th year, was not only a prolific and successful composer but was also, as the author of the celebrated *Traité de l'harmonie* (1722; Treatise on Harmony) and other technical works, Europe's leading musicologist. Rousseau, by contrast, was 30 years younger, a newcomer to music, with no professional training and only one successful opera to his credit. His scheme for a new notation for music had been rejected by the Academy of Sciences, and most of his musical entries for Diderot's Encyclopédie were as yet unpublished. Yet the dispute was not only musical but also philosophical, and Rameau was confronted with a more formidable adversary than he had realized. Rousseau built his case for the superiority of Italian music over French on the principle that melody must have priority over harmony, whereas Rameau based his on the assertion that harmony must have priority over melody. By pleading for melody, Rousseau introduced what later came to be recognized as a characteristic idea of Romanticism, namely, that in art the free expression of the creative spirit is more important than strict adhesion to formal rules and traditional procedures. By pleading for harmony, Rameau reaffirmed the first principle of French Classicism, namely, that conformity to rationally intelligible rules is a necessary condition of art, the aim of which is to impose order on the chaos of human experience.

In music, Rousseau was a liberator. He argued for freedom in music, and he pointed to the Italian composers as models to be followed. In doing so he had more success than Rameau; he changed people's attitudes. Gluck, who succeeded Rameau as the most important operatic composer in France, acknowledged his debt to Rousseau's teaching, and Mozart based the text for his one-act operetta *Bastien und Bastienne* on Rousseau's *Devin du village*. European music had taken a new direction. But Rousseau himself composed no more operas. Despite the success of *Le Devin du*

village, or rather because of its success, Rousseau felt that, as a moralist who had decided to make a break with worldly values, he could not allow himself to go on working for the theatre. He decided to devote his energies henceforth to literature and philosophy.

#### Major works of political philosophy

As part of what Rousseau called his "reform," or improvement of his own character, he began to look back at some of the austere principles that he had learned as a child in the Calvinist republic of Geneva. Indeed he decided to return to that city, repudiate his Catholicism, and seek readmission to the Protestant church. He had in the meantime acquired a mistress, an illiterate laundry maid named Thérèse Levasseur. To the surprise of his friends, he took her with him to Geneva, presenting her as a nurse. Although her presence caused some murmurings, Rousseau was readmitted easily to the Calvinist communion, his literary fame having made him very welcome to a city that prided itself as much on its culture as on its morals.

Rousseau had by this time completed a second Discourse in response to a question set by the Academy of Dijon: "What is the origin of the inequality among men and is it justified by natural law?" In response to this challenge he produced a masterpiece of speculative anthropology. The argument follows on that of his first Discourse by developing the proposition that natural man is good and then tracing the successive stages by which man has descended from primitive innocence to corrupt sophistication.

Rousseau begins his *Discours sur l'origine de l'inégalité* (1755; *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*) by distinguishing two kinds of inequality, natural and artificial, the first arising from differences in strength, intelligence, and so forth, the second from the conventions that govern societies. It is the inequalities of the latter sort that he sets out to explain. Adopting what he thought the properly "scientific" method of investigating origins, he attempts to reconstruct the earliest phases of man's experience of life on earth. He suggests that original man was not a social being but entirely solitary, and to this extent he agrees with Hobbes's account of the state of nature. But in contrast to the English pessimist's view that the life of man in such a condition must have been "poor, nasty, brutish and short," Rousseau claims that original man, while admittedly solitary, was healthy, happy, good, and free. The vices of men, he argues, date from the time when men formed societies.

Rousseau thus exonerates nature and blames society for the emergence of vices. He says that passions that generate vices hardly exist in the state of nature but begin to develop as soon as men form societies. Rousseau goes on to suggest that societies started when men built their first huts, a development that facilitated cohabitation of males and females; this in turn produced the habit of living as a family and associating with neighbours. This "nascent society," as Rousseau calls it, was good while it lasted; it was indeed the "golden age" of human history. Only it did not endure. With the tender passion of love there was also born the destructive passion of jealousy. Neighbours started to compare their abilities and achievements with one another, and this "marked the first step towards inequality and at the same time towards vice." Men started to demand consideration and respect; their innocent self-love turned into culpable pride, as each man wanted to be better than everyone else.

The introduction of property marked a further step toward inequality since it made it necessary for men to institute law and government in order to protect property. Rousseau laments the "fatal" concept of property in one of his more eloquent passages, describing the "horrors" that have resulted from men's departure from a condition in which the earth belonged to no one. These passages in his second Discourse excited later revolutionaries such as Marx and Lenin, but Rousseau himself did not think that the past could be undone in any way; there was no point in men dreaming of a return to the golden age.

Civil society, as Rousseau describes it, comes into being to serve two purposes: to provide peace for everyone and to ensure the right to property for anyone lucky enough to have possessions. It

is thus of some advantage to everyone, but mostly to the advantage of the rich, since it transforms their de facto ownership into rightful ownership and keeps the poor dispossessed. It is a somewhat fraudulent social contract that introduces government since the poor get so much less out of it than do the rich. Even so, the rich are no happier in civil society than are the poor because social man is never satisfied. Society leads men to hate one another to the extent that their interests conflict, and the best they are able to do is to hide their hostility behind a mask of courtesy. Thus Rousseau regards the inequality between men not as a separate problem but as one of the features of the long process by which men become alienated from nature and from innocence.

