The House of Saulx-Tavanes

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Published by Johns Hopkins University Press

Forster, Robert.
The House of Saulx-Tavanes: Versailles and Burgundy, 1700-1830.

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The opportunities for adornment for people of means in the late eighteenth century should not be underestimated. The Goncourt brothers describe the inventive imagination that characterized female taste in these matters in the 1770s and 1780s.

There were gowns which...called for the spoil of four thousand jays; there were gowns over which Davaux ran the most resplendent embroideries; there were gowns on which Pagelle, the tailor of the Traits Gaîtans, threw blonds of silver lace, barrières of chicoré caught and held up with jasmine, little bouquets tied with little knots in hollows of embroidered festoons, bracelets, pompons—all the prodigious embellishments that brought a dress to the price of 10,500 livres and made Madame de Matignon to pay her tailor a life-time annuity of 600 pounds for one.¹

 Appropriately, the men were only slightly less fashionable. In 1751, Marquis d’Argenson complained that the expense of new coats ordered by the King for fête days had ruined two courtiers. Although men’s apparel became somewhat less complicated at the end of the century, pages’ coats could still command 1,500 livres in 1786. Words can only begin to describe what gentlemen’s waistcoats were like—cream satin, chain stitch embroidery in pastel-colored silks, pounced and painted Indian cotton, or black satin with blue glass ornaments. Moreau’s fashion plate, ¹

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¹ E. and J. Goncourt, The Woman of the Eighteenth Century, Le Clercq and Roeder trans. (New York, 1927), p. 220. See also, H. J. Baudrillart, Histoire du luxe privé et public depuis l’antiquité jusqu’à nos jours (Paris, 1878–80). Given the state of dry cleaning at the time, how many of these dresses were necessary in the wardrobe of a lady à la mode?
“La Grande Toilette” (1777), gives some idea of the nobleman in full dress complete with ribbon diagonally across the waistcoat, two fobs dangling from the breeches, sword and hat ready to stroll with his lady companion, also in superb walking attire. To those clients who were tactless enough to mention price, an artist-tailor might justly reply, “Is Vernet paid simply for his canvas and paints?”

The conversion of Marie Antoinette from simple muslin to haute couture after 1774 surely forced the competitive pace at court. The rise of the specialist, represented by the Queen’s dressmaker Rose Bertin and the royal hairdresser Léonard, made the reign of Louis XVI the heyday of elaborate apparel. Nor was such sumptuous finery limited to the immediate circle of the Queen. It was a Parisian phenomenon, even a national distinction. Manuals were written about fashion. The “Treatise on the Principles of Women’s Hairdressing,” comprising 39 volumes and 3,744 identifiable hair fashions, was a classic of its kind. The *Monument du Costume* by Jean-Michel Moreau the younger is still a standard work of reference; its plates, a vision of beauty. The periodical of fashion, *Galérie des Modes*, was to follow. Even as intelligent and serious a woman as Madame de Genlis could expend considerable conversation on the latest in hoop petticoats and the proper adjustment of the bustle.

The extreme elaboration of female attire did not end with dress, underwear, and coiffure, however intricate they might be. It extended to a host of accessories for both men and women that were the pride of the luxury trade. Jewelry in profusion to be sure, but also watches, watch fobs, fans, buttons “in gilding and silvering,” snuff boxes, bonbon boxes, dancing-program boxes. Containers of all kinds, engraved exquisitely with heraldry, filigree, or weeping willows on classic columns were the rage. Recall that the gentleman’s snuff box and lady’s étui were as indispensable to polite society in the eighteenth century as the cigarette lighter is in the twentieth. From intimate supper to fancy dress ball, from thé à

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l’Anglaise to Jeu de Roi, the grande dame and her escort required the proper ensemble for each social occasion.

In Paris, shopping was much more than a means to elegance. It was itself a diversion, a promenade, a setting for display.

