MADAME DE MAINTENON AND

THE FOUNDATION OF SAINT-CYR

(1686-1715)

A Thesis

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree Master of Arts

By

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1971

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to thank Professor John C. Rule of the Department of History for his encouragement in the development of this paper, and for his direction and advice in regard to research and style. I would also like to thank Professor Carole R. Rogel for reading the final draft of the paper and offering her advice.
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INTRODUCTION

I

This essay is concerned with the foundation of an educational institution for girls of the nobility during the reign of Louis XIV of France. The founder of the school at Saint-Cyr, Madame de Maintenon, was the second wife of Louis, a woman of unusual strength, intelligence and influence. Her work in the field of education is one of the most intriguing aspects of her life. Why Maintenon became interested in women's education was the question which prompted this study. How she formulated and implemented her theories on education in the school at Saint-Cyr is an interesting corollary to the history of education as well as the history of the Sun King.

It is my contention in this study that the reasons for the foundation of Saint-Cyr are found in the personal experiences of Mme. de Maintenon. The founder of Saint-Cyr was born into a family of meager circumstances and poor reputation -- not the ingredients for success in the social setting of seventeenth-century France. In this situation Maintenon found that the happy accident of a good intellectual training was her most valuable asset. This knowledge was, I believe, the cornerstone for the organization and the philosophy of education at Saint-Cyr. Maintenon's view of court society and of her own position was the directing influence in the instruction of the
girls of Saint-Cyr.

It is the purpose of this study, then, to describe the foundation of Saint-Cyr as an expression of Mme. de Maintenon's personal theories on the need to educate girls of the nobility, and of her own sentiments on the daily life in the court of Louis XIV. In the course of this essay, I will also show that the educational theories formulated by Mme. de Maintenon were remarkably advanced for her century. In order to evaluate her contribution, however, it is helpful to review the state of women's education in the seventeenth century.

II

The age of Louis XIV marked a period of transition in the history of education; many classical traditions were losing ground while a few theorists were anticipating the educational trends of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment. The need for change in the realm of women's education was a keynote for the establishment of the school for girls at Saint-Cyr in 1686.

It is difficult to find figures which indicate social trends for this period, but family and municipal documents such as wills, deeds and registers provide some information. With respect to female literacy, the marriage registers for the period, 1684-1690, in which Saint-Cyr was founded, show that only 14 per cent of the women in France were able to sign their names.¹ This indicated a real poverty

of educational institutions for girls.

In recent years, there has been a growing tendency towards a sociological approach to history which has brought with it some new studies in the history of education. One of the most interesting of these studies is Philippe Ariès' *Centuries of Childhood, A Social History of Family Life*. In this study, Ariès says that the seventeenth century distinguished itself in the history of education by the realization of an "idea of childhood" as a distinct and separate state. However, in his research, Ariès has found that this specialization of childhood was not extended to girls of the period. He shows that they retained the nature of "little adults" and did not profit from the revived interest in education that accompanied this trend.

What was available to girls of the seventeenth century for their education? As early as 1560, the French state had established "little schools" to provide free elementary education to both boys and girls (who were always separated). The influence of these institutions was small, however, because no great effort was made to staff or to run them efficiently. Thus at the beginning of the seventeenth century, there were only seventy "little schools", and of these, only twenty were for girls.

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2The historians of the Sixth Section of the Ecole Practique des Hautes Études have made extensive use of sociological and quantitative techniques in their research in the social history of the seventeenth century.


The Jansenists\(^5\) also established "little schools" for the children of their faith. In the "little schools" of Port Royal, the emphasis was on the weaknesses of childhood, and education was consistent with the theological position of the Jansenist heresy. This included a belief in the "certainty of the fall", the redeeming grace of Baptism, and the "necessity of translating this grace of Baptism into the certainty of reason when the child come of age".\(^6\)

Among the most famous Jansenists of the seventeenth century were Blaise Pascal and his sister, Jacqueline. In 1657, Jacqueline drew up a *Treatise for the Children of Port-Royal*, which gives a fairly accurate description of Jansenist education. Her treatise showed an overabundance of religious exercises and supervision: the custom of prayer every hour and public confession as part of the educating process. In the schools of Port-Royal there was an aura of intolerable restraint, an almost unhealthy insistence on the religious aspects of life, and little sympathy for the natural tastes and ways of children.\(^7\)

For those not educated in the "little schools" there remained the possibility of education in the home. Although it might seem from

\(^5\)In 1640, a Flemish theologian, Jansen set forth theories on grace and predestination. His heresy was attacked and ultimately condemned, but not before it had won some powerful converts which included the sisters of Port-Royal.


\(^7\)Ibid., pp. 85-86.
literature that most nobility of the Ancien Regime had private tutors for their children, this was not really the case. Education in the home generally stopped before age ten, except for the children of the royal family. Some noble girls were entrusted to a governess, or gouvernante in their homes. Except in the families of highest rank, however, the gouvernante was little more than a domestic servant, and it was aptly judged that "a good education cannot be given by a bad gouvernante".

Of the small number of girls who were educated, most were the products of convent schools. In response to what the Jesuits and the Oratorians had done for boys' education, several orders of sisters had established educational institutions for girls during the Counter-Reformation period. These convent schools very seldom reached the quality of their male counterparts, however, because the sisters too often regarded teaching as a penance and their students as a reservoir for new community members. In fact, these schools, which were almost the only opportunity for education available to the middle-class or impoverished noble girl, became proverbial for their inefficiency.

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8Ariès, Centuries of Childhood, p. 332.


11Barnard, Fenelon on Education, p. 98.
The institutions run by the Ursuline Order were typical of the convent schools. By the end of the seventeenth century the Ursulines had about three hundred schools in various parts of France, and their school at Saint-Denis alone received about four thousand pupils during the period 1628-1660. \(^{12}\) In these schools, religion was still the basis of the curriculum, writing was taught by transcription from religious works, and French literature was completely excluded.

Overall, the Ursuline convent schools were characterized by a very bad psychological atmosphere. The rules insisted on long periods of silence, and on constant surveillance of the students. Unfortunately, the girls were indoctrinated with a notion of the world as a wicked place, and were given nothing which might help them to fulfill their future duties as wives and mothers. Their time was given to excessive religious devotions rather than practical or intellectual training. Thus the Abbé Fénelon commented on convent education:

> A girl leaves a convent like a person who has been brought up in the darkness of a deep cave and who is carried up suddenly into the broad daylight. \(^ {13}\)

The conventual schools revealed several widely accepted notions concerning the education of women in the seventeenth century. The first of these was that girls must be separated from the world and constantly surveilled during their education because they were by nature weak, the intellectually and morally inferior sex. Secondly,

\(^{12}\) Barnard, *Madame de Maintenon*, p. 50.

\(^{13}\) Barnard, *Fenelon on Education*, p. 98.
women were attributed with a diabolical curiosity which made education a dangerous thing. Finally, women's education was seen as a means of preparing girls for what was commonly acknowledged as the "feminine vocation" -- to raise them for a life of submission whether in the convent or in the world.\textsuperscript{14}

These negative concepts of the role of women in society, and the correspondingly negative character of their education lent neither to practical life nor intellectualism, but rather to an unrealistic and unproductive pietism. It was in response to this distressed situation that Mme. de Maintenon formulated her views on education.

CHAPTER I

MADAME DE MAINTENON

In the court of Louis XIV, a world of contrasts and intrigues, Madame de Maintenon was a striking enigma. She was a central figure from the time of her secret marriage to Louis in 1684, until his death in 1715. Despite her importance, there is still considerable mystery surrounding her. Maintenon's background, character, ambitions, as well as her role in politics and in education are still under study and debate.

The reasons for the mystery are several. She was without doubt a woman of extremes. The step from the Hôtel de l'Impecuniosité where she was the wife of an indigent poet to the palace at Versailles where she was an unproclaimed queen was indeed a dramatic one. Such extremes of fortune left a middle ground for conjecture on the part of those who witnessed her rise. Contemporaries who tried to interpret her position, analyse her character and gauge her influence left a wealth of conflicting information. This has resulted in an involved historiographical problem which must be dealt with before attempting to answer questions about the lady herself.

Her contemporaries tended to merge fact and fiction into a history of Mme. de Maintenon. The Duke de Saint-Simon was among the first to create a legend of the lady based on observation and on personal prejudice. In his Mémoires, Saint-Simon pictured Maintenon as a
malicious old woman who was responsible for many of the disasters of
the last decades of Louis' rule. Indeed, her marriage to Louis did
coincide with the beginning of a time of troubles, but Saint-Simon's
interpretation was founded in his own personal hatred of Maintenon,
rather than in her activities. Although of a fairly recent peerage,
Saint-Simon considered himself a true aristocrat and condemned the
audacity of a woman not of royal birth who dared become the wife of
a king. He wrote vindictively of her:

Nothing was more repulsive than the contrast between
the baseness of her character and the radiance of her
position.\footnote{Lucy Norton, ed. and trans., Historical Memoirs of the Duc de
Saint-Simon (London: Hamish Hamilton Ltd., 1967), I, 99.}

His portrait of Mme. de Maintenon was colored by his disdain of her
social origins in the provincial \textit{petite noblesse}, and by his resent-
ment of her favor for the Duke du Maine over his own friend, the Duke
d'Orleans.\footnote{Maud Crutwell, \textit{Mme. de Maintenon} (New York: E. P. Dutton &
Co. Inc., 1930), pp. 45-46.}

Saint-Simon supported Madame, the Duchess d'Orleans in her
hatred of Maintenon. Madame expressed her feeling towards Louis' second wife in her conduct at court, and she also left a history built
upon this hatred in the form of her extensive correspondence. These
letters of Madame have greatly complicated a fair interpretation of
Mme. de Maintenon.

During her lifetime, Saint-Simon and Madame succeeded in
establishing a reputation of malice around Mme. de Maintenon. This legend was perpetuated by Louis Angliviel de la Beaumelle, a professor of French literature who came into possession of Maintenon's correspondence about thirty years after her death. In 1752, La Beaumelle published three volumes on Mme. de Maintenon. He presented her as an evil and scandalous creature, but this view was largely of his own making. He had carefully edited and supplemented her writings, forging documents which told of sexual adventures and intrigues. Such good reading insured the success of his books. He was caught in one of his lies by Voltaire, who had himself given the lady a fairly good treatment in his The Age of Louis XIV. La Beaumelle was sentenced to a year in the Bastille for forgery, but when he was freed he published more volumes on Maintenon.