In the dedication Rousseau wrote for the Discourse, in order to present it to the republic of Geneva, he nevertheless praises that city-state for having achieved the ideal balance between "the equality which nature established among men and the inequality which they have instituted among themselves." The arrangement he discerned in Geneva was one in which the best men were chosen by the citizens and put in the highest positions of authority. Like Plato, Rousseau always believed that a just society was one in which everyone was in his right place. And having written the Discourse to explain how men had lost their liberty in the past, he went on to write another book, *Du Contrat social* (1762; *The Social Contract*), to suggest how they might recover their liberty in the future. Again Geneva was the model; not Geneva as it had become in 1754 when Rousseau returned there to recover his rights as a citizen, but Geneva as it had once been; i.e., Geneva as Calvin had designed it.

The Social Contract begins with the sensational opening sentence: "Man was born free, but he is everywhere in chains," and proceeds to argue that men need not be in chains. If a civil society, or state, could be based on a genuine social contract, as opposed to the fraudulent social contract depicted in the Discourse on the Origin of Inequality, men would receive in exchange for their independence a better kind of freedom, namely true political, or republican, liberty. Such liberty is to be found in obedience to a self-imposed law.

Rousseau's definition of political liberty raises an obvious problem. For while it can be readily agreed that an individual is free if he obeys only rules he prescribes for himself, this is so because an individual is a person with a single will. A society, by contrast, is a set of persons with a set of individual wills, and conflict between separate wills is a fact of universal experience. Rousseau's response to the problem is to define his civil society as an artificial person united by a general will, or volonté générale. The social contract that brings society into being is a pledge, and the society remains in being as a pledged group. Rousseau's republic is a creation of the general will--of a will that never falters in each and every member to further the public, common, or national interest--even though it may conflict at times with personal interest.

Rousseau sounds very much like Hobbes when he says that under the pact by which men enter civil society everyone totally alienates himself and all his rights to the whole community. Rousseau, however, represents this act as a form of exchange of rights whereby men give up natural rights in return for civil rights. The bargain is a good one because what men surrender are rights of dubious value, whose realization depends solely on an individual man's own might, and what they obtain in return are rights that are both legitimate and enforced by the collective force of the community.

There is no more haunting paragraph in The Social Contract than that in which Rousseau speaks of "forcing a man to be free." But it would be wrong to interpret these words in the manner of those critics who see Rousseau as a prophet of modern totalitarianism. He does not claim that a whole society can be forced to be free but only that an occasional individual, who is enslaved by his passions to the extent of disobeying the law, can be restored by force to obedience to the voice of the general will that exists inside of him. The man who is coerced by society for a breach of the law is, in Rousseau's view, being brought back to an awareness of his own true interests.

For Rousseau there is a radical dichotomy between true law and actual law. Actual law, which he describes in the Discourse on the Origin of Inequality, simply protects the status quo. True law, as

described in *The Social Contract*, is just law, and what ensures its being just is that it is made by the people in its collective capacity as sovereign and obeyed by the same people in their individual capacities as subjects. Rousseau is confident that such laws could not be unjust because it is inconceivable that any people would make unjust laws for itself.

Rousseau is, however, troubled by the fact that the majority of a people does not necessarily represent its most intelligent citizens. Indeed, he agrees with Plato that most people are stupid. Thus the general will, while always morally sound, is sometimes mistaken. Hence Rousseau suggests the people need a lawgiver--a great mind like Solon or Lycurgus or Calvin--to draw up a constitution and system of laws. He even suggests that such lawgivers need to claim divine inspiration in order to persuade the dim-witted multitude to accept and endorse the laws it is offered.

This suggestion echoes a similar proposal by Machiavelli, a political theorist Rousseau greatly admired and whose love of republican government he shared. An even more conspicuously Machiavellian influence can be discerned in Rousseau's chapter on civil religion, where he argues that Christianity, despite its truth, is useless as a republican religion on the grounds that it is directed to the unseen world and does nothing to teach citizens the virtues that are needed in the service of the state, namely, courage, virility, and patriotism. Rousseau does not go so far as Machiavelli in proposing a revival of pagan cults, but he does propose a civil religion with minimal theological content designed to fortify and not impede (as Christianity impedes) the cultivation of martial virtues. It is understandable that the authorities of Geneva, profoundly convinced that the national church of their little republic was at the same time a truly Christian church and a nursery of patriotism, reacted angrily against this chapter in Rousseau's *Social Contract*.

By the year 1762, however, when *The Social Contract* was published, Rousseau had given up any thought of settling in Geneva. After recovering his citizen's rights in 1754, he had returned to Paris and the company of his friends around the *Encyclopédie*. But he became increasingly ill at ease in such worldly society and began to quarrel with his fellow Philosophes. An article for the *Encyclopédie* on the subject of Geneva, written by d'Alembert at Voltaire's instigation, upset Rousseau partly by suggesting that the pastors of the city had lapsed from Calvinist severity into unitarian laxity and partly by proposing that a theatre should be erected there. Rousseau hastened into print with a defense of the Calvinist orthodoxy of the pastors and with an elaborate attack on the theatre as an institution that could only do harm to an innocent community such as Geneva.

