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978-1-108-04548-3 - Secret Memoirs of Robert, Count de Paradès on Coming Out of the Bastille: Containing an Account of his Successful Transactions as a Spy in England

Robert de Paradès

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### **Secret Memoirs of Robert, Count de Paradès, on Coming Out of the Bastille**

Little is known of the true origins of the French adventurer Victor-Antoine-Claude Robert, Count de Paradès (1752–86). He arrived in Paris in 1778, just as the Franco-American alliance, which guaranteed French military support to the United States against Great Britain, was being signed. Paradès was determined to join the French Army, but lacking the connections to do so, offered his services as a spy. He travelled repeatedly to England, visiting ports and fortifications to gather confidential information. First published in 1791, this work provides a detailed account of Paradès' adventures and misfortune. Written while he was jailed in the Bastille, the book denounces the corruption of ministers who wrongly accused him of state treason after the failure of the 1779 Franco-Spanish 'Armada' against Plymouth. A fascinating historical document, it sheds light on the political relations between France and England during the American War of Independence.

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ROBERT DE PARADÈS



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Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town,  
Singapore, São Paulo, Delhi, Mexico City

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

[www.cambridge.org](http://www.cambridge.org)

Information on this title: [www.cambridge.org/9781108045483](http://www.cambridge.org/9781108045483)

© in this compilation Cambridge University Press 2012

This edition first published 1791

This digitally printed version 2012

ISBN 978-1-108-04548-3 Paperback

This book reproduces the text of the original edition. The content and language reflect the beliefs, practices and terminology of their time, and have not been updated.

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SECRET MEMOIRS  
OF  
ROBERT,  
COUNT DE PARADES,  
*A FRENCH SPY.*

— NON INOPIA HOMINUM, SED DESIDIA, NEGLIGENTIA  
ET INSCIENTIA PRECIPIENTIUM. *Tacitus.*

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*SECRET MEMOIRS*  
OF  
ROBERT,  
COUNT DE PARADES,

WRITTEN BY HIMSELF,

ON COMING OUT OF THE BASTILLE.

Serving to supply some important Facts for the History of the  
late War;

AND CONTAINING

AN ACCOUNT OF HIS SUCCESSFUL TRANSACTIONS,

AS

*A SPY IN ENGLAND,*

WITH THE REAL CAUSES OF THE FAILURE OF THE EVER  
MEMORABLE EXPEDITION AGAINST PLYMOUTH,

In 1779.



L O N D O N,  
PRINTED FOR R. BALDWIN, PATER-NOSTER ROW.  
MDCCXCI.

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## ADVERTISEMENT

OF THE

### *TRANSLATOR.*

**A**LTHOUGH it is not mentioned how the original memoirs were obtained, nor where, nor by whom they were published; yet there are many reasons to believe they contain matters of fact. The plain and unstudied style in which they are written, every where expressive of the author's emotions, as they arose at the time, may be considered as affording an internal evidence of their authenticity. But a stronger proof may be drawn from the account given of the Combined and English fleets, many of the operations of which are of public notoriety; and with regard to the private transactions of the author, some of them have been confirmed by gentlemen of probity, who personally knew the truth of what our author relates on these heads. We have, therefore, deemed it a duty to offer a translation

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tion to the public; for, by bringing to light a part of the secret correspondence, which was kept up between this country and France during the last war, and which narrowly missed of producing the most serious consequences, it was thought it would prove interesting to every Englishman; and by exposing, as it does, the negligence of some in office, and the corruption of others, during that period, might render government more watchful on similar occasions.

The division into chapters, which is adopted in the original, has been disregarded in the translation; because it seemed quite unnecessary in a narrative not very long, and no where interrupted; some minute and tedious details which are by no means essential to the narration, nor interesting to an Englishman, have likewise been retrenched; and, lastly, care has been taken to leave out many names of men, ships, and other things, published by the French editors, lest they might point out particular persons as abettors of this enterprising Spy; and thereby charge them with a criminality,

I

which,

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which, notwithstanding the general probability of the author's story, ought not to be done upon such evidence.

Some expressions, which seemed to deserve the reader's particular notice, have been put in italics.

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ADVER-

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ADVERTISEMENT  
OF THE  
FRENCH EDITORS.

*OUR only motive for publishing these memoirs, of which a great many written copies have gone abroad, is to make the world acquainted with that extraordinary man who is the author of them. We have, therefore, thought proper to suppress the names of many persons therein concerned, as they might, otherwise, have complained of having their secrets divulged.*

*We have made no alteration in the style of these memoirs. We lay them before the public, just as they were presented to the king. It was in consequence of reading them, that Marshal de Castries, at that time minister of the marine department, interested himself to get Count de Parades released, and to have the remainder of his accounts settled.*

*Count de Paradès died at St. Domingo, in the prime of life.*

ADVER-

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## ADVERTISEMENT

OF THE

## AUTHOR.

NATURE having given me a spirit of enterprize, attended with great sensibility, I soon endeavoured to dissipate the obscurity, that hid, even from myself, the authors of my being. I was eager to acquire a name, when I learnt from a respectable friend that I had one\*; and I was anxious to prove by my conduct, that I was worthy of it. Therefore, as soon as I began to reflect, honour and fortune were the only objects of my attention; and I conceived the best way of acquiring them, was to undertake things evidently hazardous, but which, in case of success, would gain me the rewards I sought. The manner in which I commenced my career had sufficient *eclat* to create envy, and of course enemies.

\* Some suppose that M. de Paradès was a descendant of the family of Parade s in Spain; others that he was an illegitimate child of a Count de Paradès, a Spanish grandee, who died in the French service; but most people are of opinion, that he was only the son of a pastry-cook at Falzburg.

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I have been confined under a suspicion of having betrayed the interests of the state, when, in truth, I had formed the best plans for its advantage. My innocence has been proved, and I have been set at liberty; but as the proceedings against me were of such a nature as not to be publicly known, I now purpose to lay before government, the manner in which I executed the commission that I was charged with by the then minister; the many opportunities which occurred to me of making my own fortune (all which I was allowed to take advantage of) in the course of the whole transaction; and, lastly, the sums of money I received from the minister, and what I paid on the king's account, upon the business with which I was trusted; and from this statement will be seen the propriety of my demands upon his majesty.

It will be perceived, that these memoirs are not the work of a lettered man, nor the fruits of much study or reflection. I have represented with simplicity facts relating to myself; being persuaded that truth should be the only recommendation of what I have written.

LETTER

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## L E T T E R

TO THE

K I N G\*.

S I R E,

**Y**OU have just bestowed upon your people the blessings of peace, and added new lustre to your reign. In that war which you have so gloriously terminated, I was employed to promote the success of your arms, and I was found worthy of the favours of your Majesty; but calumny has made me pay very dearly for them. My enemies have prevailed upon you, by misrepresentations, to deprive me of my liberty; and have subjected to the suspicion of treachery towards you, Sir,

\* This letter was written in 1783.

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one, who, after having exhausted in your service the greatest part of his fortune, would willingly have shed the last drop of his blood in the same cause.

These memoirs will furnish your Majesty with an account of my transactions and of my disgrace; and there resides in your Majesty's breast that justice which is naturally looked for, by

SIRE,

The most humble,

And the most respectful of all

Your faithful subjects and servants,

COUNT de PARADES.