La Beaumelle's portrait of Mme. de Maintenon endured for almost a century until during the Second Empire, M. Theophile Lavallée challenged this interpretation. Lavallée's findings produced a more positive picture of Maintenon, and succeeded in dispelling many of the fictions created by her detractors. His work in editing and publishing Mme. de Maintenon's letters established a basis for numerous studies

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3Jean Racine had been entrusted with this correspondence and unknowingly allowed La Beaumelle the use of it to write his Mémoirs Pour Servir à l'Histoire de Mme. de Maintenon et à celle du Siècle Passe.


5Lavallée's main work was Mme. de Maintenon et La Maison Royale de Saint-Cyr, 1686-1793. Paris: Henri Plon, 1862.
of her life. Historians have since uncovered material on her back-
ground, early influences and activities which provide insights into her
character.

Mme. de Maintenon did not like to talk about her childhood.
This was understandable, for she had what might be called an ignomin-
ious beginning. Françoise d'Aubigné was born in the prison at Niort,
in the province of Guyenne, in 1635. Her father, Constant d'Aubigné,
was incarcerated there for certain treasonous activities with the
English. Constant, who was the blacksheep of the family of the famous
Huguenot general and author, Agrippa d'Aubigné, had married Françoise's
Catholic mother, Jeanne de Cardhilac, while imprisoned. This sad
woman spent the rest of her life fighting for an existence since
Constant cared little and provided nothing for his family.

During her young years, Françoise was abandoned to the care of
relatives. Mme. de Villette, Constant's sister, took her as a baby
to the Aubigné home at Mursay on the left bank of the river Sèvre.6
In the chateau at Mursay, Mme. de Villette cared for Françoise as a
daughter, and gave her a certain pride in her lineage. In the daytime,
Françoise often helped her aunt in her charities, and in the evening
she listened to passages from the L'Histoire Universelle written by
her grandfather.

While Françoise was at Mursay, her mother moved to Paris where
she fought an extensive lawsuit to regain her husband's inheritance.

6Georges Maugin, La Jeunesse Mystérieuse de Mme. de Maintenon
The courts decided against Jeanne, and she was reduced to abject poverty. This misfortune was compounded by unexpected release of Constant, for whom she now felt only contempt and bitterness. Constant soon gained the post of governor of the island of Marie-Galante in the West Indies. On his arrival, he found the island uninhabitable and applied for a post in Martinique where the unhappy family then settled. Jeanne, greatly changed by her years of suffering, was a stern mother. The three children were allowed to read nothing but Plutarch, and to speak of nothing but what they read.\(^7\) The sojourn lasted only a year, and on returning to France, the family again dispersed.

Françoise was not allowed to return to the happiness of Mursay. In 1647, her Catholic aunt, Mme. de Neuillant, requested an order from the Queen Regent removing Françoise from the Protestant household of Mme. de Villette. Françoise went to live at Niort, about ten kilometers from Mursay, where M. Neuillant was governor. In this new household, Françoise was more a servant than a relative. Mme. de Neuillant attempted to convert her niece to Catholicism, but Françoise had developed a sentimental attachment to the Huguenot faith.

During these years, Georges Brossin, le Chevalier de Méré, was a frequent visitor to the Neuillant home. Le Chevalier was a noted man of letters, and he noticed that Françoise had good intellectual qualities. Perhaps to gain the favor of the Neuillants, he offered to

become Françoise's teacher.

Le Chevalier's lessons with Françoise lasted on and off for about four years. Until this time, her intellectual training had consisted only of readings from the popular Quatrains of Pibrac, from the L'Histoire Universelle, and Plutarch. Le Chevalier was a good preceptor, and his lessons covered a very broad subject matter. He instructed Françoise in both oral and written French, in the rudiments of Latin, and in a sprinkling of Spanish and Italian. She was introduced to literary and historical works, and even a little philosophy. Although le Chevalier transmitted to Françoise his thoughts on morality during his instructions, he did not settle the question of her conversion to Catholicism. Mme. de Neuillant therefore took Françoise from his tutelage and sent her to an Ursuline convent in Paris where she finally consented to Catholicism in 1650.

Françoise was at this time fifteen years of age. She was leaving a childhood that had been harsh and insecure, and showed a resulting shyness and reserve in her manner. She was prone never to forget a kindness, and never to forgive an injury. Her devotion to Mme. de Villette and her lifelong scorn for the Neuillant family were proof. Most of her enduring character traits were already visible -- a strong moral fiber and a realistic attitude towards life. More than this, her most striking quality was already quite apparent. She

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8 Crutwell, Maintenon, p. 22.

possessed a knowledge and training far surpassing other young ladies of her circumstances. She was gifted intellectually and had a talent for bright conversation.

Mme. de Neuillant wished to see her penniless niece placed in a convent for the rest of her life, but instead, Françoise consented to an arranged marriage with the crippled poet, Paul Scarron. Scarron's house was a popular meeting place for the intelligentsia of Paris, and was called the Hôtel de l'Impecuniosité because artists and writers who came there to be entertained by Scarron's wit paid for their pleasure by food or gifts. Although this kind of life was repugnant to Françoise, she acted as Scarron's hostess to many notables such as the Maréchal d'Albret, the Duke de Vivonne, Mme. de Sévigné and the Comte de Gramont. Among these visitors, Mme. Scarron became respected for her intellect and her virtue, and when Scarron died in 1660 she received assistance from many of them. She was a frequent visitor at the Hôtels d'Albret and de Richelieu.\textsuperscript{10} While assisting with the wedding arrangements of Maréchal d'Albret's niece, Bonne de Pons,\textsuperscript{11} Mme. Scarron made the acquaintance of Françoise-Athenais, Marquise de Montespan.

In 1667, the Marquise de Montespan became the mistress of Louis XIV, and in 1669 a daughter was born of their relationship. In order to hide this child from the jealous Marquis de Montespan, Louis and

\textsuperscript{10}Saint-Simon, Historical Memoirs, I, 268.
\textsuperscript{11}Crutwell, Maintenon, p. 59.
Mme. de Montespan sought someone of character and discretion to care for the child in secret. Mme. Scarron was chosen as this gouvernante in 1669.

Five years later the children of Mme. de Montespan and Louis, now three in number, were recognized and moved to court with Mme. Scarron. In 1675, Mme. Scarron acquired the estate of Maintenon, and immediately assumed the title of Madame de Maintenon due to her favor with the King. The source of this favor was Mme. de Maintenon's devotion to Louis' children.

Mme. de Maintenon's role as royal gouvernante, although a position of importance, was to her a cause of anxiety and distress. Her letters to her spiritual advisor, the Abbé Gobelin, revealed the extent of her unhappiness at this time. The days at Versailles, partially inhabited by the court from August of 1676, were filled with quarrels between Mme. de Montespan and Maintenon. Mme. de Maintenon desperately wanted to leave her post, but she was convinced by Gobelin that it was God's will that she stay and be a good influence on Louis and the children. As early as July, 1675, she wrote to Gobelin:

Mme. de Montespan et moy avons eu aujet'huy une contestation forte vifre; et comme je suis la partie souffrante, j'ay beaucoup pleuré, et elle en a rendu conte au Roy, à sa mode; je vous advoue que j'ay bien de la peine à demeurer dans un estat où j'auray tous les jours de ces aventures là, et il me seroit bien doux de mettre en liberté...je ne saurois

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comprendre que la volonté de Dieu soit que je souffre de
Mme. de Montespan.\textsuperscript{13}

Such exchanges between Mme. de Maintenon and Gobelin were frequent,
and indicated a woman of strong moral quality with a sense of duty
and almost of mission at court. The letters also expressed her dis-
approval of Louis' continued liaison with Montespan. The puritanical
attitudes inherent in her correspondence do much to discredit the
accusations of such as Saint-Simon and La Beaumelle that she was a
woman of loose morals.

Her unhappiness at court also revealed much of her character.
She disliked court society, never danced, drank or cared for the
excesses of the nobles. In 1675, she sent a paper to her confessor
entitled "Projet de la conduite que je voudrais tenir, sy j'estois
hors de la cour," in which she outlined her ideal mode of living. This
document reflected her love of simplicity and her desire to devote
herself to prayer and to charitable works. In postulating her week,
she wrote:

\begin{quote}
Je destinerous les trois autres jours de la sepmaine: un
pour visiter les pauvres de ma paroisse, l'autre pour aller
à l'hostel dieu, et l'autre pour les prisonniers, et passer
mes soirées seule à travailler où à lire.\textsuperscript{14}
\end{quote}

When Louis broke with Montespan in 1679, Mme. de Maintenon en-
couraged him to return to his wife, Maria Theresa. Here again was
evidence of good intention on Maintenon's part. She was furious at

\textsuperscript{13}Madame de Maintenon, Lettres, edited by Marcel Langlois

\textsuperscript{14}Ibid., II, 166.
the King's interlude with Mlle. de Fontanges which she considered immoral. She wrote to Gobelin in 1679 of her disapproval and concern.

Je vous le demande encore, et je prier et faire prier pour le Roy, qui est sur le bord d'un grand précipice.¹⁵

By this time she had become the King's companion, and was attempting to exert a conservative influence on his personal activities. Louis returned his attentions to Maria Theresa in 1680, but the Queen's happiness was cut short by her premature death three years later. In 1683, not long after the death of the Queen, Louis secretly married Mme. de Maintenon despite the protests of his close advisers.

The events of 1683 mark a convenient and logical point at which to evaluate the character of Mme. de Maintenon. From this time onward, her life assumed a new dimension, and her activities must be judged as those of a queen as well as a woman. To this point her character seems well established. She had risen, not in the role of a mistress or schemer, but in the position of gouvernante and confidante. She had a powerful influence on the King, but her intentions were for the most part positive. True, she satisfied her desire for financial security and social recognition in acquiring the estate of Maintenon, but this was little in comparison to the benefits taken by other favorites. Mme. de Montespan had been made the Superintendent of the Queen's Household, and Mlle. de Fontanges had been created a Duchess. Also, in comparison to the other favorites it must be noted that Mme. de Maintenon used her influence to Louis' own welfare. She curbed many of his

dangerous personal liaison, and encouraged him in a reconciliation with his wife.