#### Years of seclusion and exile

By the time his *Lettre à d'Alembert sur les spectacles* (1758; Letter to Monsieur d'Alembert on the Theatre) appeared in print, Rousseau had already left Paris to pursue a life closer to nature on the country estate of his friend Mme d'Épinay near Montmorency. When the hospitality of Mme d'Épinay proved to entail much the same social round as that of Paris, Rousseau retreated to a nearby cottage, called Montlouis, under the protection of the Maréchal de Luxembourg. But even this highly placed friend could not save him in 1762 when his treatise on education, *Emile*, was published and scandalized the pious Jansenists of the French Parlements even as *The Social Contract* scandalized the Calvinists of Geneva. In Paris, as in Geneva, they ordered the book to be burned and the author arrested; all the Maréchal de Luxembourg could do was to provide a carriage for Rousseau to escape from France. Rousseau spent the rest of his life as a fugitive moving from one refuge to another.

The years at Montmorency had been the most productive of his literary career; besides *The Social Contract* and *Emile*, *Julie: ou, la nouvelle Héloïse* (1761; Julie: or, *The New Eloise*) came out within 12 months, all three works of seminal importance. *The New Eloise*, being a novel, escaped the censorship to which the other two works were subject; indeed of all his books it proved to be the most widely read and the most universally praised in his lifetime. It develops the Romanticism that had already informed his writings on music and perhaps did more than any other single work

of literature to influence the spirit of its age. It made the author at least as many friends among the reading public--and especially among educated women--as *The Social Contract* and *Emile* made enemies among magistrates and priests. If it did not exempt him from persecution, at least it ensured that his persecution was observed, and admiring *femmes du monde* intervened from time to time to help him so that Rousseau was never, unlike Voltaire and Diderot, actually imprisoned.

The theme of *The New Eloise* provides a striking contrast to that of *The Social Contract*. It is about people finding happiness in domestic as distinct from public life, in the family as opposed to the state. The central character, Saint-Preux, is a middle-class preceptor who falls in love with his upper-class pupil, Julie. She returns his love and yields to his advances, but the difference between their classes makes marriage between them impossible. Baron d'Étange, Julie's father, has indeed promised her to a fellow nobleman named Wolmar. As a dutiful daughter, Julie marries Wolmar and Saint-Preux goes off on a voyage around the world with an English aristocrat, Boniston, from whom he acquires a certain stoicism. Julie succeeds in forgetting her feelings for Saint-Preux and finds happiness as wife, mother, and chatelaine. Some six years later Saint-Preux returns from his travels and is engaged as tutor to the Wolmar children. All live together in harmony, and there are only faint echoes of the old affair between Saint-Preux and Julie. The little community, dominated by Julie, illustrates one of Rousseau's political principles: that while men should rule the world in public life, women should rule men in private life. At the end of *The New Eloise*, when Julie has made herself ill in an attempt to rescue one of her children from drowning, she comes face-to-face with a truth about herself: that her love for Saint-Preux has never died.

The novel was clearly inspired by Rousseau's own curious relationship--at once passionate and platonic--with Sophie d'Houdetot, a noblewoman who lived near him at Montmorency. He himself asserted in the *Confessions* (1781-88) that he was led to write the book by "a desire for loving, which I had never been able to satisfy and by which I felt myself devoured." Saint-Preux's experience of love forbidden by the laws of class reflects Rousseau's own experience; and yet it cannot be said that *The New Eloise* is an attack on those laws, which seem, on the contrary, to be given the status almost of laws of nature. The members of the Wolmar household are depicted as finding happiness in living according to an aristocratic ideal. They appreciate the routines of country life and enjoy the beauties of the Swiss and Savoyard Alps. But despite such an endorsement of the social order, the novel was revolutionary; its very free expression of emotions and its extreme sensibility deeply moved its large readership and profoundly influenced literary developments.

*Emile* is a book that seems to appeal alternately to the republican ethic of *The Social Contract* and the aristocratic ethic of *The New Eloise*. It is also halfway between a novel and a didactic essay. Described by the author as a treatise on education, it is not about schooling but about the upbringing of a rich man's son by a tutor who is given unlimited authority over him. At the same time the book sets out to explore the possibilities of an education for republican citizenship. The basic argument of the book, as Rousseau himself expressed it, is that vice and error, which are alien to a child's original nature, are introduced by external agencies, so that the work of a tutor must always be directed to counteracting those forces by manipulating pressures that will work with nature and not against it. Rousseau devotes many pages to explaining the methods the tutor must use. These methods involve a noticeable measure of deceit, and although corporal punishment is forbidden, mental cruelty is not.

Whereas *The Social Contract* is concerned with the problems of achieving freedom, *Emile* is concerned with achieving happiness and wisdom. In this different context religion plays a different role. Instead of a civil religion, Rousseau here outlines a personal religion, which proves to be a kind of simplified Christianity, involving neither revelation nor the familiar dogmas of the church. In the guise of *La Profession de foi du vicaire savoyard* (1765; *The Profession of Faith of a Savoyard Vicar*) Rousseau sets out what may fairly be regarded as his own religious views, since that book confirms what he says on the subject in his private correspondence. Rousseau could never entertain doubts about God's existence or about the immortality of the soul. He felt,

moreover, a strong emotional drive toward the worship of God, whose presence he felt most forcefully in nature, especially in mountains and forests untouched by the hand of man. He also attached great importance to conscience, the "divine voice of the soul in man," opposing this both to the bloodless categories of rationalistic ethics and to the cold tablets of biblical authority.