The “Merchant’s Dream” is no more; we shop at the Palais-Royal. It is not at the “Ottoman’s Loss,” his very name has perished, but at the “Descent of the Pont Neuf,” at the “Petit Dunkerque,” at the “Petit” as it is known for short, that the fashionable flâneurs alight to linger a couple of hours agreeably over some petty futility.\(^5\)

Elaboration in dress went hand in hand with an enlarged field of amusements. Theatre, suppers, promenades, balls, and firework displays were not new, nor was the elaborate game of love. The latter was no intermittent, shameful activity judging by the first fifty pages of Lauzun’s Mémoires. But if the duke’s conquests be ascribed to what a contemporary called his “chivalric imagination,” he was not unique. One of the suitors of Madame de Genlis disguised himself as a beggar on the streets of Paris so that he could follow her everywhere.\(^6\) More novel was the fashion for “true friendship” between women. Hours might now be spent in intimate conversation; Madame de Genlis would chat with her lady friends from eight in the evening until one in the morning.\(^7\) For other spare hours, an array of newer diversions appeared—the passion for pets, the craze for puppets, the addiction to raveling and unraveling (the “mode of knots”), play-acting at home, and dabbling in philosophy, literature, and science. And “science” was an elastic word in the late century.

Mesmerism, pseudo-science, fortune-telling, outright sorcery were a welcome relief to the bored, the hysterical, the credulous.\(^8\) The Prince de Ligne described his efforts to conform to this social prescription.

In vain I passed whole nights at the house of the old Countess de Silly in the Faubourg Saint-Marceau where she saw spirits, or said she did, in my presence; in vain a certain Chavigny worked over me; and a man named Beauregard, on the night between Holy Thursday and Good Friday, per-

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\(^5\) Goncourt, The Woman of the 18th Century, p. 76.

\(^6\) Comtesse de Genlis, Mémoires, ed. F. Barrière (Paris, 1857), pp. 95n, 126. Unless otherwise indicated, this edition is used throughout.

\(^7\) Ibid., p. 85.

formed the most horrible conjurations and tricks around me and the Ducs d’Orléans and Fitz-James. The latter in signing his name upset the inkstand over our compact with the Devil, who, apparently furious at this lack of attention, refused to appear.⁹

The Prince went on to describe the appeal of Cagliostro, Mesmer, the “great Etteilà,” and other visionaries who were the rage of the moment. Efforts to communicate with the dead did not end, of course, with the departure of fortune teller or healer. Princess de Guemeneé, governess of the royal children, was reported in constant trances which none of her contemporaries considered peculiar.¹⁰

And what of gambling? Comte Dufort de Cheverny, who liked the company of marshals and lieutenant-generals like Mirepoix, Duras, Richelieu, and Tavanes, had this to say about it.

Already at collège I knew all the games of chance as well as I do now. This science was part of our education and all our recreation time was spent at piquet, trictrac, quadrille, or at quinze. We were so well prepared that, when we entered society, Comte de Chabot, Monseigneur Brienne, the four Flamarens, and Monseigneur de Toris with whom we gathered every day at Monsieur de Saint Sauveur’s were all dispensed from this apprenticeship. It is rather curious that no one of us was a real gambler, while Marquis de Genlis, though he was at my collège but not in our set, and Monsieur de Sillery, his brother, have become the biggest gamblers in Paris even though they were unacquainted with it at collège.¹¹

That Cheverny had not entirely abandoned the habit is suggested by his subsequent remark that he had lost about a hundred louis (2,300 livres) “on this trip.” The more prosaic account book of Marquis de Castries, also Marshal of France, tells a similar story. Castries calculated not in livres but in solid gold louis, the mark of a Parisian aristocrat. Interspersed with expenditures for travel literature, the comédie, cases of champagne, and trips to Marly and Fontainebleau such items as “won at gaming—45 louis” or “lost at gaming—15 louis” appear regularly.¹² It is this routine, habitual gambling that tells us more about the pervasiveness of the “vice” (or social asset) than the famous gaming tables of the

¹² Bibliothèque Nationale, Manuscrits français, 11438.
The Burden of Status

King. Of course, someone had to win. Baron de Viomérin was reputed a winner for over twenty years and there were others with unbeatable luck. But the losses were sometimes extraordinary. At age twenty, Marquis de Genlis lost 500,000 livres in a single evening to the same Baron de Viomérin. After this escapade, the Marquis’ uncle locked him in Saumur castle for five years—one year for each 100,000 livres, he said.