Mme. de Maintenon's own life was orderly and free of scandal. In the midst of the splendor of the Sun King, she entreated Gobelin for release to the simplicity of life at Maintenon. She was in her conduct anything but the libertine described by La Beaumelle. On the brink of her new life as Louis' wife, she wrote a description of herself to her confessor which serves as perhaps the most accurate and candid summary that can be made of her character. In 1680 she wrote:

> Je pense souvent à Dieu dans la journée, je luy offre mes actions; je le prie de m'oster d'icy, sy je ni fais mon salut, et du reste, je ne cognois point mes péchés. J'ay une morale, et de bonnes inclinations, qui font que je ne fais guirères de mal; j'ay un désir de plaire et d'estre estimée, qui me met sur mes gardes contres toutes mes passions; ainsy, ce ne sont presque jamais des faits, que je puis me reprocher, mais les motifs très humains, une grande vanité, beaucoup de légèreté, et de dissipation, une grande liberté dans mes pensées et dans mes jugements, et une contrainte dans mes paroles, qui n'est fondée que sur la prudence humaine.16

The question of Mme. de Maintenon's ambitions and activities as Louis' wife have been much debated and never properly assessed. She has been charged with interfering in Church matters, but the most serious accusations have concerned her interference in affairs of state. The charges range from complicity in the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, to her role in the War of the Spanish Succession and her manipulation of political favorites.

Maintenon was very concerned with the Spanish Question and

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16Ibid., II, 329.
mentioned it frequently in her correspondence during the year 1700. In November of that year, she wrote to the Superior of Saint-Cyr that "les affaires d'Espagne vont mal". Only a week later, she was optimistic when she wrote to the Cardinal de Noailles from Marly that "je regarde l'union de l'Espagne avec nous avec un nouveau plaisir".

Mme. de Maintenon's interest in the affairs of Spain was heightened by her correspondence with the Duke d'Harcourt, who accompanied the young Phillip V to Spain as ambassador of the French court. It was in a letter to Harcourt of April, 1701 that Maintenon described the person who would be her most solid link with Spanish politics. She wrote:

Comme je dis plus mon avis, sur les affaires de dames, que sur les autres, je propose que ce soit Mme. de Bracciano que vous meins la Princesse de Savoie; c'est une femme qui a de l'esprit, de la douceur, de la politesse, de la connaissance, des estrangers, qui a toujours représenté, et s'est fait aimer partout.

Marie-Anne de Trémoille, Duchess de Bracciano and Princess des Ursins had met Mme. de Maintenon many years before, when she was still married to Paul Scarron. Mlle. de Trémoille was the daughter of the Duke de Noirmontier, and had acquired the title of Princess des Ursins from her marriage to the Italian Prince Orsini. At the beginning of the War of the Spanish Succession, the Princess had been influential in fostering the succession of Phillip V to the throne among Spanish

\[17\text{Maintenon, Lettres, V. 521.}\]

\[18\text{Ibid., V. 226.}\]

\[19\text{Ibid., V. 579.}\]
noblemen. She had also helped in arranging the engagement of Philip V to the Duchess de Savoy. In return for her aid to the Bourbon cause, the Princess des Ursins was appointed first lady-in-waiting to Marie-Louise of Savoy when she became the Queen of Spain. Her post was referred to as Camerera Mayor, and among her duties was to support Louis XIV's policies in the Spanish court. From the time of her appointment in 1701, until her eventual disgrace in 1714, Mme. de Maintenon kept a continuous correspondence with the Princess.

These letters covered a variety of political issues, and have been used to support the thesis that Maintenon and the Princess directed Bourbon policy during the War of the Spanish Succession. The Princess des Ursins occupied a powerful position as the guide and confidante of the young Spanish Queen -- a role which was most useful to Louis' interests. Mme. de Maintenon's most recent biographer, Charlotte Haldane, contends that it was at Louis' request that Mme. de Maintenon initiated her correspondence with the Princess.

The letters of Mme. de Maintenon were concerned for the most part with the fortunes of war and with the state of the Spanish monarchy. She spoke at length of military campaigns and generals, but interspersed with personal and family news. There were numerous examples of this tendency in her writing. For example, in a letter of July, 1706, Maintenon lamented the flight of the Spanish monarchs

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from Madrid, and skipped in the same sentence to a detailed report on the pregnancy of the Duchess of Burgundy.\textsuperscript{22} The news of Eugene of Savoy and of Marlborough, the enemy generals, was mixed with complaints of rheumatism and comments on the weather. Thus the tone of the correspondence in no manner resembled that of a diplomatic dispatch, and this was very revealing of its intent.

Mme. de Maintenon's letters were primarily a means of informing the Spanish court unofficially of Louis' activities and intentions, and supplying the young monarchs with his confidence. So Mme. de Maintenon informed Ursins of important affairs, and offered only vague interpretations. On March 4, 1709, she wrote of the King's new assignments:

The King has named those who are to command his armies: Monseigneur will have that of Flanders with Marshal de Villars as his second in command; the Duke of Burgundy will command the army of Germany aided by Marshal d'Harcourt; Marshal de Berwick is to have that of Dauphiny and the Duke de Berri accompanies the Dauphin...I think that these appointments will please the Parisiens, as they asked for Marshal de Villars, thinking him fortunate and the Dauphin even more so.\textsuperscript{23}

Even more indicative of Mme. de Maintenon's intention in her correspondence was her deletion from the letters of those details which Louis and his ministers did not wish to be publicized. The Princess took umbrage at this and in July of 1709, she wrote to Maintenon:

\textsuperscript{22}The Secret Correspondence of Mme. de Maintenon with the Princess des Ursins (London: Geo. B. Whittaker, 1827), I, pp. 13-14.

\textsuperscript{23}Ibid., I, p. 221.
You have taken care Madame, to communicate to me by your letter of the 24th the King's determination to withdraw all his troops from Spain; but you had not taken the trouble to tell me that he had changed his mind and left twenty-five battalions. I therefore announce to you that if you continue to hold forth in such a frightful strain, I shall put no more faith in it than I do at this hour.24

Mme. de Maintenon answered:

It is true that I did not write you respecting the battalions which were left you. I was not the less agitated during the council at which this object was discussed, but I am firm, and I preferred your learning the news through M. de Torcy to my own communication.25

In his study of Maintenon's political role, Alfred Baudrillart noted the important fact that her letters were frequently only a reproduction of the texts which Louis sent to his ambassadors.26 This point is still open to debate but Baudrillart's work indicates that Maintenon was not plotting a political course outside of official government policy. Indeed, Maintenon echoed the King's views in private and public matters in her letters to the Princess. Thus in a letter of February, 1707, she reported to Ursins that the "King greatly approves of the Biscayan nurses" who will tend to the child of Marie-Louise and that the "King thinks it will be very proper

24Ibid., III, 302.

25Ibid., I, 249.

for you to address M. de Beauvilliers as governor of the King of Spain".27

Mme. de Maintenon was no doubt expressing a political personality in these exchanges with Ursins. On several occasions, especially in her discussions of the sufferings of war, she showed a determination to see an early peace. She attempted to influence the King to this end, but she did not try to head any political faction. Louis detested her interfering in any way, and looked upon her more as a source of comfort in his misfortunes. Indeed, Maintenon laughed at the accusations that her correspondence constituted a political intrigue. She wrote to the Princess:

I cannot believe that they open our letters; and if I dare place myself on an equality with you, it seems to me that we write for the praises of our two Kings, that is, unless you are not the confidante of the correspondence I have with the Princess Anne, or that I am not yours in that which you have so long had with the Emperor; for I will remember that you were accused of this formerly.28

The volumes of Mme. de Maintenon's correspondence attest to her knowledge of and activity in the politics of the War of the Spanish Succession. But what do the letters say? They comment on almost every important battle, general, and turn of fortune during the long period. Always they lament those events which hurt the

27Secret Correspondence, I, 85.
28Ibid., I, pp. 76-77.
Bourbon cause, and revel at allied setbacks. In short, they express the normal sentiments of the French government on the course of the war.

There was an aspect of the correspondence on which Mme. de Maintenon can quite validly be criticized. This was her policy of making judgments on the leading French governmental and military figures. In this she allowed her personal likes and dislikes to overlap into the sphere of politics. Character sketches of prominent ministers and generals appeared throughout the years, and in these she revealed a tendency to adopt certain political favorites. Two prominent examples of her practice of favoritism were Michel Chamillart and Marshal Villars.

The Marquis de Chamillart was an early protege of Mme. de Maintenon. He succeeded Louis de Pontchartrain as the head of finances for her school at Saint-Cyr in the late 1690's. In September of 1699, he was made contrôleur-général des finances, and she expressed a confidence that he would do as good a job in the post as he had in running the school. Throughout the years 1699-1700, Maintenon mentioned Chamillart in her correspondence as a hard-working and honest man,29 and alluded to a close association and friendship between them. She wrote of her happiness to see him in the council when he was made Ministre d'Etat in November of 1701,30 and continuously

29Maintenon, Lettres, V, 433, 472.
30Ibid., V, 530.
stressed his abilities in her letters as she no doubt did in her conversations with Louis. In 1701 Chamillart was also made *Secrétaire d'État à la Guerre*.

Thus during the War of the Spanish Succession, Chamillart had the burden of both finances and military, plus the stigma among his fellow ministers of being the favorite of Maintenon. As the problems of the war multiplied with the years, Chamillart came increasingly under attack for his policies. Despite the fact that she had encouraged and promoted his position, Mme. de Maintenon also criticized Chamillart's work. She alluded to the deterioration of the French position frequently during the years 1708-1709 in her correspondence with Ursins. When Chamillart was finally dismissed from his office in 1709, and succeeded by M. Voysin, Maintenon did not fight for him. She wrote to the Princess in March of that year:

I wrote to you of M. Chamillart's disgrace. M. Voysin, his successor, will, I have no doubt, be more active and energetic.\(^\text{31}\)

Saint-Simon charged that Maintenon had "ruined" Chamillart because he disappointed her in the "chain of reciprocal wants and services" which she had established with the ministers.\(^\text{32}\) This does not seem to have been the case. It might be charged that she

\(^{30}\)Ibid., V, 530.

