

The Marquis d'Argenson.

The Marquis d'Argenson treated of in this "Study in Criticism," the Stanhope Essay at Oxford for 1893, was third in sequence of an illustrious line. His grandfather, René de Voger, of an honorable house in old Touraine, was one of the ablest and most trusted servants of the king under Mazarin. His father, René 2d, was the redoubtable chief of the Paris police in the later days of Louis XIV, "for the space of one and twenty years more loved and feared than any man in Paris," and in 1718 he received the seals as chancellor. He himself, as minister under Louis XV, as a faithful supporter of a monarch who distrusted and betrayed him, as the friend of Voltaire, and as a patriotic statesman and deep thinker, occupies a noteworthy position among the men of his time. This short but careful digest of his character and poems, by Arthur Ogle, is excellently well given. His merits, and his failures in spite of his merits, with the reasons of both, are accurately and subtly judged, as well as the differences in character and fate between himself and his younger brother, the Count d'Argenson:

At the outset of life their roads diverged. The one led to greatness through labyrinths of littleness; the other was the way of honest, impotent, disdainful obscurity. The simple truth was that the younger brother, keen, accomplished, utterly careless, was free to choose the pleasanter of the two; for the elder it was barred from the beginning. His estrangement from the world had wholly unfitted him for the arts of complaisance and intrigue, and there was something within him which protested that they were as far beneath him as they were beyond his reach. D'Argenson went his way; he found that it led nowhither. He was to learn that, without those arts *which he coveted and despised*, devotion, disinterestedness, were no passport to power; yet it is good to reflect he would never consent to lose his devotion in the ignobler interests of a private life. When the last word has been said it may be found that of the two brothers it was he who had chosen the better part.

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