This minimal creed put Rousseau at odds with the orthodox adherents of the churches and with the openly atheistic Philosophes of Paris, so that despite the enthusiasm that some of his writings, and especially *The New Eloise*, excited in the reading public, he felt himself increasingly isolated, tormented, and pursued. After he had been expelled from France, he was chased from canton to canton in Switzerland. He reacted to the suppression of *The Social Contract* in Geneva by indicting the regime of that city-state in a pamphlet entitled *Lettres écrites de la montagne* (1764; Letters Written from the Mountain). No longer, as in the *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*, was Geneva depicted as a model republic but as one that had been taken over by "twenty-five despots"; the subjects of the king of England were said to be free men by comparison with the victims of Genevan tyranny.

It was in England that Rousseau found refuge after he had been banished from the canton of Bern. The Scottish philosopher David Hume took him there and secured the offer of a pension from King George III; but once in England, Rousseau became aware that certain British intellectuals were making fun of him, and he suspected Hume of participating in the mockery. Various symptoms of paranoia began to manifest themselves in Rousseau, and he returned to France incognito. Believing that Thérèse was the only person he could rely on, he finally married her in 1768, when he was 56 years old.

#### The last decade

In the remaining 10 years of his life Rousseau produced primarily autobiographical writings, mostly intended to justify himself against the accusations of his adversaries. The most important was his *Confessions*, modeled on the work of the same title by St. Augustine and achieving something of the same classic status. He also wrote *Rousseau juge de Jean-Jacques* (1780; "Rousseau, Judge of Jean-Jacques") to reply to specific charges by his enemies and *Les Rêveries du promeneur solitaire* (1782; Reveries of the Solitary Walker), one of the most moving of his books, in which the intense passion of his earlier writings gives way to a gentle lyricism and serenity. And indeed, Rousseau does seem to have recovered his peace of mind in his last years, when he was once again afforded refuge on the estates of great French noblemen, first the Prince de Conti and then the Marquis de Girardin, in whose park at Ermenonville he died on July 2, 1778.

#### Voltaire

(1694-1778)

Voltaire, one of the greatest French authors, though only a few of his works are still read, is held in worldwide repute as a courageous crusader against tyranny, bigotry, and cruelty. He embodies characteristic qualities of the French mind--a critical capacity, wit, and satire. His whole work vigorously propagates an ideal of progress to which men of all nations have remained responsive. His long life spans the last years of classicism and the eve of the revolutionary era; during this age of transition his works and activities influenced the direction taken by European civilization.

#### Heritage and youth

Voltaire's background was middle class. According to his birth certificate he was born François-Marie Arouet in Paris on November 21, 1694, but the hypothesis that his birth was kept secret cannot be dismissed, for he stated on several occasions that in fact it took place on February 20,

1694. He believed that he was the son of an officer named Rochebrune, who was also a songwriter. He had no love for either his putative father, François Arouet, a onetime notary who later became receiver in the Cour des Comptes (audit office), or his elder brother Armand. Almost nothing is known about his mother of whom he hardly said anything. Having lost her when he was seven, he seems to have become an early rebel against family authority. He attached himself to his godfather, the Abbé de Châteauneuf, a freethinker and epicurean who presented the boy to the famous courtesan Ninon de Lenclos when she was in her 84th year. But it is doubtless that he owed his positive outlook and his sense of reality to his bourgeois origins.

He attended the Jesuit college of Louis-le-Grand in Paris, where he learned to love literature, the theatre, and social life. While he appreciated the classical taste the college instilled in him, the religious instruction of the fathers served only to arouse his skepticism and mockery. He witnessed the last sad years of Louis XIV and was never to forget the distress and the military disasters of 1709 nor the horrors of religious persecution. He retained, however, a degree of admiration for the sovereign, and he remained convinced that the enlightened kings are the indispensable agents of progress.

He decided against the study of law after he left college. Employed as secretary at the French embassy in The Hague, he became infatuated with the daughter of an adventurer. Fearing scandal, the French ambassador sent him back to Paris. Despite his father's wishes, he wanted to devote himself wholly to literature, and he frequented the Temple, then the centre of free-thinking society. After the death of Louis XIV, under the morally relaxed Regency, Voltaire became the wit of Parisian society, and his epigrams were widely quoted. But when he dared to mock the dissolute regent, the Duc d'Orléans, he was banished from Paris and then imprisoned in the Bastille for nearly a year (1717). Behind his gay facade, he was fundamentally serious and set himself to learn the accepted literary forms. In 1718, after the success of *Oedipe*, the first of his tragedies, he was acclaimed as the successor of the great classical dramatist Jean Racine and thenceforward adopted the name of Voltaire. The origin of this pen name remains doubtful. It is not certain that it is the anagram of Arouet le jeune (i.e., the younger). Above all he desired to be the Virgil that France had never known. He worked at an epic poem whose hero was Henry IV, the king beloved by the French people for having put an end to the wars of religion. This Henriade is spoiled by its pedantic imitation of Virgil's *Aeneid*, but his contemporaries saw only the generous ideal of tolerance that inspired the poem. These literary triumphs earned him a pension from the regent and the warm approval of the young queen, Marie. He thus began his career of court poet.

United with other thinkers of his day--literary men and scientists--in the belief in the efficacy of reason, Voltaire was a Philosophe, as the 18th century termed it. In the salons he professed an aggressive Deism, which scandalized the devout. He became interested in England, the country that tolerated freedom of thought; he visited the Tory leader Viscount Bolingbroke, exiled in France--a politician, an orator, and a philosopher whom Voltaire admired to the point of comparing him to Cicero. On Bolingbroke's advice he learned English in order to read the philosophical works of John Locke. His intellectual development was furthered by an accident: as the result of a quarrel with a member of one of the leading French families, the Chevalier de Rohan, who had made fun of his adopted name, he was beaten up, taken to the Bastille, and then conducted to Calais on May 5, 1726, from where he set out for London. His destiny was now exile and opposition.