\(^{31}\)Secret Correspondence, I, 236.

showed a shallowness in abandoning Chamillart, but she did not demonstrate any desire to destroy him. Instead, she wrote of his position in a very understanding manner to the Princess in June of 1709:

In a word the King has removed this Minister because the charge was too heavy for him; and he treats him well, because he is a worthy man, attached to his person and who had given all he possessed to the state.33

If the Marquis de Chamillart was a less fortunate and faithful example of Mme. de Maintenon's political favoritism, Marshal de Villars was a successful one. Moreover, Claude de Villars had a hard background to overcome. His father, Pierre de Villars, had participated in the Frondes, and his greatuncle, Marshal Bellefonds, was an enemy of Louvois. Thus when Villars entered the military, he was distrusted by the King and hated by the Minister of War. It was only through his friendship with influential persons, especially with Mme. de Maintenon, that he was able to enter the King's service.34

However, Villars' success was not due entirely to the machinations of Maintenon. Once she had opened the door for him, his own dominant character assumed control. In fact, a recent biographer of Villars, Claude Sturgill, has said that ambition and self-sufficiency were the Marshal's most prominent personality traits. He made his own way as a soldier, but his manner often alienated him

33Secret Correspondence, I, 235.

34Claude Sturgill, Marshal Villars and the War of the Spanish Succession (Kentucky: University of Kentucky Press, 1965), pp. 10-11.
from his fellow generals and from the King's ministers. Much of Maintenon's service to Villars was in supporting his activities in the court circle. This does not mean that she blindly defended him, for she understood his desire for honor. When he received his first major command in Flanders in 1709, she wrote to Ursins in Madrid:

M. de Villars has set out full of courage and confidence, although he is fully sensible of the heavy charge imposed upon him; it appears to me however, that he thinks more of the honor than the charge.35

In his work on Villars, Sturgill goes as far as to say that of all the superiors that Villars reluctantly acknowledged, it was perhaps only for Mme. de Maintenon that he had respect.36 Indeed, Villars and Maintenon seem to have understood each other well. Both had reached success through intelligence and hard work, and both were disliked by many high personages. It was very indicative of their relationship that Villars was one of the only people connected with Maintenon politically, who associated with her when her influence was gone. She received Villars frequently at her retreat at Saint-Cyr after the death of Louis.

Maintenon's role in politics is a very cloudy area of discussion, and probably the most controversial question concerning her both in her lifetime and in the histories of her life. However, whatever her complicity was in the affairs of state, it was not in the realm of

35Secret Correspondence, I, 224.
36Sturgill, Marshal Villars, p. 155.
politics that she became an outstanding figure, but in the field of education. For her work with the training of young girls she was revered for a century to come by the demoiselles of Saint-Cyr, and was distinguished in the history of education as the practitioner of educational theories far in advance of her day. In an age not alive to the need for educating girls, Mme. de Maintenon shared her interest with a small but dedicated few. Among the most significant of this group was the Abbé Fénélon, whose educational writings and personal advice were a great influence on Maintenon and her institut.
CHAPTER II
FÉNELON AND WOMEN'S EDUCATION

François de Salignac de la Mothe-Fénelon stood out as one of the most influential men of his century on the question of women's education. His work was primarily in the realm of theory, but he was able to disseminate his ideas on education to one who could put them into immediate application. At the Hôtel de Beavillier, Fénelon first met Madame de Maintenon sometime late in 1686.\(^{37}\) She became very interested in his ideas, and began to consult him on matters pertaining to the school for girls which she was founding at Saint-Cyr.

Fénelon was the son of an impoverished noblesse de Provence, Pons de Salignac, Comte de la Mothe-Fénelon. He was born in Périgord in southwestern France in 1651, and as a younger son he was destined for the priesthood. Fortunately, his uncle, Antoine de Fénelon, the Marquis de Fénelon, had connections in the Church and was able to provide François with benefactors in his ecclesiastical career. The Marquis was a close friend of Jean-Jacques Olier, the founder of the seminary of Saint-Sulpice, and this was to prove very fortunate for his nephew.

François was first educated at the Jesuit University of Cahors,

and then at the University of Paris in the College du Plessis. On the advice of his uncle, François entered the seminary of Saint-Sulpice in 1668. He was placed under the tutorship of Louis Tronson, and was ordained a priest in 1675 at the age of twenty-four.

After his ordination, Fénelon served for two years in the diocese of Saint-Sulpice. In 1678, he was appointed superior of the Nouvelles Catholiques of Paris, a post formerly held by Louis-Antoine de Noailles. This appointment first brought him into contact with the education of girls, as well as with the Huguenot controversy. The Nouvelles Catholiques was a convent which had been established in 1634 in an alliance of Church and state to combat Protestantism. The convent was designed to furnish young female converts with a retreat "against the persecution of their parents and the wiles of the heretics". In 1685, the year of the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, he was appointed to a missionary campaign against the Huguenots in the vicinity of La Rochelle in southwestern France. This mission was intended to instruct recent converts from Protestantism, as well as win more of the inhabitants back to Catholicism.

38Abbé Tronson was also the spiritual advisor of the Duke de Beauvillier.
39Louis-Antoine de Noailles had attended the College du Plessis at the same time as Fénelon. Noailles was to become the Archbishop of Paris at the height of the Quietist controversy.
Returning to his post at the Nouvelles Catholiques, Fénelon made some very important acquaintances in the later 1680's. He was introduced by Colbert de Seignelay\textsuperscript{42} to the Duke de Beavillier and his brother-in-law, the Duke de Chevreuse.\textsuperscript{43} These noblemen had both married daughters of Jean-Baptiste Colbert, Louis XIV's financial minister and Seignelay's father. Due in part to Fénelon's intellectual reputation, and to his experience with the education of girls at the Nouvelles Catholiques, the Duke and Duchess de Beavillier asked Fénelon to give them advice on the education of their daughters. At this time, the Beavilliers had eight girls. In response to this request, Fénelon drew up a model for the education of girls. His collected instructions and discourses were published in 1686 as the Traité de l'Education des Filles, and met with tremendous success.

One of the repercussions of this treatise was the appointment of Fénelon in 1689 as the preceptor to the eldest son of the Dauphin, the Duke of Burgundy.\textsuperscript{44} This moody seven-year old grandson of Louis XIV was a challenge to Fénelon's educational techniques but responded positively to his efforts. For the benefit of the Duke of Burgundy, Fénelon wrote the instructive novel, Télémague, which was about the

\textsuperscript{42}Seignelay was the eldest son of Jean-Baptiste Colbert, and the brother of the Duchess de Beavillier.

\textsuperscript{43}The Duke de Beavillier was at this time President of the Conseil des Finances. The Duke de Chevreuse was the capitaine des cheveaux-légers du Roi.

\textsuperscript{44}The Duke de Burgundy was the son of the Dauphin and Marie-Anne of Bavaria.
travels of the young Telemachus in search of his father, Odysseus. The novel was taken by some of his contemporaries, probably with reason, as more than a course of study for his young pupil. It contained many of Fénelon's personal criticisms of Louis' reign, as would his later anonymous, Lettre à Louis XIV.45 For his critical attitude, and for his involvement in the religious quarrel over Madame Guyon and the Quietists, Fénelon was retired from his tutorship in 1695. He was banished from court in 1697 when he published his Quietist-inspired, Maxims of the Saints, and confined to his diocese at Cambrai for the last fifteen years of his life.46

Although Fénelon's practical work as an educator came to naught with the premature death of the Duke de Burgundy in 1712, the theories which he presented in the Traité de l'Education des Filles were enough to warrant his place as one of the great men of education in the seventeenth century. His treatise on education was divided into three parts. First, he examined the faults of the present system under which girls were educated. Next, he discussed the many duties of women which necessitated a good education, and lastly he presented a program by which this education could be accomplished.

45This letter was probably composed in 1694, and was very critical of Louis and his ministers. For a discussion of Fénelon as a critic of the reign, see Lionel Rothkrug, Opposition to Louis XIV, The Political and Social Origins of the French Enlightenment (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965).

Fénelon's estimate of contemporary girls' education was that it was grossly inadequate. He charged that the education then given to a young lady abandoned her to an idleness and boredom which was not mentally, physically or spiritually healthy. He warned that a poorly educated girl wallows in stories and fantasies, and then cannot cope with real life.\footnote{Fénelon, \textit{Traité}, pp. 1-6.}

The inadequacy of girls' education was, in Fénelon's mind, compounded by the fact that he saw women as responsible for the "good or bad conduct of almost all the world".\footnote{Ibid., p. 1} This was because they exerted so much influence on young children. The bad man, he contended, is often the result of an education by a bad woman. Thus the primary function of a woman at the core of a family, plus the secondary responsibility that she had in the household and the estate, demanded a good intellectual preparation.\footnote{Ibid., pp. 75-90.}

With the resolution that the "limits of a woman's learning -- like that of a man -- should be determined by her duties,"\footnote{Ibid., pp. 91.} Fénelon proposed a model for education. His theory was two-sided; it depended on a good teacher and a willing student. The girl was to be taken young because "first impressions on a soft brain will be the deepest
impressions". Instruction was to be made pleasant and natural, mingled with games and presented in the form of stories. In an attitude remarkably akin to Rousseau and Pestalozzi, Fénélon suggested that instruction should supplement nature, follow natural inquiries. He insisted on good hygiene and a proper diet as crucial to learning.

With regard to the curriculum, Fénélon said that girls should be taught reading, writing, and spelling. For the formation of their characters, the girls were to be allowed reading in history, which would acquaint them with persons of legendary courage and virtue. He included the study of arithmetic so that girls could keep accounts for their households and estates. To these subjects, he added a final area of study which we might call "human relations" -- how to deal with domestic servants, and most importantly, how to deal with children.