Gambling was not restricted to the backgammon tables of select residences. By 1775, horse racing had made its mark with the royal family; Duc de Lauzun brought English horses across the channel and Duc d’Artois enticed the young queen with enormous wagers on the “Plaine de Sablons,” the Longchamps of the late century. The medieval tournament had succumbed to cupidity, commented one contemporary. Comte de Genlis bet Duc de Chartres that he could make the trip from Paris to Fontainebleau and back in less time than it would take the Prince to prick 500,000 pinholes into paper. No wonder Duc de Villeroi lost at least one coachman in his regular carriage race from Paris to Versailles in one hour and five minutes. As Comte Dufort put it, “C’était un bon enfant, voilà tout.”

Aside from certain puerile aspects, there was more insidious danger in the habit of small gestures and petty vanities. “It is not the grand passions which ruin us,” wrote Madame de Genlis, “for their danger is obvious, and the well-born can triumph over them by a concentration of will; but one is less aware of the petty, puerile sentiments which have nothing vicious about them, and yet, little by little, come to dominate us and lead us astray.”

Lauzun, a good representative of the “Young Court,” scoffed at the older court traditions, the vexations of etiquette, and clamored for a more open, free and pleasurable life, ranging from new modes of dress à la Henri IV to a commitment to Anglomania or revolution in North America. But new tastes and enthusiasms ceded nothing to that other form of pettiness usually called “bourgeois” or “provincial.” One simply should not count by livres and sous. Lauzun complained that his wife

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14 Dufort, Mémoires, I, 44–45.
16 Maugras, Lauzun and Marie-Antoinette, 82–84.
17 Dufort, Mémoires, I, 75.
18 Genlis, Mémoires, 117.

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had brought him only 150,000 in *rentes* and he wanted her to be "magnificent." Madame de Genlis defined this term as a desire among *grands seigneurs* to possess luxurious horses and carriages, numerous servants, and perhaps most important of all, to provide theater loges, *hôtel* apartments, and open table to all their friends, with sufficient leavings for the poor at the main gate.

Duc de Choiseul maintained such a magnificent style of life, especially after his exile to Chanteloup. He managed to spend through a Crozat dowry, a generous government pension, and sumptuous royal gifts within a few years. Nothing was spared on his guests; Chanteloup became a veritable Houghton Hall, with a wine cellar to match. A staff of 54 liveried servants in the main house, and a table constantly prepared for 35 to 50 place-settings, served Choiseul's company 4,000 chickens per year, 30 sheep per month, and 300 pounds of bread per day! Between dinners and suppers, there was daily deer-hunting in the duke's 6,000-acre forest along the Loire; there was billiards, *trictrac*, chess, a superb library, and a collection of engravings inside the château; and an extensive formal garden was dominated by a Chinese pagoda of prodigious height. A substantial number of Parisian aristocrats understandably followed the duke into exile and were infected by his notions of noble hospitality. His style of life, he said, was not simply a matter of personal taste, but an accessory to his birth and dignity, an obligation for a man of his station. It prompted Voltaire to quip: "My God, give him the post of controller-general and he will pick the Treasury bare in two years!"

The higher one went in the social scale, the more demanding the obligation of magnificence became. It seemed worth almost any price; indebtedness, even open bankruptcy were risked and socially accepted. Lauzun, with his customary casualness best expressed in the untranslatable "*désinvolture*," alluded to his considerable debts in 1780, which was "not very extraordinary." He had an obligation of 1,500,000 livres and a fortune of more than 4,000,000 livres. All would have gone well, he re-

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marked, had not some avaricious speculators bought out all the old creditors and threatened to send him to prison. Refusing all financial aid from his many well-placed friends, Lauzun sold his land to Prince de Guémenée and converted his entire fortune into a life-time annuity of 80,000 which would keep him in proper estate for the rest of his days. But without direct descendants, Lauzun was somewhat peculiar. Bankruptcies could be weathered without depriving posterity of its patrimony. The Rohan-Guémenée survived perhaps the most famous family bankruptcy of the reign—33 millions deficit. It is not clear whether the spectacles of the Prince or the “representations” of the Princess precipitated the “crash.” The Polignacs, who followed the Guémenée as official tutors of the royal children, were reputed as “ruined” two or three times. But this did not prevent them from purchasing the magnificent domain of Chambord, in order to raise horses. Both the Guémenée and the Polignac were sustained by powerful court connections. For who could be more understanding in these matters than the Queen and her flamboyant brother-in-law, Duc d’Artois? Marie-Antoinette had a reputation for being “very attached to her friends.”