#### Exile to England

During a stay that lasted more than two years he succeeded in learning the English language; he wrote his notebooks in English and to the end of his life he was able to speak and write it fluently. He met such English men of letters as Alexander Pope, Jonathan Swift, and William Congreve, the philosopher George Berkeley, and Samuel Clarke, the theologian. He was presented at court, and he dedicated his Henriade to Queen Caroline. Though at first he was patronized by Bolingbroke,

who had returned from exile, it appears that he quarrelled with the Tory leader and turned to Sir Robert Walpole and the liberal Whigs. He admired the liberalism of English institutions, though he was shocked by the partisan violence. He envied English intrepidity in the discussion of religious and philosophic questions and was particularly interested in the Quakers. He was convinced that it was because of their personal liberty that the English, notably Sir Isaac Newton and John Locke, were in the forefront of scientific thought. He believed that this nation of merchants and sailors owed its victories over Louis XIV to its economic advantages. He concluded that even in literature France had something to learn from England; his experience of Shakespearean theatre was overwhelming, and, however much he was shocked by the "barbarism" of the productions, he was struck by the energy of the characters and the dramatic force of the plots.

#### Return to France

He returned to France at the end of 1728 or the beginning of 1729 and decided to present England as a model to his compatriots. His social position was consolidated. By judicious speculation he began to build up the vast fortune that guaranteed his independence. He attempted to revive tragedy by discreetly imitating Shakespeare. *Brutus*, begun in London and accompanied by a Discours du milord Bolingbroke, was scarcely a success in 1730; *La Mort de César* was played only in a college (1735); in *Eriphyle* (1732) the apparition of a ghost, as in *Hamlet*, was booed by the audience. *Zaïre*, however, was a resounding success. The play, in which the sultan Orosmane, deceived by an ambiguous letter, stabs his prisoner, the devoted Christian-born Zaïre, in a fit of jealousy, captivated the public with its exotic subject.

At the same time, Voltaire had turned to a new literary genre: history. In London he had made the acquaintance of Fabrice, a former companion of the Swedish king Charles XII. The interest he felt for the extraordinary character of this great soldier impelled him to write his life, *Histoire de Charles XII* (1731), a carefully documented historical narrative that reads like a novel. Philosophic ideas began to impose themselves as he wrote: the King of Sweden's exploits brought desolation, whereas his rival Peter the Great brought Russia into being, bequeathing a vast, civilized empire. Great men are not warmongers; they further civilization--a conclusion that tallied with the example of England. It was this line of thought that Voltaire brought to fruition, after prolonged meditation, in a work of incisive brevity: the *Lettres philosophiques* (1734). These fictitious letters are primarily a demonstration of the benign effects of religious toleration. They contrast the wise Empiricist psychology of Locke with the conjectural lucubrations of René Descartes. A philosopher worthy of the name, such as Newton, despairs empty, a priori speculations; he observes the facts and reasons from them. After elucidating the English political system, its commerce, its literature, and the Shakespeare almost unknown to France, Voltaire concludes with an attack on the French mathematician and religious philosopher Pascal: the purpose of life is not to reach heaven through penitence but to assure happiness to all men by progress in the sciences and the arts, a fulfillment for which their nature is destined. This small, brilliant book is a landmark in the history of thought: not only does it embody the philosophy of the 18th century, but it also defines the essential direction of the modern mind.

#### Life with Mme du Châtelet

Scandal followed publication of this work that spoke out so frankly against the religious and political establishment. When a warrant of arrest was issued in May of 1734, Voltaire took refuge in the château of Mme du Châtelet at Cirey in Champagne and thus began his liaison with this young, remarkably intelligent woman. He lived with her in the château he had renovated at his own expense. This period of retreat was interrupted only by a journey to the Low Countries in December 1736--an exile of a few weeks became advisable after the circulation of a short, daringly epicurean poem called "*Le Mondain*".

The life these two lived together was both luxurious and studious. After Adélaïde du Guesclin (1734), a play about a national tragedy, he brought Alzire to the stage in 1736 with great success. The action of Alzire--in Lima, Peru, at the time of the Spanish conquest--brings out the moral superiority of a humanitarian civilization over methods of brute force. Despite the conventional portrayal of "noble savages," the tragedy kept its place in the repertory of the Comédie-Française for almost a century. Mme du Châtelet was passionately drawn to the sciences and metaphysics and influenced Voltaire's work in that direction. A "gallery" or laboratory of the physical sciences was installed at the château, and they composed a memorandum on the nature of fire for a meeting of the Académie des Sciences. While Mme du Châtelet was learning English in order to translate Newton and The Fable of the Bees of Bernard de Mandeville, Voltaire popularized, in his *Éléments de la philosophie de Newton* (1738), those discoveries of English science that were familiar only to a few advanced minds in France, such as the astronomer and mathematician Pierre-Louis de Maupertuis. At the same time, he continued to pursue his historical studies. He began *Le Siècle de Louis XIV*, sketched out a universal history of kings, wars, civilization and manners that became the *Essai sur les moeurs*, and plunged into biblical exegesis. Mme du Châtelet herself wrote an *Examen*, highly critical of the two Testaments. It was at Cirey that Voltaire, rounding out his scientific knowledge, acquired the encyclopaedic culture that was one of the outstanding facets of his genius.