This course of study was a great improvement on the existing system, but it was by no means a revolutionary theory. If Fénélon had proposed a radical revamping of women's education, rather than this moderate one, he might well have been ignored as a fanatic and made no practical contribution to the field of education. As it was, he advanced the state of women's education without becoming embroiled in a contemporary controversy surrounding a small group of female intellec-

51 Fénélon, Traité, pp. 1-6.
52 Like John Locke and J. J. Rousseau, Fénélon was thinking of a pupil who belonged to a wealthy family and would be brought up by a tutor or governess.
53 Bizos, Fénélon, pp. 38-42
54 Fénélon, Traité, pp. 80-90.
uals called *precieuses*. These *precieuses* were generally women of the Paris salons, and sometimes novelists, who were greatly criticized during the second half of the century.\(^{55}\) Neither did Fénelon admire these female intellectuals, but thought instead that "the *precieuse* is a *precieuse* because she is ignorant, romantic and visionary". He did not want the *femme savante* but the instructed woman. He distinguished plainly between a correct and incorrect use of knowledge on the part of women.\(^{56}\)

In steering this moderate course with regard to women's education, Fénelon became a innovator. His own sense prevented him in this affair from preaching an equality of the sexes which would not have been accepted by his century. His theories that a girl should be given more than a smattering of literacy were enough temperately judged to be practically implemented. When Fénelon discussed his views with Mme. de Maintenon after their meeting in 1686, they found that a similar spirit and similar hopes were behind the *Traité* and the *institut* at Saint-Cyr. Fénelon and Maintenon both saw a reformed practical education for girls as a vehicle for renewed Christianity in France, and as a means of relieving those segments of the nobility which had been impoverished through royal policies and wars.\(^{57}\)

During the period 1688-1693, Maintenon and Fénelon kept up a

\(^{55}\)Gaston, *Bizos* notes the existence and membership in this group in his *Fénelon Educateur*, pp. 17-18.

\(^{56}\)Bizos, *Fénelon*, p. 33.

lively correspondence. She acted as his benefactress in his appointment as the preceptor to the Duke of Burgundy; now in the early 1690's he became her spiritual advisor, as well as a consultant on the education and spiritual life at Saint-Cyr. In a long letter of January, 1689, Fénelon presented a portrait of Maintenon. He pointed out her weaknesses, especially her need to renounce the moi, and offered guidance. The letter revealed an intimate knowledge of Maintenon, and an understanding of her situation within the court and the country. He wrote:

Je vous dis ceci, Madame, parce que, en la place où vous êtes, on découvre tant de choses indignes, et on en entend si souvent d'imaginées par la calomnie, qu'on ne sait plus que croire.

Among the dames and demoiselles at Saint-Cyr, Fénelon was also a spiritual advisor. It was in this capacity that he became involved with the Quietist controversy that shook the court in the early 1690's, sent a tremor through the school at Saint-Cyr and resulted in his own disgrace.

Quietism was a form of mysticism which emphasized the freedom of the spirit and the peace of prayer. It's origins were in Spain of the 1660's, but the most important figure of French Quietism was Jeanne-Marie Bouvier de la Motte Guyon. Mme. Guyon had written two

58Maintenon, Lettres, III, 386.
59Ibid., III, 387.
works on Quietism during the early 1680's: Les Torrents and Moyen Court et très facile pour l'oraison. In 1686, she was incarcerated for her "mystical works", but was released in 1688 through the intercession of her cousin, Marie-Françoise Silvine de la Maisonfort (who was a well-liked novice at Saint-Cyr) with Mme. de Maintenon. Following her release, she went to live with her daughter and son-in-law, Louis Nicolas Fouquet, Comte de Vaux.61 It was at the house of the Comte de Vaux's sister, the Duchess de Béthune-Charost, that Mme. Guyon met Abbé Fénelon in 1688.

Although Fénelon was not previously inclined towards mysticism, he corresponded with Mme. Guyon during the years 1688-1689 and was eventually won over to Quietism. His writings to the novices at Saint-Cyr fostered the spiritual abandon and mystical qualities associated with "Guyonnisme". These letters, in addition to the frequent visits of Mme. Guyon to Saint-Cyr, unleashed a dangerous wave of mysticism among the dames and demoiselles.

Although Maintenon was personally involved with Fénelon and Guyon, by early 1693, she sensed the threat which they posed to her school in terms of heresy62 and insubordination. During the years 1693 and 1694, her letters contained many reproaches for the disorder among the novices which had been caused by "Guyonnisme". In early

61 Louis Nicolas Fouquet was the son of Nicolas Fouquet, the Superintendent of Finances who was disgraced in 1661.

62 In 1689, Mme. Guyon's book, Moyen Court et très facile pour l'oraison was placed on the Index.
1694, she wrote to the Maitresse Générale:

Les Demoiselles travaillent avec une si grande laschete, qu'il faudroit les punir, en redoublant les heures de ostant les relaschemens.63

Thus Fénelon had a dual effect on Saint-Cyr. His educational writings influenced the formation of the institut, and many of Maintenon's plans were made in consultation with him. However, his activities at Saint-Cyr in the early 1690's during the affaire du Quietisme had a very negative effect on the school. A discussion of the foundation of Saint-Cyr illuminates the application of many of the ideas presented in Fénelon's Traité by Mme. de Maintenon, and it also shows why the Quietist controversy posed such a threat to Saint-Cyr by describing the explicit organization and aims of the school.

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63Maintenon, Lettres, IV, 209.
CHAPTER III
MADAME DE MAINTENON EDUCATRICE

In the experience and character of Mme. de Maintenon there were elements which made it easy to understand her interest in education. She had been exposed to the ritual training of the contemporary Ursuline convent schools, however, due to the efforts of her aunt, Mme. Villette, and her tutor, the Chevalier de Méré, she had received a good education. Her intellectual training had been a prominent factor in her appointment as gouvernante to the royal bastards, and her subsequent favor with Louis. It was not surprising, then, that in her position as Louis’ wife, she used her influence and her resources to establish educational institutions for girls.

Her first effort in this direction was made in 1680, when she collaborated with Marie de Brinon, an Ursuline nun, in founding a small school at Montmorency, on the north side of Paris. By 1681, there were fifty girls at the school, forty of whom were from the estate of Maintenon. The curriculum at Montmorency consisted of reading, writing, religious instruction, arithmetic and housework.

64 Marie de Brinon was the daughter of Charles de Brinon, a colonel in the French army. She met Maintenon at the home of the Duke de Montchevreuil.

65 Barnard, Madame de Maintenon, pp. 49-51.
Mme. de Maintenon's interest in Montmorency was active, but the traveling distance between the court and the school prevented her from having the control she desired. In 1681, Louis had taken up formal residence at his new palace at Versailles, although many of Maintenon's letters were still dated from Saint Germain and Fontainebleau. In August of 1681, Maintenon wrote to Mme. de Brinon of her plans to transfer the school to a location more convenient to the court. She chose Rueil, about five miles from Saint Germain, as the new site, and promised Mme. de Brinon "je ne seray asseurément 24 heures, à Versailles où à St. Germain sans vous aller voir".66

The teaching community transferred to Rueil consisted of Mme. de Brinon and three Ursuline nuns. To the original girls from Montmorency was added a group of twenty-five girls from impoverished noble families. These girls were kept in two distinct groups. The peasant girls occupied the ground floor of the building at Rueil, and held class in the stable. They were called petites soeurs, and learned various domestic skills. The noble girls were housed in the upper part of the building. They were called pensionnaires, but unfortunately there was no record kept of their course of studies. As yet, Mme. de Maintenon's educational program with regard to these girls was in embryo form.

Maintenon wrote of her work at Rueil with great interest and satisfaction. During the years 1681-1682, she corresponded almost

66Maintenon, Lettres, II, 397.
daily with Mme. de Brinon, and admitted her feelings of personal fulfillment in the work at Rueil. She wrote:

L'idée que vous faites de Rueilles est assez juste; c'est un lieu admirable, et où je me diverti fort:
Dieu bénit tout ce que s'y fait, par un success qui passe nos espérences; la police féminine y triomphe et n'en seriez pas estonné.67

In 1683, when the King bought land for a park near Versailles, he gave the adjoining chateau at Noisy to Mme. de Maintenon to use as a school. He donated 10,000 écus for the equipment of the building, and early in 1684 the girls from Rueil were transferred there. Evidently pleased with Maintenon's work in the education of girls, Louis promised to maintain one hundred and fifty girls as pensionnaires at Noisy. Two new mistresses were added to the staff, and the girls were divided into groups according to age. They were instructed in reading, religion, writing, arithmetic, music and needlework.68

Louis' patronage of Noisy was a prelude to Saint-Cyr. In the early institutions at Montmorency, Rueil and Noisy, Maintenon had demonstrated her ability and her devotion to the education of girls. Undoubtedly, Louis agreed to the establishment of Saint-Cyr because he was impressed with these schools, and also because he wished to please his new wife. Saint-Cyr was more than this, however. It fit nicely into Louis' pattern of endeavors aimed at repaying noble families who had been impoverished during his reign. The founding

67Ibid., II, 427.
68Barnard, Madame de Maintenon, pp. 52-54.
of hospitals during the 1670's, of which Les Invalides in Paris is
the most famous, was an example of this program. So too were the
provisions made during the 1670's for the education of sons of
deserving noblemen. These boys were organized into companies of
cadets, and placed in military academies in the garrison towns of
northeastern France. Thus when Louis announced to his council in 1684
that he intended to establish a school for girls, he explained:

We have decided that it is not less just nor less
useful to provide for the upbringing of young ladies
of rank, above all, those whose fathers have died in
the Service, or who, having impoverished themselves by
expenses for the benefit of their country, find them-
elves unable to give their daughters assistance neces-
sary to their education.69

Apart from this proclaimed altruism, Saint-Cyr, the hospitals and
military academies were undoubtedly seen by Louis as another means
of control over a potentially dangerous nobility.

This original proposal for Saint-Cyr was quite detailed. In
it, Louis announced that he would maintain two-hundred and fifty
demoiselles at school until twenty years of age. When each girl
left she would be given a dowry of 20,000 livres to either marry or
enter the religious life. The school was to be run by thirty-six
teaching sisters of an order to be called the Dames de Saint-Louis.70
The project was met with both criticism and acclaim. François Le

69 Geraldine Hodgson, Studies in French Education From Rabelais

70 Mme. de Maintenon objected to the name "Dames de Saint-Louis",
pointing out that it was improper for the King to be cannonized dur-
ing his lifetime.
Tellier, the Marquis de Louvois, who was one of Louis' chief ministers, opposed it on the grounds that it was too expensive an undertaking; on the other hand, Louis' confessor, François d'Aix de la Chaise, gave it his wholehearted support. The King agreed with Père la Chaise and set about work with Mme. de Maintenon on the details of the school.

