(which was the palmy day of portraits in words) objected to her divers deviations from strictly regular beauty, such as eyes of different colours and sizes, a “square-ended” nose and a somewhat heavy jaw. Her beautiful hair and complexion, however, were admitted even by these censors, as well as the extraordinary spirit and liveliness of her expression. Her long minority, under so careful a guardian as Coulanges, had also raised her fortune to the amount of 100,000 crowns—a large sum for the time, and one which with her birth and beauty might have allowed her to expect a brilliant marriage. There had been some talk of her cousin Bussy, but fortunately for her this came to nothing. She married Henri, marquis de Sévigné, a Breton gentleman of good family, allied to the oldest houses of that province, but of no great estate. The marriage took place on August 4, 1644, and the pair went almost immediately to Sévigné’s manor-house of Les Rochers, near Vitré, a place which Madame de Sévigné was in future years to immortalize. It was an unfortified chateau of no great size, but picturesque, with the peaked turrets common in French architecture, and surrounded by a park and grounds. The abundance of trees gave it the repute of being damp and somewhat gloomy. Fond, however, as Madame de Sévigné was of society, it may be sus­pected that the happiest days of her brief married life were spent there. For there at any rate her husband had less oppor­tunity than in Paris of neglecting her, and of wasting her money and his own. Very little good is said of Henri de Sévigné by any of his contemporaries. He was one of the innumerable lovers of Ninon de l'Enclos, and made himself even more con- spicuous with a certain Madame de Gondran, known in the nickname slang of the time as “ La Belle Lolo.” He was wildly extravagant. That his wife loved him and that he did not love her was generally admitted. At last his vices came home to him. He quarrelled with the Chevalier d’Albret about Madame de Gondran, fought with him and was mortally wounded on the 4th of February 1651; he died two days afterwards. There is no reasonable doubt that his wife regretted him a great deal more than he deserved. Though only six and twenty, and more beautiful than ever, she never married again despite frequent offers, and no aspersion was ever thrown, save in one instance, on her fame. For the rest of her life 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, who was bom on the 10th of October 1646, whether at Les Rochers or in Paris is not certain. The second, a son, Charles, 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.

After her husband’s death Madame de Sévigné passed the greater part of the year 1651 in retirement at Les Rochers, but she returned to Paris in November of that year. 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. Notwithstanding Bussy’s various delinquencies 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 strong belief in family ties; she recognized in Bussy a kindred spirit, and she excused his faults as *Rabutinades* and *Rαbutinαges.* But 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 offended. A year later, at the escapade of Roissy

(see Bussy), 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 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, though after Bussy’s disgrace and imprisonment in 1666 the correspondence was renewed. What might have been, and to some extent was, a much more serious matter occurred in 1661 at the downfall of the Superintendent Fouquet. 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 these 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 Madame de Sévigné had a great affection for the establishment of Port Royal, which was not without its effect on her literary work. That work, however, 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 Sainte-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. But she 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 d’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. He never 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 harebrained expedition to Crete against the Turks, and served with credit. Then his mother bought him the commission of *guidon* (a kind of sub-cornet) in the Gendarmes Dauphin, in which regiment he served for some years. But though he always