Because of a lawsuit, he followed Mme du Châtelet to Brussels in May 1739, and thereafter they were constantly on the move between Belgium, Cirey, and Paris. Voltaire corresponded with the crown prince of Prussia, who, rebelling against his father's rigid system of military training and education, had taken refuge in French culture. When the prince acceded to the throne as Frederick II (the Great), Voltaire visited his disciple first at Cleves (Kleve, Germany), then at Berlin. When the War of the Austrian Succession broke out, Voltaire was sent to Berlin (1742-43) on a secret mission to rally the King of Prussia--who was proving himself a faithless ally--to the assistance of the French Army. Such services--as well as his introduction of his friends the brothers d'Argenson, who became ministers of war and foreign affairs, respectively, to the protection of Mme de Pompadour, the mistress of Louis XV--brought him into favour again at Versailles. After his poem celebrating the victory of Fontenoy (1745), he was appointed historiographer, gentleman of the king's chamber, and academician. His tragedy *Mérope*, about the mythical Greek queen, won public acclaim on the first night (1743). The performance of *Mahomet*, in which Voltaire presented the founder of Islam as an imposter, was forbidden, however, after its successful production in 1742. He amassed a vast fortune through the manipulations of Joseph Pâris Duverney, the financier in charge of military supplies, who was favoured by Mme de Pompadour. In this ambience of well-being, he began a liaison with his niece Mme Denis, a charming widow, without breaking off his relationship with Mme du Châtelet.

Yet he was not spared disappointments. Louis XV disliked him, and the pious Catholic faction at court remained acutely hostile. He was guilty of indiscretions. When Mme du Châtelet lost large sums at the Queen's gaming table, he said to her in English: "You are playing with card-sharpers"; the phrase was understood, and he was forced to go into hiding at the country mansion as the guest of the Duchesse du Maine in 1747. Ill and exhausted by his restless existence, he at last discovered the literary form that ideally fitted his lively and disillusioned temper: he wrote his first *contes* (stories). *Micromégas* (1752) measures the littleness of man in the cosmic scale; *Vision de Babouc* (1748) and *Memnon* (1749) dispute the philosophic optimism of Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz and Alexander Pope. *Zadig* (1747) is a kind of allegorical autobiography: like Voltaire, the Babylonian sage Zadig suffers persecution, is pursued by ill fortune, and ends by doubting the tender care of Providence for human beings.

The great crisis of his life was drawing near. In 1748 at Commerce, where he had joined the court of Stanislaw (the former king of Poland), he detected the love affair of Mme du Châtelet and the poet Saint-Lambert, a slightly ludicrous passion that ended tragically. On September 10, 1749, he witnessed the death in childbirth of this uncommonly intelligent woman who for 15 years had been his guide and counsellor. He returned in despair to the house in Paris where they had lived

together; he rose in the night and wandered in the darkness, calling her name.

#### Later travels

The failure of some of his plays aggravated his sense of defeat. He had attempted the comédie larmoyante, or "sentimental comedy," that was then fashionable: after *L'Enfant prodigue* (1736), a variation of the prodigal son theme, he adapted William Wycherley's satiric Restoration drama *The Plain-Dealer* to his purpose, entitling it *La Prude*; he based *Nanine* (1749) on a situation taken from Samuel Richardson's novel *Pamela*, but all without success. The court spectacles he directed gave him a taste for scenic effects, and he contrived a sumptuous decor, as well as the apparition of a ghost, for *Sémiramis* (1748), but his public was not captivated. His enemies compared him with Prosper Jolyot, sieur de Crébillon, who was pre-eminent among French writers of tragedy at this time. Though Voltaire used the same subjects as his rival (*Oreste*, *Sémiramis*), the Parisian audience preferred the plays of Crébillon. Exasperated and disappointed, he yielded to the pressing invitation of Frederick II and set out for Berlin on June 28, 1750.

At the moment of his departure a new literary generation, reacting against the ideas and tastes to which he remained faithful, was coming to the fore in France. Disseminators of the philosophical ideas of the time, such as Denis Diderot, Baron d'Holbach, and their friends, were protagonists of a thoroughgoing Materialism and regarded Voltaire's Deism as too timid. Others had rediscovered with Jean-Jacques Rousseau the poetry of Christianity. All in fact preferred the charm of sentiment and passion to the enlightenment of reason. As the years passed, Voltaire became increasingly more isolated in his glory.

At first he was enchanted by his sojourn in Berlin and Potsdam, but soon difficulties arose. After a lawsuit with a moneylender, and quarrels with prominent noblemen, he started a controversy with Maupertuis (the president of Frederick's academy of science, the Berlin Academy) on scientific matters. In a pamphlet entitled "*Diatribe du docteur Akakia*" (1752), he covered him with ridicule. The King, enraged, consigned "*Akakia*" to the flames and gave its author a thorough dressing down. Voltaire left Prussia on March 26, 1753, leaving Frederick exasperated and determined to punish him. On the journey he was held under house arrest at an inn at Frankfurt, by order of the Prussian resident. Louis XV forbade him to approach Paris. Not knowing where to turn, he stayed at Colmar for more than a year. At length he found asylum at Geneva, where he purchased a house called *Les Délices*, at the same time securing winter quarters at Lausanne.