The most immediate concern was the formulation of the Constitutions of Saint-Cyr -- the regulations for the order of the Dames de Saint-Louis and the demoiselles of Saint-Cyr, as well as the terms of the royal endowment of the institut. The content of the Constitutions was of extreme importance to Mme. de Maintenon for it established both the spirit of the teaching community and the spirit of education at Saint-Cyr. The actual writing of the Constitutions began late in 1684 and was not completed until the summer of 1686, two months before the school opened. These regulations were so crucial to the future of the institut, that Mme. de Maintenon spent a great deal of time consulting important figures in the clergy, in education, and literature on important aspects. She wrote to Mme. de Brinon in 1686 of this practice saying that "M. Racine et M. des Preaux les [the Constitutions] lisent, les admirent et corrigen

Franç0is Michel Le Tellier, the Marquis de Louvois, was born in Paris on 1641. His father, Michel Le Tellier, and he both served as secrétaire d'état à la guerre.

Père la Chaise was a member of the Society of Jesus, and the rector of the College de Lyon. He became the confessor of Louis XIV in 1675.
des défauts de langage...". In the course of writing the Constitutions, Maintenon frequently asked advice from these men of literature, as well as from Père la Chaise, from her own confessor, the Abbé Gobelin, from M. Jassault who was a priest at Versailles, and from François Neufville de Villeroy, the Bishop of Chartres.

It was to Mme. de Brinon that Maintenon addressed her most sensitive questions about Saint-Cyr. Throughout the summer of 1685, Maintenon and Brinon discussed the important question of how Saint-Cyr was to be organized and run. In August, Maintenon wrote to Mme. de Brinon plainly stating the problem by asking "s'y vous voulez un couvent de quelle manière le faire?". This was a crucial point, for neither Maintenon nor Louis really wanted Saint-Cyr to become a typical convent school. Louis was strongly against the proliferation of religious orders and convent schools in France. He had written late in the 1660's that "il étoit de la police générale de mon royaume, de diminuer ce grande nombre de religieux, dont la plupart, étant inutiles à l'Eglise, étoient onereux à l'Etat".

73 Maintenon, Lettres, III, 177.
74 Ibid., III, 126.
75 Ibid., III, 121.
76 Ibid., III, 149.
77 Ibid., III, 110.
78 Oeuvres de Louis XIV (Paris, 1806), II, 270.
Maintenon concurred with Louis on this point for she wished to establish an institution which would be practical and of service to the public, not hidden from the world and dedicated to the interior life of the monestary. The motive behind the foundation of Saint-Cyr was to give France a number of well-educated young ladies, not more religieuses.

So the Constitutions, when completed, illustrated the uniquely secular orientation of Saint-Cyr. Article one of the document stated that the Dames de Saint-Louis were to take only simple vows, and were to be addressed as "Madame", not "Sister". In addition, the Dames were to take a special vow which dedicated their lives to the task of educating girls. Articles three and four set forth the conditions for admission of a demoiselle to Saint-Cyr. Each girl was required to have four degrees of nobility on her father's side. Article eight promised that the Dames and demoiselles would be maintained by the King with no fee.  

Articles nine and ten of the document provided for the revenues of Saint-Cyr. Louis arranged them in the form of an endowment so that the school would not depend on a "variable and uncertain treasury, but have an inalienable revenue because it was supposed to be perpetual and independent, not subject to the changing wishes of his

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79 Lavallée, Madame de Maintenon, pp. 64-65.
successors or their ministers." The original endowment amounted to 160,000 livres, and came from two sources: 50,000 livres from the seigneurie of Saint-Cyr, and 114,000 livres from the revenues of the abbey of Saint-Denis. In 1691, an additional 30,000 livres was granted from Paris taxes.

The Constitutions were given the official seal by issue of letters patent registered at the Parlement of Paris and the chambre des comptes on June 7, 1686. In these letters patent, Mme. de Maintenon was named the founder and the temporal superior of Saint-Cyr. Mme. de Brinon was made the superior of the Dames de Saint-Louis, and the Bishop of Chartres was named the spiritual superior of Saint-Cyr, as the school was in the boundaries of his diocese.

The explicit direction and organization laid down for Saint-Cyr in the Constitutions was equalled in the internal organization of the order of the Dames de Saint-Louis. The Superior, Mme. Brinon, looked over the general government of the institut, and under her were certain posts of responsibility called the grandes

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80 Ibid., p. 57. Louis also made specific provisions in his will for the continued support of Saint-Cyr, perhaps prodded by the anxiety that Mme. de Maintenon felt for the future of the institut after his death. However, just as the stipulations for a Council of Regency headed by the Duke de Maine were cast aside by Philippe d'Orleans and the Parlement, the provisions for Saint-Cyr were disregarded. The Duke d'Orleans, as Regent, withheld the endowment for Saint-Cyr until the school subsisted solely on credit, and the personal fortune of Maintenon for several months.

81 Ibid., pp. 54-55.

82 Ibid., p. 67.
charges and the petites charges. The grandes charges included the posts of Assistent to the Superior, Mistress of Novices, Mistress of Classes and Dépositaire. The Dépositaire kept accounts of the income and expenses of the school. Under the category of petites charges were the Mistress of the Choir, the Econome, who looked after food and household expenses, the Secrétaire and the Sacristine. 83

The sisters who held the grandes charges were also members of the "internal council" which met once every two weeks with Mme. de Maintenon to discuss the business of the community. The "internal council" was primarily concerned with religious affairs, with the reception of novices, the profession of Dames, or elections within the community. Because the Dépositaire sat on this council, its business also included some matters of finance. However, in this respect the "internal council" was limited in its powers. The Dépositaire could not enter into any transaction involving more than fifty livres without the consent of the "external council." 84

This "external council" was an important link between the institut and the royal financial administration. This council was composed of a councillor of state appointed by the King, of a lawyer representing the Parlement of Paris, and the intendant of Saint-Cyr. The representative of Louis was the president of this council, and by obvious design of the King, he was in most cases also the contrôleur-

83 Ibid., pp. 145-51.
84 Barnard, Madame de Maintenon, pp. 134-35.
général des finances and secrétaire d'état à la marine, at the time of his appointment. In 1699, Pontchartrain was succeeded at Saint-Cyr by Michel de Chamillart, who was at that time the new contrôleur-général des finances. The connection between the finances of Saint-Cyr and the royal financial administration was thus established in the post of president of the "external council", and was underlined by the order that the convent's accounts be submitted to this council at the end of each year for approval.

In practical terms, Manseau, who was the intendant of Saint-Cyr, was the most involved and responsible member of the "external council" with regard to financial matters. Manseau was also the intendant of Mme. de Maintenon's personal household, and his dual position enhanced Maintenon's control over the administration of Saint-Cyr. In fact, the two most competent and influential figures

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85 Louis Phelypeaux, comte de Pontchartrain was born in Paris in 1643. He became the contrôleur-général des finances in 1689, and secrétaire d'état à la marine in 1690. It was in his post with the navy that Pontchartrain is most remembered. He became the Chancellor of France in 1699 and held this post until 1714. He died at Pontchartrain in 1727.

86 Michel de Chamillart (1652-1721) worked his way from the office of Maitre des requêtes to that of intendant for Rouen. His success in the King's service has been attributed by some historians to his prowess at billiards or his friendship with Mme. de Maintenon. His most important offices included that of contrôleur-général des finances (1699), ministre d'état (1700) and secrétaire d'état à la guerre (1701). He was dismissed from his offices in June, 1709. For an account of his disgrace see Historical Memoirs of the Duc de Saint-Simon, edited by Lucy Norton (London: Hamish Hamilton Ltd., 1967), I, 279-80.

87 Barnard, Madame de Maintenon, p. 134.
of the early years of the institut were the trusted members of Maintenon's household staff -- Manseau and Nanon Balbien. Marcel Langlois, who carefully edited and compiled five volumes of Mme. de Maintenon's correspondence, has noted the importance of Manseau and Nanon Balbien at Saint-Cyr. Langlois stated that:

Madame de Maintenon réglé tout elle-même, avec Nanon Balbien et Manseau, disant à Louis XIV que son conseil étoit de tel avis.

It was Manseau who regulated the funds which went to the Dépositaire at Saint-Cyr. She in turn allotted sums of money to the Econome who actually bought the food and household necessities for the school. The Dépositaire signed receipts and kept daily accounts, but Manseau had charge of the legers which were presented to the "external council". The figures available in these yearly financial reports indicate the weight of Manseau's task. In the

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88Nanon Balbien was the daughter of a Paris architect. She had made the acquaintance of Mme. de Maintenon when, after the death of Paul Scarron, she had become a dame pensionnaire at the Petite Charité de Notre-Dame in Paris. With the advent of Mme. de Maintenon's good fortunes as gouvernante to the royal bastards, Mlle. Nanon assumed a post in her personal household. She proved to be Maintenon's most faithful friend and servant, and in 1685 she was given the title of première demoiselle d'honneur de Mme. de Maintenon. From its inception, Nanon was very involved in the arrangements for the school at Saint-Cyr. It was she who designed the habits worn by the Dames de Saint-Louis and the uniforms of the demoiselles of Saint-Cyr. Maintenon relied on her help and advice in the purchase of the furnishings and equipment for the school. In 1690, Nanon was awarded 36,000 livres by Louis for her services in this project and in others. Perhaps the best testimony to Nanon's favor with Mme. de Maintenon was her charge over Maintenon's niece, Françoise-Annable d'Aubigné. Nanon acted as a gouvernante to Mlle. d'Aubigné, who later became the Duchess de Noailles.

89Maintenon, Lettres, III, 378.
first full year of its existence, the expenses for Saint-Cyr amounted to 105,402 livres, and in the following years the total hovered around the 100,000 livre mark. The most expensive year recorded in this early period was 1692, in which 122,521 livres was spent for the maintenance of Saint-Cyr.90

Mme. de Maintenon understood the financial problem involved in the operation of Saint-Cyr, and exhorted the Dames to be economical. She wrote to Brinon in 1686 that

...sy vous leur inspirés vostres économie, dont il ne faut pas se relascher, quoique cela paraisse grand: car il y a bien des extraordinaires dans une maison où il y aura 320 personnes.91

Maintenon entrusted much to Manseau and described him as "à côté de Mme. Brinon" in his power over finances.92 Manseau was an essential ingredient in the organization that Maintenon set up at Saint-Cyr. His association with the representative of Louis on the "external council" insured the watchful eye of the minister of finances over the expenditures at Saint-Cyr; his position in the household of Mme. de Maintenon assured her a control over the administration as well as education at the school.

