



The Memoirs of Marie Antoinette (Complete)

Madame Campan

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Louis XVI. possessed an immense crowd of confidants, advisers, and guides; he selected them even from among the factions which attacked him. Never, perhaps, did he make a full disclosure to any one of them, and certainly he spoke with sincerity, to but very few. He invariably kept the reins of all secret intrigues in his own hand; and thence, doubtless, arose the want of cooperation and the weakness which were so conspicuous in his measures. From these causes considerable chasms will be found in the detailed history of the Revolution. In order to become thoroughly acquainted with the latter years of the reign of Louis XV., memoirs written by the Duc de Choiseul, the Duc d'Aiguillon, the Marechal de Richelieu, [I heard Le Marechal de Richelieu desire M. Campan, who was librarian to the Queen, not to buy the Memoirs which would certainly be attributed to him after his death, declaring them false by anticipation; and adding that he was ignorant of orthography, and had never amused himself with writing. Shortly after the death of the Marshal, one Soulavie put forth Memoirs of the Marechal de Richelieu.] and the Duc de La Vauguyon, should be before us. To give us a faithful portrait of the unfortunate reign of Louis XVI., the Marechal du Muy, M. de Maurepas, M. de Vergennes, M. de Malesherbes, the Duc d'Orleans, M. de La Fayette, the Abby de Vermond, the Abbe Montesquiou, Mirabeau, the Duchesse de Polignac, and the Duchesse de Luynes should have noted faithfully in writing all the transactions in which they took decided parts. The secret political history of a later period has been disseminated among a much greater number of persons; there are Ministers who have published memoirs, but only when they had their own measures to justify, and then they confined themselves to the vindication of their own characters, without which powerful motive they probably would have written nothing. In general, those nearest to the Sovereign, either by birth or by office, have left no memoirs; and in absolute monarchies the mainsprings of great events will be found in particulars which the most exalted persons alone could know. Those who have had but little under their charge find no subject in it for a book; and those who have long borne the burden of public business conceive themselves to be forbidden by duty, or by respect for authority, to disclose all they know. Others, again, preserve notes, with the intention of reducing them to order when they shall have reached the period of a happy leisure; vain illusion of the ambitious, which they cherish, for the most part, but as a veil to conceal from their sight the hateful image of their inevitable downfall! and when it does at length take place, despair or chagrin deprives them of fortitude to dwell upon the dazzling period which they never cease to regret

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