He now completed his two major historical studies. *Le Siècle de Louis XIV* (1751), a book on the century of Louis XIV, had been prepared after an exhaustive 20-year interrogation of the survivors of le grand siècle. Voltaire was particularly concerned to establish the truth by collecting evidence from as many witnesses as possible, evidence that he submitted to exacting criticism. His desire was to write the nation's history by means of an examination of its arts and sciences and of its social life, but military events and politics still occupy a large place in his survey. The *Essai sur les moeurs*, the study on customs and morals that he had begun in 1740 (first complete edition, 1756), traced the course of world history since the end of the Roman Empire and gave an important place to the Eastern and Far Eastern countries. Voltaire's object was to show humanity slowly developing beyond barbarism. He supplemented these two works with one on Russian history during the reign of Peter the Great, *Histoire de l'empire de Russie sous Pierre le Grand* (1759-63), the *Philosophie de l'histoire* (1765), and the *Précis du siècle de Louis XV* (1768).

At Geneva, he had at first been welcomed and honoured as the champion of tolerance. But soon he made those around him feel uneasy. At *Les Délices* his presentation of plays was stopped, in accordance with the law of the republic of Geneva, which forbade both public and private theatre performances. Then there was his mock-heroic poem "*La Pucelle*" (1755), a most improper presentation of Joan of Arc (*La Pucelle d'Orléans*), which the booksellers printed in spite of his protests.

Attracted by his volatile intelligence, Calvinist pastors as well as women and young people

thronged to his salon. Yet he soon provoked the hostility of important Swiss intellectuals. The storm broke in November 1757, when volume seven of Diderot's *Encyclopédie* was published. Voltaire had inspired the article on Geneva that his fellow philosopher Jean d'Alembert had written after a visit to Les Délices; not only was the city of Calvin asked to build a theatre within its walls but also certain of its pastors were praised for their doubts of Christ's divinity. The scandal sparked a quick response: the *Encyclopédie* was forced to interrupt publication, and Rousseau attacked the rational philosophy of the Philosophes in general in a polemical treatise on the question of the morality of theatrical performances, *Lettre à d'Alembert sur les spectacles* (1758). Rousseau's view that drama might well be abolished marked a final break between the two writers.

Voltaire no longer felt safe in Geneva, and he longed to retire from these quarrels. In 1758 he wrote what was to be his most famous work, *Candide*. In this philosophical fantasy, the youth Candide, disciple of Doctor Pangloss (himself a disciple of the philosophical optimism of Leibniz), saw and suffered such misfortune that he was unable to believe that this was "the best of all possible worlds." Having retired with his companions to the shores of the Propontis, he discovered that the secret of happiness was "to cultivate one's garden," a practical philosophy excluding excessive idealism and nebulous metaphysics. Voltaire's own garden became Ferney, a property he bought at the end of 1758, together with Tourney in France, on the Swiss border. By crossing the frontier he could thus safeguard himself against police incursion from either country.

#### Achievements at Ferney

At Ferney, Voltaire entered on one of the most active periods of his life. Both patriarch and lord of the manor, he developed a modern estate, sharing in the movement of agricultural reform in which the aristocracy was interested at the time. He could not be true to himself, however, without stirring up village feuds and went before the magistrates on a question of tithes, as well as about the beating of one of his workmen. He renovated the church and had *Deo erexit Voltaire* ("Voltaire erected this to God") carved on the facade. At Easter Communion, 1762, he delivered a sermon on stealing and drunkenness and repeated this sacrilegious offense in the following year, flouting the prohibition by the bishop of Annecy, in whose jurisdiction Ferney lay. He meddled in Genevan politics, taking the side of the workers (or natifs, those without civil rights), and installed a stocking factory and watchworks on his estate in order to help them. He called for the liberation of serfs in the Jura, but without success, though he did succeed in suppressing the customs barrier on the road between Gex in the Jura and Geneva, the natural outlet for the produce of Gex. Such generous interventions in local politics earned him enormous popularity. In 1777 he received a popular acclamation from the people of Ferney. In 1815 the Congress of Vienna halted the annexation of Ferney to Switzerland in his honour.

His fame was now worldwide. "Innkeeper of Europe"--as he was called--he welcomed such literary figures as James Boswell, Giovanni Casanova, Edward Gibbon, the Prince de Ligne, and the fashionable philosophers of Paris. He kept up an enormous correspondence--with the Philosophes, with his actresses and actors, and with those high in court circles, such as the Duc de Richelieu (grandnephew of the Cardinal de Richelieu), the Duc de Choiseul, and Mme du Barry, Louis XV's favourite. He renewed his correspondence with Frederick II and exchanged letters with Catherine II of Russia.

There was scarcely a subject of importance on which he did not speak. In his political ideas, he was basically a liberal, though he also admired the authority of those kings who imposed progressive measures on their people. On the question of fossils, he entered into foolhardy controversy with the famous French naturalist Comte de Buffon. On the other hand, he declared himself a partisan of the Italian scientist Abbé Lazzaro Spallanzani against the hypothesis of spontaneous generation, according to which microscopic organisms are generated spontaneously in organic substances. He busied himself with political economy and revived his interest in metaphysics by absorbing the ideas of 17th-century philosophers Benedict de Spinoza and Nicolas

Malebranche.