Royal spending at Saint-Cyr involved the construction as well as the yearly maintenance of the school. Louis provided the funds

90 Ibid., III, 378.
91 Ibid., III, 156.
92 Ibid., III, 378.
for the land, the building and its contents. He placed Louvois over
the project, and enlisted Jules Hardouin Mansart as architect.

Mansart came from a celebrated family whose artisanal work
dated from the construction of the cathedral of St. Pierre de Beauvais
in the fifteenth century. His uncle, François Mansart, had been a
member of the Academy of Architecture and had given Jules an appreci-
cation of classic design. Jules was introduced to Louis XIV
sometime in the early 1670's, and soon afterwards he became a favorite
royal architect. Mansart's works included the chateau de Clagny
built for Madame de Montespan, the reconstruction of Saint Germain-en-
Laye, and Les Invalides. In 1675, he was given the title of Architecte
du Roi and two years later he started work on the palace at Versailles.
His contributions at Versailles included the Gallerie des Glaces, the
gardens, the Colonnade, and the Orangerie. From 1679 to 1686, he
constructed the chateau at Marly for Louis. In 1685, while Mansart
was supervising the completion of Marly, Mme. de Maintenon wrote to
her confessor of commissioning Mansart to build her school:

M. de Louvois a este a Saint-Cyr; il a ordonné à
Mansard d'examiner la situation, l'air, la facilité
d'y avoir l'eau, et toutes autres choses nécessaires
pour prendre avec seureté la resolution d'un aussi
grand dessein.\footnote{Pierre Bourget and Georges Cattaui, Jules Mardouin Mansart

The appointment of Mansart as architect of Saint-Cyr was indicative

\footnote{Maintenon, Lettres, III, 98.}
of royal interest and approval. Louis studied the plans for the building, and offered suggestions as Maintenon noted in one of her letters:

Le Roy est très occupé de Saint-Cyr: il en a corrigé le chœur et plusieurs autres entroits.\(^{95}\)

It was actually Mansart who chose Saint-Cyr as the location for the school. He purchased the land, three miles west of Versailles, from the Marquis de Saint-Brisson for 91,000 livres. Madame de Maintenon at first objected to this choice because she did not wish the land to be taken from a noble estate, but Mansart prevailed. In the end, Maintenon's opinion proved sounder because the site turned out to be swampy and a source of disease for the students. Out of 3,161 girls educated at Saint-Cyr during its existence, two-hundred and eighty-nine died of fever contracted while at school.\(^{96}\)

Mansart and Maintenon also disagreed on his architectural plans for the school. Mme. de Maintenon desired "ni un palais ni un couvent, mais une maison très-simple, n'ayant de beauté que par la grandeur qui lui est nécessaire pour contenir un si grand nombre de personnes".\(^{97}\) Mansart's ideas were of a grander scale, and the school was built according to his plans and under his direction in fifteen months. Maintenon followed Mansart's work closely and commented on

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\(^{95}\)Ibid., III, 152.

\(^{96}\)Barnard, Madame de Maintenon, p. 57.

\(^{97}\)Lavallée, Mme. de Maintenon, p. 53.
his progress in a letter to her niece dated during the summer of 1685.

Je vais à Saint-Cir, qu'avance d'une manière uncroyable: on a commerce vers le 15 de mars, et on couvrira mon appartement à la fin de ce mois; tous les autres corps de logis sont eslevés; le refectoire est presque fait.98

When it was completed in June of 1686, Saint-Cyr consisted of two parallel buildings, separated by elaborate gardens and courts, and a third building which cut perpendicularly and housed a large church. In all, the school and gardens covered about sixteen hectares.99 The expenditures for the construction and equipment of the school were entered in the Registres des Bâtiments du Roi; the total cost came to 1,077,000 livres. Of that amount, 91,000 livres had been the cost of the seigneurie of Saint-Cyr, and 37,417 livres the cost of the adjoining lands and woods. The actual construction, the carpentry, masonry and ironworks, cost another 767,988 livres. Other large expenses included 37,600 livres for couverture; 23,400 livres for plomberie; 40,700 livres for pave and 23,392 livres for terasse et sable.100

The foundation of Saint-Cyr was thus a very costly and time-consuming project. However, the financial investment made by the

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98Maintenon, Lettres, III, 100.
99Lavallée, Mme. de Maintenon, p. 53.
King was equalled by the minute organizational detail attended to by Mme. de Maintenon. She supervised the purchase of each piece of furniture, and was concerned with even the most mundane details such as the supply of winter coals and the quality of the linens.\textsuperscript{101} Throughout the months of tedious discussion and consultation on the Constitutions, and of supervision of the construction and equipping of the school, Maintenon retained a high level of motivation. In a letter to Mme. de Brinon, written shortly before the opening of Saint-Cyr, Maintenon hinted that the driving force behind her work bordered upon a religious dedication. She wrote:

\begin{quote}
Rêjouissés vous, ma très chère. Vous consommez votre vie pour Dieu, et pour un grand ouvrage.\textsuperscript{102}
\end{quote}

The "grand ouvrage" of which Maintenon wrote was her vision of education. When Saint-Cyr opened in August of 1686, her work was really just begun.

\textsuperscript{101}For example: Maintenon, \textit{Lettres}, III, 113; III, 201.

\textsuperscript{102}Maintenon, \textit{Lettres}, III, 176.
CHAPTER IV
EDUCATION AT SAINT-CYR

Education at Saint-Cyr was marked by Mme. de Maintenon's ideals and organizational abilities. The essential character of education at the institut was secular, as had been the organizational document of the school, the Constitutions. The aim of providing a secular education as a preparation for family life was reinforced in the organization of the classes and in the subject matter of the curriculum. The daily regime at Saint-Cyr reflected Maintenon's abhorrence of convent education, as did her insistence that religious devotions not have precedence over school work, and her willingness to experiment with new educational techniques.103

The manner in which the girls were organized in their classes does much to illuminate Mme. de Maintenon's philosophy of education, and her innovative talents. The girls were first divided into classes according to age, each class signified by a different color sash. Les rouges were girls seven to eleven years of age; les vertes, eleven to fourteen years; les jaunes, fourteen to seventeen years; and les bleues, seventeen to twenty years. These classes were again divided into "families" consisting of eight to ten pupils. The girls of each "family" sat together at lessons, ate together and lived together. Each "family" had a senior member called the "mère

103 Barnard, Madame de Maintenon, pp. 140-142.
de famille", and each "family" took turns doing housework and serving in the refectory. The creation of this system of "families" corresponded with Maintenon's basic educational objective of a secular and practical training for girls. Moreover, it illustrated her ability to adapt the conditions of education to her philosophy by the technique of reproducing the conditions of home life as much as possible within the school.

Mme. de Maintenon's writings leave little doubt as to her theories of education. She stated clearly that education at Saint-Cyr should be based on "Christianity and reason". By these she did not mean the common religiosity and anti-intellectualism doled out in convent schools. She explained these as a kind of "sanctified common sense" -- the means by which a woman can make herself useful, content, industrious and acceptable to God within the limits of her world of action. The education in "Christianity and reason" was the same moderate path that had been outlined by Fénelon which prevented both the ignorant girl and the unacceptable précieuse. Fénelon's dictum that the limits of a woman's learning should be determined by her duties was followed faithfully at Saint-Cyr. The

104 Barnard, Madame de Maintenon, pp. 144-145.

105 Madame de Maintenon, Recueil des Instructions Que Mme. de Maintenon a Données Aux Demoiselles de St.-Cyr (Paris: J. Dumoulin, 1908), pp. 138-140.
instruction was oriented to reality, and reality for most girls was
life in the world and marriage. Maintenon wanted to provide girls
who lacked the material base for a good life with practical, moral
and intellectual advantages. She directed the organization and
curriculum of the school towards this aim.

The curriculum for the classes was varied. The "reds" received
lessons in reading, writing, elementary arithmetic and catechism.
The "greens" had a similar course of study with the addition of
music, history and geography. For the "yellows" drawing and dancing
were added, and in the "blue" class more attention was given to
literary and musical works. All of the classes received instruction
in needlework and housework.\textsuperscript{106}

In addition to this moderately liberal curriculum, Mme. de
Maintenon encouraged the development of self-expression through plays
which were performed by the girls. This emphasis on dramatics was
an early characteristic of Saint-Cyr. It reached its height in the
presentation of Jean Racine's \textit{Esther} in 1689. This play, written
especially for the girls at Saint-Cyr, brought them great attention
from the court. This was a disaster for Maintenon, because she
desired to keep the school as separated from the court as possible.
However, the ladies of the court, realizing the King's enchantment
with the institut, desired to gain his favor by visiting Saint-Cyr.

Madame de Montespan was one of the first great ladies to visit
\begin{footnote}
\end{footnote}
the school after its opening, and others quickly followed suit. As early as December, 1686, Maintenon sent specific orders to Mme. de Brinon that these ladies were not to be allowed into the choir where the girls sat.¹⁰⁷ In the Spring of 1687, she wrote to Brinon that she detested the visits of Mme. de Guise and her retenue at Saint-Cyr.¹⁰⁸ This distrust and hostility for the ladies of the court was underlined by the fact that Maintenon forbade the girls to leave the school in the company of a lady of the court. Such people she deemed irresponsible and liable to allow the girls to associate with bad company or read bad literature because "ces dames ont bien d'autres choses à faire que de garder vos demoiselles, et que leur chambres étant remplie de monde, elles n'y seroient guère en sûreté".¹⁰⁹

Thus when Saint-Cyr was invaded by the court to view the girls in their dramatic presentations, Maintenon became very upset. She disliked court society and the breed of women who frequented it, and feared the damage that their attention was doing to the education of the girls. Indeed, the presence of the court provoked an unwanted wave of "prima dona" sentiments in the girls at Saint-Cyr. Consequently, Mme. de Maintenon discontinued public theatricals at the

¹⁰⁸Ibid., III, 271.
¹⁰⁹Barnard, Madame de Maintenon, p. 135.
institut in 1691, and the experience was one of the reasons for a reform of Saint-Cyr in 1694. The other contributing factor in the reform of 1694 was the insubordination among the novices which had been caused by the Quietist teachings of Fénelon and Mme. Guyon.

