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978-1-107-48699-7 - La Rochefoucauld: Maximes
Edited by F. C. Green
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F. C. GREEN

*Drapers Professor of French in the
University of Cambridge*

CAMBRIDGE
AT THE UNIVERSITY PRESS
1945

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CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781107486997

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First published 1945

First paperback edition 2015

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

ISBN 978-1-107-48699-7 Paperback

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CONTENTS

Editorial Note	<i>page vii</i>
La Rochefoucauld	1
I. Portrait du Duc de La Rochefoucauld fait par lui-même	46
II. Portrait du Duc de La Rochefoucauld par le Cardinal de Retz	51
III. Réflexions ou Sentences et Maximes morales	
(a) Préface de la première Édition (1665)	53
(b) Préface de la cinquième Édition (1678)	55
(c) Réflexions morales. Nos. 1–504	56
(d) Maximes posthumes. Nos. 505–562	125
(e) Maximes supprimées par l'Auteur. Nos. 563–641	133
IV. Réflexions diverses	147

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[More information](#)

EDITORIAL NOTE

THE TEXT adopted in this edition of the *Maximes* is that reproduced in the *Grands Écrivains* edition (tome premier) of the *Œuvres de La Rochefoucauld*. In order to give the reader a general impression of the development of La Rochefoucauld's style and thought, several variants have been printed as footnotes to the present edition. These have been selected, however, not from the first tome of the *Grands Écrivains* edition (1868), but from the *Appendice du tome premier* (1883). This requires some explanation.

When, in 1883, A. Régnier, the general editor of the *Grands Écrivains* edition of La Rochefoucauld, began to prepare his *Appendice du tome premier* he made two interesting discoveries. The first was that a new and authentic autograph MS. of the *Maximes* existed at the château de Liancourt whither it had been transported in 1870 from the château de La Roche-Guyon. His other find was more disconcerting. In spite of the most rigorous search, no trace could be discovered in either château of the two distinct autograph MSS. of the *Maximes* used independently by Gilbert and Barthélemy in the preparation of the original *Grands Écrivains* edition of the *Maximes*. Nor could any member of the La Rochefoucauld family recollect ever having seen more than one autograph MS. of this work, that is to say, any other than the Liancourt MS. found by Régnier. Gilbert was dead and Barthélemy could throw no light on the mystery. Yet it is clear that the MS. upon which he worked differs from that employed by his colleague, Gilbert, and that both differ considerably from the MS. of the *Maximes* found by Régnier. That the latter is in the handwriting of the author is beyond doubt. But, unfortunately, owing to the disappearance of the other two

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[More information](#)

viii

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MSS., it is impossible to prove that they are authentic autograph MSS. and not copies.

The abbreviations used in connection with the variants given in our edition are: MS. (the Liancourt autograph MS.); MSC. (a copy of the above, dated 1663, found by A. Régner at Liancourt); Ed. 1665 (the first edition published in France of the *Maximes*).