Indeed, the Princes of the Blood set the worst example of all. Clermont, in debt for over a million, saved by the royal treasury; Conty, whose wife loved to spend even more than he, sustained in large part by the fortune of his mistress, Madame d’Artic; the house of Condé rescued by the death of the duke and the efforts of the trustee, Comte de Charolais. The death of the older Due d’Orléans exposed the young Due de Chartres to imminent bankruptcy. An enterprising member of the Genlis family saved him by proposing that the duke build shops and galleries in the inner court of his Parisian townhouse, the Palais-Royal. Comte de Toulouse, bastard son of Louis XIV, left nine millions in debt when he died in 1737. Thanks to the efforts of the financial manager of the estate, Abbé Salabery, the debt was substantially reduced and the revenues increased to almost a million livres per annum. But in 1743, the

23 Lauzun, Mémoires, pp. 150-54.
26 Genlis, Mémoires, pp. 236-37.
young Duc de Penthèvre assumed direct control of his fortune; two years later the estate was again unable to meet obligations of 800,000 livres. 

Looking back, Abbé Soulavie, author of the memoirs of Duc de Richelieu, had this to say about the Princes of the Blood:

All the Princes were wont to scandalize the public by their libertine habits, and almost all of them have been the most brazen corrupters of the Nation. In order to reestablish the old morals, the legislators and administrators of the Empire had to choose from that class of citizens called the petite bourgeoisie where decent morals can still be found.

All of aristocratic society cannot be judged by the "follies" of the Princes or the "magnificence" of a Choiseul. Expenditure of money was one aspect, to be sure, but expenditure of time and energy on the "whirlpool" of Paris was perhaps even more pervasive. In those sobering years after the Revolution, many noblemen of the older generation looked back on the "false vanities" and "fragile grandeur" of Paris at the end of the Old Regime. But Talleyrand's famous douceur de vivre is probably more historical. There was no perception of Séguir's "abyss under the carpet of flowers" in 1788. Madame de Genlis, one of that old society's finer products, remembered well what we have since labeled "the eve of the Revolution."

A few individuals in our society foresaw storm and trouble, but in general, a sense of security prevailed in abundance. Duc d'Orléans and M. de Lauzun were with me one evening during the sessions of the Assembly of Notables. I said that I hoped the Assembly would reform a number of abuses. M. le Due d'Orléans said that it would not even end the lettres de cachet.

Lauzun disagreed. Typically, they bet fifty louis on the question, Madame de Genlis keeping the written wager in her possession.

I showed this wager to more than fifty people, and the ideas of M. le Duc were those of almost everyone. They regarded the idea of revolution as

28 Richelieu, Mémoires, II, 146. Since the duke died in 1788, this is undoubtedly the comment of Abbé Soulavie, who was vicar-general of the diocese of Châlons when the Revolution broke out. Although it has been established that Richelieu transferred his personal papers to Soulavie, the memoirs were written by the abbé, later priest in the constitutional church. This authorship explains the moral tone of the memoirs as well as the controversy over their authenticity. See G. P. Gooch, Louis XV: the Monarchy in Decline (London, 1956), p. 279.
impossible. This sense of security had a disastrous effect; it kept us from taking measures that would have prevented it.29

Let there be no mistake about it. The cream of the old society—from the Gens de la Cour to more modest army officers—loved the world on the Seine. With all their affectation of blasé disdain, there was no other. For them, it was permanent and authentic. When Mademoiselle de Lespinasse described her day—dinner with Madame de Boufflers, social calls in the Faubourg Saint-Honoré, “Henry IV” at the Comédie-Française, the loge “on the Queen’s side”—she seemed supremely happy, in her own words, a day “marvellously arranged.”30 It was the same for Genlis.31 Or perhaps the outcry of the “exiled” army officer captures best the lure of Paris:

I would rather kill myself than live in the provinces. I cannot find a single soul, a single wit to my liking. You, and all that is around you, have spoiled me for life.32