In the face of these threats to the organizational stability and the normal educational process at Saint-Cyr, Maintenon amended the Constitutions in 1694 so that they allowed for a stricter control over the dames and demoiselles. The size of the teaching staff was increased so that each girl might receive more care and attention, and the Dames de Saint-Louis were brought under the Augustinian rule. However, neither the number of girls admitted to Saint-Cyr, nor the essential character of education at the institut were changed by the reform of 1694.110

After 1694, Mme. de Maintenon became more directly involved in the education at Saint-Cyr through her frequent lectures to the girls. Designed to augment the curriculum, these lectures illustrated more vividly than the mere emenration of subjects exactly what education at the institut meant. The subject matter of the lectures can be divided into three general areas: Christian values, personal values relating to life in the world, and the value of education.

When Mme. de Maintenon spoke to the girls of Saint-Cyr on religion, her focus was unlike that in a convent class. She did not expound on religious devotions or dwell on the lives of the saints.

110Ibid., pp. 77-80.
Instead, she concentrated on giving the girls a set of values with which they could function in the world. For example, in a certain discourse Maintenon explained the practical application of the cardinal virtues in public and private life. "Justice" consisted in rendering everyone his due in personal relations or business matters. "Prudence" ruled that reason should determine actions, and exhorted that decisions should be made in consultation with those who were experienced and wise. "Temperance" prompted a moderation in spending and a simplicity in habits and dress. "Fortitude" helped to surmount obstacles, and was a consolation to those "qui ont le plus de défauts ou qui sentent qu'elles ne sont pas si bien nées".111 These and other religious concepts were thus made to have a specific meaning for girls of the particular socio-economic background of the poorer nobility.

Maintenon encouraged the girls to be charitable, and to begin their charities with the needy of their own estates. Her own activities at Maintenon were an example to the girls in this respect. To guide them in all religious matters, she counseled the girls to choose a wise spiritual director. Her main thrust in discussing religious matters was to displace a silly religiosity with a set of practical attitudes. She warned the girls that when they married they should not spend long hours in prayer and abandon their house and children to the care of domestics. She advised that true piety in the married state will be in fulfilling obligations to the children and the house-

111Maintenon, Recueil, pp. 150-154.
hold.\textsuperscript{112}

The great bulk of Mme. de Maintenon's lectures were directed towards the future secular life of the girls of Saint-Cyr. The curriculum of the institut introduced the girls to the rudiments of the Christian faith, to the necessary intellectual tools and to some aesthetic pursuits. The organization of the school gave them practical experience in living with others and in performing household functions. In her lectures, Maintenon tried to tell the girls what the world was like, and tried to instill in them personal qualities which would help them to get along better in society. In this context, the lectures revealed what Maintenon thought of her own world, her rise to prominence, and her life at court.

A program for getting along in society was described in the course of the lectures. Maintenon advised the girls that civility meant more than the compliments and fawning that were so characteristic of the court life she disliked. Successful conduct in society, according to Maintenon, consisted in forgetting oneself, conveniencing others, listening to others and being grateful and considerate.\textsuperscript{113} Surely this advice came from her personal experience, for it had been as an understanding confidante that Maintenon had gained Louis' affections. Maintenon also encouraged the girls to retain the cheerful attitude which they showed in their studies at Saint-Cyr. In

\textsuperscript{112}Ibid., p. 7.

\textsuperscript{113}Ibid., pp. 68-72.
doing this, she noted that nothing endears so much as kindness, good humor and affability. The King proved an example of this, according to Maintenon, for "le Roi est si chéri de ses peuples, jamais il n'a rebuté personne".\textsuperscript{114}

Mme. de Maintenon placed a special emphasis on the need for a good reputation. This is not difficult to understand for her entry into the court as the royal \textit{gouvernante} had been the result of her excellent reputation. She exhorted the girls to guard their good names, and said that the way to do this was by absolute discretion.\textsuperscript{115} Allied with this emphasis on reputation was her instruction on friendship. She told the girls to treat each other honestly, and praised general friendship as a real virtue. However, she warned that in the world you hazard your reputation by private liaisons.\textsuperscript{116}

Another risk to good reputation was the love of adornment. Mme. de Maintenon singled out this fault with particular vengeance. She was very opposed to the luxury of the court ladies, and herself always dressed in simple black. She told the girls of Saint-Cyr that modest dress denoted good conduct, and that it was better to have the good sense and good taste which they learned at school than to have diamonds and rubies of noble ladies.\textsuperscript{117}

\textsuperscript{114}Ibid., pp. 16-17.
\textsuperscript{115}Ibid., pp. 24-29.
\textsuperscript{116}Ibid., pp. 99-102.
\textsuperscript{117}Ibid., pp. 143-144.
The great sympathy and understanding that Mme. de Maintenon had for the girls of Saint-Cyr showed constantly in her lectures. She, after all, had much in common with them. Her origins had been similarly inauspicious, and her success had been the result of the same practice of moderation and good reputation that she preached. Speaking from her own experience, Maintenon told the girls that the education which they received at Saint-Cyr would be their greatest advantage in life. At the end of a lecture on the subject of education, Mme. de Maintenon summarized her hopes for the girls of Saint-Cyr saying:

Pourquoi, mes enfants, croyez-vous que je vous tout cela? C'est pour votre bien, afin de vous encourager à prendre l'habitude de vous contraindre et de vous accoutumer à ne pas rechercher vos aises, c'est un vrai moyen d'adoucir un peu la mauvaise fortune qui vous attend peut-être et quand vous devriez avoir chacune trente mille livres de rente, je vous dirais encore les mêmes choses car en quelque état que vous trouviez, il vous sera très avantageux d'avoir été élevées un peu durement.118

118 Ibid., pp. 85-86.
CONCLUSIONS

As an educational institution, Saint-Cyr represented some theories far advanced for the day. It was intended and served as a model for girls' education for a century to come. In this respect, Mme. de Maintenon rightly deserves a place of distinction, and a share in the brilliance of the reign of Louis XIV. Her institute at Saint-Cyr was a departure from the second-rate intellectual training customarily provided for girls. In addition, Saint-Cyr must be singled out as an institution that was founded solely for education -- that is, not with the education of girls as a side-benefit of religious training.

Mme. de Maintenon's educational ideas are worthy of note. One of the most significant of these was her belief that education was important for all types of children, regardless of age or social class. Her work with the peasant children of Maintenon was unusual for the seventeenth century, and many of the philosophes of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment did not go as far as to extend education to the working class.

The education which Mme. de Maintenon envisioned and established in her schools was what we would call a vocational training. The peasant girls from Maintenon were given a course of instruction that was completely different from that of the demoiselles. Both types of instruction were oriented to reality, the cardinal principle in
Maintenon's educational scheme. The fille raisonnable of Saint-Cyr had an education which included literature, history, art and music, but was based on a system of "families" and emphasized practical instruction in domestic skills. This program illuminates an important aspect of Maintenon's educational thought -- her recognition of individual needs and abilities in students.

Present-day theorists expound on the necessity of remembering that each child has different capabilities and needs, and in this regard Mme. de Maintenon was quite modern. In her instructions to the Dames de Saint-Louis she emphasized the need to fit punishments and rewards to the individual girl. When explaining the course of studies for her earlier institution at Rueil, where both peasant and noble girls were trained, she pointed out that each group of girls needed different things in their education. The vinedresser's daughter need not speak the perfect French of a demoiselle, but she should be able to perform a variety of domestic duties well. Thus Maintenon always kept in mind the kind of life for which the girl was being trained, to what "état" she was destined. This alone may now seem a backward notion, but it must be remembered that Maintenon was the creature of an age in which social class was an extremely important consideration. If we judge her theories in their proper context, the individualized education which Maintenon espoused has a great practical merit.

Although Mme. de Maintenon disliked the precieuse, and insisted that Saint-Cyr not become a breeding ground for female intellectuals,
the school offered a high quality education. This is attested to by the activities of some of the graduates of the institut. A case in point is Charlotte d'Aumale, who was an early graduate of Saint-Cyr and for many years Mme. de Maintenon's personal secretary. Mlle. d'Aumale's letters, which form the first volume of the comte d'Haussonville's Souvenirs Sur Madame de Maintenon, show a high quality training in both composition and self-expression. Many other graduates distinguished themselves in the field of education either in their work at Saint-Cyr or at one of the schools patterned after it.

In addition to the basic theories upon which education at Saint-Cyr was built, the lectures of Mme. de Maintenon are crucial to an evaluation of the school. The content of the lectures seems to have come directly from her personal experiences. For example, the emphasis on the value of education and good reputation was admittedly her own formula for success. The actual establishment of the school was the result of her background, a reflection of her personal knowledge of the tenuous future of a girl without the advantage of a wealthy family. It is probable that the organization and discipline at Saint-Cyr were compensation for the stability and security that Maintenon had herself lacked as a young girl.

In her advice to the girls of Saint-Cyr on life in the world, Maintenon also drew from her personal experience. Her work at Saint-Cyr revealed her sentiments on her life at court in two distinct ways. First, her lectures contained obvious criticism of the life of
the nobility at the court of Louis XIV. The evils of which she warned the girls were those which she saw around her daily -- the vanity and dishonesty of so many ladies of the court. Secondly, Saint-Cyr was a means of escape for Maintenon from a life which she detested. In a conversation recounted by Mme. de Glapion, one of the Dames de Saint-Louis, Maintenon candidly admitted her preference for Saint-Cyr over Versailles. In 1705, she said:

I am in great joy whenever I see the door closing behind me as I enter here; Saint-Cyr and I never go out of it without pain. Often upon returning to Versailles, I think: 'This is the world, and apparently the world for which Jesus Christ would not pray on the eve of death. I know there are good souls at Court, and that God has saints in all conditions; but it is certain that what is called the world is centered here; it is here that all passions are in motion, -- self-interest, ambition, envy, pleasure; this is the world so often cursed by God.' I own to you that these reflections give me a sense of sadness and horror for that place, where, nevertheless, I have to live.\textsuperscript{119}

\textsuperscript{119}The Correspondence of Madame, Princess Palatine, Marie-Adelaide de Savoie and Madame de Maintenon, translated by Katherine Prescott Wormley (Boston: Hardy, Pratt, & Co., 1902), p. 300.
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