His main interest at this time, however, was his opposition to l'infâme, a word he used to designate the church, especially when it was identified with intolerance. For mankind's future he envisaged a simple theism, reinforcing the civil power of the state. He believed this end was being achieved when, about 1770, the courts of Paris, Vienna, and Madrid came into conflict with the pope; but this was to misjudge the solidarity of ecclesiastical institutions and the people's loyalty to the traditional faith. Voltaire's beliefs prompted a prodigious number of polemical writings. He multiplied his personal attacks, often stooping to low cunning; in his sentimental comedy *L'Écossaise* (1760), he mimicked the eminent critic Élie Fréron, who had attacked him in reviews, by portraying his adversary as a rascally journalist who intervenes in a quarrel between two Scottish families. He directed *Le Sentiment des Citoyens* (1764) against Rousseau. In this anonymous pamphlet, which supposedly expressed the opinion of the Genevese, Voltaire, who was well informed, revealed to the public that Rousseau had abandoned his children. As author he used all kinds of pseudonyms: Rabbi Akib, Pastor Bourn, Lord Bolingbroke, M. Mamaki "interpreter of Oriental languages to the king of England," Cloçpitre, Cubstorf, Jean Plokof--a nonstop performance of puppets. As a part-time scholar he constructed a personal *Encyclopédie*, the *Dictionnaire philosophique* (1764), enlarged after 1770 by *Questions sur l'Encyclopédie*. Among the mass of writings of this period are *Le Blanc et le noir* ("The White and the Black"), a philosophical tale in which Oriental fantasy contrasts with the realism of *Jeannot et Colin*; *Princesse de Babylone*, a panorama of European philosophies in the fairyland of The Thousand and One Nights; and *Le Taureau blanc*, a biblical tale.

Again and again Voltaire returned to his chosen themes: the establishment of religious tolerance, the growth of material prosperity, respect for the rights of man by the abolition of torture and useless punishments. These principles were brought into play when he intervened in some of the notorious public scandals of these years. For instance, when the Protestant Jean Calas, a merchant of Toulouse accused of having murdered his son in order to prevent his conversion to the Roman Catholic Church, was broken on the wheel while protesting his innocence (March 10, 1762), Voltaire, livid with anger, took up the case and by his vigorous intervention obtained the vindication of the unfortunate Calas and the indemnification of the family. But he was less successful in a dramatic affair concerning the 19-year-old Chevalier de La Barre, who was beheaded for having insulted a religious procession and damaging a crucifix (July 1, 1766). Public opinion was distressed by such barbarity, but it was Voltaire who protested actively, suggesting that the Philosophes should leave French territory and settle in the town of Cleves offered them by Frederick II. Although he failed to obtain even a review of this scandalous trial, he was able to reverse other judicial errors.

By such means he retained leadership of the philosophic movement. On the other hand, as a writer, he wanted to halt a development he deplored--that which led to Romanticism. He tried to save theatrical tragedy by making concessions to a public that adored scenes of violence and exoticism. For instance, in *L'Orphelin de la Chine* (1755), Lekain (Henri-Louis Cain), who played the part of Genghis Khan, was clad in a sensational Mongol costume. Lekain, whom Voltaire considered the greatest tragedian of his time, also played the title role of *Tancrède*, which was produced with a sumptuous decor (1760) and which proved to be Voltaire's last triumph. Subsequent tragedies, arid and ill-constructed and overweighted with philosophic propaganda, were either booed off the stage or not produced at all. He became alarmed at the increasing influence of Shakespeare; when he gave a home to a grandniece of the great 17th-century classical dramatist Pierre Corneille and on her behalf published an annotated edition of the famous tragic author, he inserted, after *Cinna*, a translation of *Julius Caesar*, convinced that such a confrontation would demonstrate the superiority of the French dramatist. He was infuriated by the Shakespearean translations of Pierre Le Tourneur in 1776, which stimulated French appreciation of this more robust, nonclassical dramatist, and dispatched an abusive *Lettre à l'Académie*. He never ceased to acknowledge a degree of genius in Shakespeare, yet spoke of him as "a drunken savage." He returned to a strict classicism in his last plays, but in vain, for the audacities of his

own previous tragedies, timid as they were, had paved the way for Romantic drama.

It was the theatre that brought him back to Paris in 1778. Wishing to direct the rehearsals of *Irène*, he made his triumphal return to the city he had not seen for 28 years on February 10. More than 300 persons called on him the day after his arrival. On March 30 he went to the Académie amid acclamations, and, when *Irène* was played before a delirious audience, he was crowned in his box. His health was profoundly impaired by all this excitement. On May 18 he was stricken with uremia. He suffered much pain on his deathbed, about which absurd legends were quickly fabricated; on May 30 he died, peacefully it seems. His nephew, the Abbé Mignot, had his body, clothed just as it was, swiftly transported to the Abbey of Scellierères, where he was given Christian burial by the local clergy; the prohibition of such burial arrived after the ceremony. His remains were transferred to the Panthéon during the Revolution in July 1791.

#### Assessment

Voltaire's name has always evoked vivid reactions. Toward the end of his life he was attacked by the followers of Rousseau, and after 1800 he was held responsible for the Revolution. But the excesses of clerical reactionaries under the Restoration and the Second Empire rallied the middle and working classes to his memory. At the end of the 19th century, though conservative critics remained hostile, scientific research into his life and works was given impetus by Gustave Lanson. Voltaire himself did not hope that all his vast quantity of writings would be remembered by posterity. His epic poems and lyrical verse are virtually dead, as are his plays. But his contes are continually republished, and his letters are regarded as one of the great monuments of French literature. He bequeathed a lesson to humanity, which has lost nothing of its value. He taught men to think clearly; his was a mind at once precise and generous. "He is the necessary philosopher," wrote Lanson, "in a world of bureaucrats, engineers, and producers."

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