

Cambridge University Press
978-1-316-62004-5 — Madame de Sévigné
Arthur Tilley
Frontmatter
[More Information](#)

MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ

CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
978-1-316-62004-5 — Madame de Sévigné
Arthur Tilley
Frontmatter
[More Information](#)

MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ

SOME ASPECTS OF
HER LIFE AND CHARACTER

by

ARTHUR TILLEY

FELLOW OF KING'S COLLEGE
CAMBRIDGE



CAMBRIDGE
AT THE UNIVERSITY PRESS

1936

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/9781316620045

© Cambridge University Press 1936

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 1936

First paperback edition 2016

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

ISBN 978-1-316-62004-5 Paperback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this publication, and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

Cambridge University Press
978-1-316-62004-5 — Madame de Sévigné
Arthur Tilley
Frontmatter
[More Information](#)

To
MY WIFE

CONTENTS

<i>Preface</i>	<i>page</i>	ix
I. Mme de Sévigné and the news		i
II. Mme de Sévigné and her friends		27
III. Mme de Sévigné at Livry and Les Rochers		78
IV. Mme de Sévigné and her books		110
<i>Chronological Note</i>		154
<i>Index</i>		157

PREFACE

This is not a life of Mme de Sévigné. It is merely an attempt to bring out in fuller detail than hitherto certain aspects of it. The first chapter calls attention to the accuracy of her information about current events and to the marvellous skill with which she describes an event at which she was not present. The second chapter gives some account of her more intimate friends, and at the same time shews her remarkable capacity for true friendship. The next chapter calls attention to her love of the country as well as of society and to the need which she had from time to time of solitary meditation on serious subjects. It was at her country home of Les Rochers that she did most of her reading, and thus we pass naturally in the last chapter to an examination of the books that she read. She liked good company, as she calls Montaigne, in books as well as in real life. Character in action appealed to her more than the delicate analysis of it. Thus she preferred *Tartuffe* to *Le Misanthrope*, and *Cléopâtre* to *Bérénice* and perhaps even to *La Princesse de Clèves*. For the same reason she delighted in history, especially when it dealt with incident and character. In later life books of religious controversy as well as history attracted her. She had always had her favourite books of devotion.

Besides her letters the chief sources for Mme de Sévigné's life are the biographical notice by P. Mesnard which forms the first volume of the edition by Mon-

PREFACE

merqué and Mesnard, 14 vols., 1862–1866, in the *Grands Écrivains de la France* and Walckenaer's *Mémoires touchant la vie et les écrits de Mme de Sévigné*, 5 vols., 1842–1852, to which a sixth volume was added by Aubenas in 1865. It cannot be said that either work gives us a satisfactory life. Mesnard's is unattractive in style and badly put together. Walckenaer's discursive volumes supply much information about the society and events of Mme de Sévigné's day, but they often fail us in matters which concern her inner life and character. The two writers who seem to me to have understood her best are Sainte-Beuve (*Portraits de Femmes*) and Gaston Boissier (*Les Grands Écrivains français*, 1887). There are recent studies by André Hallays (1920) and Cécile Gazier (1933), and two English women of genius, Lady Ritchie (Annie Thackeray) and Mme Duclaux (Mary Robinson), have paid graceful and characteristic tributes to her memory, the former in *Foreign Classics for English Readers*, the latter in an introductory essay to *Mme de Sévigné's Letters to her daughter*, 10 vols., 1927. Edward FitzGerald's *Dictionary of Mme de Sévigné*, 2 vols., 1914, is notable as a record of the author's devotion, but it required a more complete revision than the piety of his great-niece, Mary Eleanor FitzGerald Kerritch, has permitted. There is a useful little volume entitled *The Queen of Letter-writers*, 1907, by Janet Aldis, and a good selection of letters edited by Professor Baker, Manchester, 1925.

The text that I have used for the letters is that of the edition in the *Grands Écrivains de la France*, but I have

PREFACE

cited them by their date as being more convenient for readers who possess other editions. In 1872 a MS. was discovered at Dijon, which contained, besides several new letters, a good many corrections and new fragments. These were used by Ch. Capmas for his *Lettres inédites à Mme de Grignan*, 2 vols., 1876.

A. T.

CAMBRIDGE
1936