ever thrown save in one instance on her fame. For the rest of her life, which was long, she gave herself up to her children. These were two in number, and they divided their mother’s affections by no means equally. The eldest was a daughter, Françoise Marguerite de Sévigné, who was born on October 10, 1646, whether at Les Rochers or in Paris is not absolutely certain. The second, a son, Charles de Sévigné, was born at Les Rochers in the spring of 1648. To him Madame de Sévigné was an indulgent, a generous (though not altogether just), and in a way an affectionate mother. Her daughter, the future Madame de Grignan, she worshipped with an almost insane affection, which only its charming literary results and the delightful qualities which accompanied it in the worshipper, though not in the worshipped, save from being ludicrous if not revolting. As it is, not one in a hundred of Madame de Sévigné’s readers can find in his heart to be angry with her for her devotion to a very undivine divinity.

After her husband’s death Madame de Sévigné passed the greater part of the year 1651 in retirement at Les Rochers. She had, however, no intention of renouncing the world, and she returned to Paris in November of that year, her affairs having been put in such order as Sévigné’s extravagance permitted by the faithful Coulanges. For nearly ten years little of importance occurred in her life, which was passed at Paris in a house she occupied in the Place Royale (not as yet in the famous Hôtel Carnavalet), at Les Rochers, at Livry, or at her own estate of Bourbilly in the Mâconnais. She had, however, in 1658 a quarrel with her cousin Bussy, which had not unimportant results, and at the end of the time mentioned above she narrowly escaped being compromised in reputation, though not poli­tically, at Fouquet’s downfall. Notwithstanding Bussy’s unamiable character and the early affair of the proposed marriage, and notwithstanding also his libertine conduct towards her, the cousins had always been friends; and the most amusing and characteristic part of Madame de Sévigné’s correspondence, before the date of her daughter’s marriage, is addressed to him. She had a very strong belief in family ties ; she recognized in Bussy a kindred spirit, and she excused his faults as *Rabutinades* and *Rabutinages—*the terms she uses in alluding to the rather excitable and humorist temper of the house. But in 1658 a misunderstanding about money brought about a quarrel, which in its turn had a long sequel, and results not unimportant in literature. Bussy and his cousin had jointly come in for a considerable legacy, and he asked her for a loan. If this was not positively refused, there was a difficulty made about it, and Bussy was deeply offended. A year later, at the escapade of Roissy (see Rabutin), according to his own account, he improvised (according to probability he had long before written it) the famous portrait of Madame de Sévigné which appears in his notorious *Histoire Amoureuse,* and which is a triumph of malice. Circulated at first in manuscript and afterwards in print, this caused Madame de Sévigné the deepest pain and indignation, and the quarrel between the cousins was not fully made up for years, if indeed it was ever fully made up. This portrait, however, was more wounding to self-love than in any way really dangerous, for, read between the lines, it is in effect a testimonial of character. The Fouquet matter was more serious. The superin­tendent was a famous lady-killer, but Madame de Sévigné, though he was her friend, and though she had been ardently courted by him as by others (one quarrel in her presence between the Duke de Rohan and the Marquis de Tonquedec had become notorious), had hitherto escaped scandal. At Fouquet’s downfall in 1651 it was announced on indubitable authority that communications from her had been found in the coffer where Fouquet kept his love

letters. She protested that the notes in question were of friendship merely, and Bussy (one of the not very numerous good actions of his life) obtained from Le Tellier, who as minister had examined the letters, a corroboration of the protest. But the letters were never published, and there have always been those who held that Madame de Sévigné regarded Fouquet with at least a very warm kind of friendship. It is certain that her letters to Pomponne describing his trial are among her masterpieces of unaffected, vivid, and sympathetic narration.

During these earlier years, besides the circumstances already mentioned, Madame de Sévigné conceived, like most of the better and more thoughtful among Frenchmen and Frenchwomen, a great affection for the establishment of Port Royal, which was not without its effect on her literary work. That work, however (if writing than which certainly none was ever less carried out in a spirit of mere workmanship can be so called), dates in its bulk and really important part almost entirely from the last thirty years of her life. Her letters before the marriage of her daughter, though by themselves they would suffice to give her a very high rank among letter-writers, would not do more than fill one moderate-sized volume. Those after that marriage fill nearly ten large volumes in the latest and best edition. We do not hear very much of Made­moiselle de Sévigné’s early youth. For a short time, at a rather uncertain date, she was placed at school with the nuns of St Marie at Nantes. But for the most part her mother brought her up herself, assisted by the Abbé de la Mousse, a faithful friend, and for a time one of her most constant companions. La Mousse was a great Cartesian, and he made Mademoiselle de Sévigné also a devotee of the bold soldier of Touraine to a degree which even in that century of blue stockings excited surprise and some ridi­cule. But Mademoiselle de Sévigné was bent on more mundane triumphs than philosophy had to offer. Her beauty is all the more incontestable that she was by no means generally liked. Bussy, a critical and not too bene­volent judge, called her “la plus jolie fille de France,’’ and it seems to be agreed that she resembled her mother, with the advantage of more regular features. She was introduced at court early, and as she danced well she figured frequently in the ballets which were the chief amusement of the court of Louis XIV. in its early days. If, however, she was more regularly beautiful than her mother she had little or nothing of her attraction, and like many other beauties who have entered society with similar expectations she did not immediately find a husband. Various projected alliances fell through for one reason or another, and it was not till the end of 1668 that her destiny was settled. On January 29 in the next year she married François Adhémar, Comte de Grignan, a Provençal, of one of the noblest families of France, and a man of amiable and honourable character, but neither young nor handsome, nor in reality rich. He had been twice married and his great estates were heavily encum­bered. Neither did the large dowry (300,000 livres) which Madame de Sévigné, somewhat unfairly to her son, bestowed upon her daughter, suffice to clear encumbrances, which were constantly increased in the sequel by the extravagance of Madame de Grignan as well as of her husband.

Charles de Sévigné was by this time twenty years old, but he had no doubt already learnt that he was not the person of chief importance in the family. He never, throughout his life, appears to have resented his mother’s preference of his sister ; but, though thoroughly amiable, he was not (at any rate in his youth) a model character. Nothing is known of his education, but just before his sister’s marriage he volunteered for a rather hairbrained