It would be wrong to characterize this high society simply as whirl of pleasure and frivolity. The puerilities, the inflexible etiquette, the apparently compulsive comings-and-goings—visites, soupers, promenades—imperceptibly merged into a more serious salon life, ranging, to be sure, from the lighter tone of Madame de Luxembourg or Madame du Def­fand to the intellectual stimulus of Madame Geoffrin or Mademoiselle de Lespinasse. For the great attraction of Paris was not only the setting for magnificence, the opportunities to indulge one’s tastes for the “finer things” that luxury industry could provide, but also the sense of being near the center of a civilization. Many of this privileged society merely went through the outward forms of urbane living, but there were others who pierced the surface to develop esprit, goût, bon ton, and even to think critically and imaginatively. It was the combination of visites and the Comédie-Française, of soupers and the latest novel, of château garden promenades and talks with English guests that made the capital all

29 Genlis, Mémoires, p. 220.
31 Genlis, Mémoires, p. 84. “I spent the winter in rather extensive dissipation.” To be sure, the word carried less unfavorable connotations then.
32 Lespinasse, Correspondance, p. 146 (Guibert to Lespinasse, September 9, 1774).
the more captivating. As Mademoiselle de Lespinasse wrote to Comte de Guibert, who was lamenting his exile in Quercy:

We can say about the habit of living with people of esprit and merit what La Rochefoucauld said about the Court: it does not make us happy, and it prevents us from finding happiness elsewhere.33

But whether predominantly frivolous or serious, there was little place for the petty bourgeois virtues to which Abbé Soulavié alluded. How unfortunate it was that Comte de Crillon was constantly occupied with business matters! It was, said Mademoiselle de Lespinasse, "a kind of occupation which results in more profit than glory."34

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Aglaé-Marie-Louise de Choiseul-Gouffier was only fourteen when she married the son of Duc de Saulx-Tavanès in 1786. At this young age, she could be excused for a somewhat superficial view of her new father-in-law. She remembered him in her memoirs as a man of noble and generous sentiments, sincerely loyal to the Queen, though not a member of her intimate circle. Although he had been part of the royal court since youth, she said, the duke did not share the ideas of most courtiers. "I remember his saying that the office of chevalier d'honneur pleased him especially because it entailed no pecuniary advantage, and when the National Assembly ordered the publication of the Red Book recording all the secret pensions of the court, he laughed with complete indifference, confident, he said, that his name would not appear in it."35 In fact, as his accounts show, the office returned the duke exactly 10,380 livres in 1786, after taxes.36 Needless to add, the duke's correspondence with his estate agents exposes another side to the man. But to anyone who knew the duke in Paris, his "indifference to pecuniary advantage" seemed amply demonstrated.

That the duke, like his forebears, was quite capable of crying for strict economy from his agents in Burgundy while spending lavishly in Paris needs no comment. "Economy" was no religious fetish to Tavanès,

33 Ibid., p. 166 (Lespinasse to Guibert, September 23, 1774).
34 Ibid., pp. 203-4 (Lespinasse to Guibert, October 14, 1774).
36 A. D., E-1712.
but a necessary means to maintain his status in the capital. A lavish spender he was. Gaston Roupnel was right to characterize the Tavanes papers at Dijon as one mass of bills and debts.  

And if these bundles of bills are any indication, spending for conspicuous display had increased after 1770.

The amount of time and money the duke and duchess spent frequenting those delightful shops along the Rue Saint-Honoré, Saint-Denis, or Richelieu was appreciable. The printed headings on the duke's bills give some of the flavor and attraction of such traiteurs, fournisseurs, and marchands de modes:

Magazin de toutes sortes de Marchandises de Fantasies les plus Nouvelles et le plus à la Mode. Rue de Richelieu, No. 13.

Judging by the frequency of the bills, the duchess was particularly fond of Bourjot's, though she hardly limited herself to a single shop.

At the Silver Lion. Rue St. Denis near l'Apport Paris.

Bourjot, merchant, selling all kinds of cloth, rich in gold and silver; embroidered, sown, and stitched in silk or velvet; taffetas of all styles; all kinds of cloth for furnishing or for the ladies and gentlemen.

In 1771, the year before her separation from Charles-François-Casimir, Madame de Tavanes spent 3,804 livres for fabrics of this quality. The bill from Bourjot's was 4,063 livres the year before. The count was little more restrained in his personal dress. Between April and June of 1770, he spent 2,369 livres at Alexander's. The purchases included a dress suit, a coat, and a small wig (en bouffant en blonde fine) for 300 livres, plus ribbons, lace, cuffs and other sundries.

Tavanes and his wife also had a great love of silverware, jewelry, crystal, porcelain, and other precious products of French craftsmanship, sold under signboards marked Orfèvrerie and Bijouterie. Gold spoons, silver

37 G. Roupnel, La ville et la campagne au XVIIIe siècle: étude sur les populations du pays Dijonnais (Paris, 1955), p. 314. Roupnel's cursory treatment of the Tavanes' accounts is misleading, however; Roupnel is too quick to separate the nobles of the Court from those of the robe in matters of estate administration.

38 A. D., E-1728. Bundles E-1713, 1714, 1717, and 1720 bulge with receipts and bills for the 1780s. They are not classified.

39 A. D., E-1698. This is still another bundle of bills for the 1760s and 1770s.

40 Ibid.
coffee services, an exquisite pair of earrings inlaid with precious stones (6,500 livres), and a mechanical watch and chain studded with jewels (5,900 livres) give some idea of the duke's taste. These last two purchases alone were worth more than his mother's entire jewelry collection, and the Tessés were notoriously rich. In fact, the duke revealed increased interest in expensive gifts in the 1780s. The more traditional male accoutrements—walking canes with ball tops, decorated steel rapiers, ivory pen knives, or engraved snuff boxes—like those owned by his father, would not do. He developed a weakness for mechanical dolls and cosmetic cases, gifts he showered on his new daughter-in-law, the fourteen-year-old Aglaé-Marie-Louise de Choiseul-Gouffier. His wedding gift to her was a masterpiece of compact value; a rouge-box, pencil, scissors, knife, sewing set of silver and gold, all placed in a small chest of acajou wood. It cost 14,889 livres.

Between 1784 and 1787, all three of the duke's children married. On these three occasions the duke spared no expense. For his son, in addition to a 20,000-livre pension and a cavalry company worth 5,000 livres more, the duke spent over 4,000 livres on new clothes and 700 livres on the ceremony itself, including 96 livres for the parish poor. In addition to his daughters' dowries, set at 200,000 livres each, Tavanes borrowed 30,000 livres for their trousseaus. The new Comtesse de Kercado must have been splendid indeed. Bland receipts cannot begin to describe the richness of color and finery, from the gaze d'Italie to velours frisés and satin rayé. For the tailors and shopkeepers who served the Tavanes family in these years, there were profits to be made. And let it not be said that clothes, jewelry, and other accessories were an inconsequential expense for a Parisian nobleman.

In the 1780s the Tavanes lived in a solid townhouse on the Rue du Bac, having left the Rue St. Dominique in the St. Sulpice quarter for something more suitable. They rented the house for 6,000 livres per annum, an outlandish rent by provincial standards, but not exaggerated for a good Paris address. The accounts of 1786 allude to recent additions and embellishments. In 1783, the duke laid new parquet flooring, and a

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41 A. D., E-1720; E-1699, Inventory, 1784.
42 A. D., E-1699.
43 A. D., E-1720.
44 A. D., E-1717, Detail, 1788.
45 A. D., E-1714.
year later he built a library. Curiously, he sold his father's library of some 400 books the same year, including the works of his learned ancestor, Chancellor Daguesseau. A few years later, he paid to have a number of his books rebound, including some volumes on natural history and travel, and a one-volume seigneurial rent register—terrier perpetuel. One suspects that the decorative function of the library was worth more to the duke than its intellectual content. He paid equal attention to the re-decoration of his bedroom and dressing room, especially the painting of the two shepherdesses, presumably of marble. But these do not seem to have been heavy expenses. Carpenters were cheap, and it cost the duke more to repair and polish his watches and snuff boxes in 1788 than it did to redecorate his townhouse. Heating such a house was something else. The August wood supply—no doubt for the winter of 1787–88—cost 2,835 livres. The duke could well appreciate the high cost of this commodity, since a substantial part of his revenues depended on it. 46

What about other household expenses? The duke of course ate very well. The basic annual food budget was in the neighborhood of 5,000 livres. To this must be added the produce of specialty shops along the Rue St. Honoré. Here is a sample of purchases in January 1784: 47

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
<th>Price (livres)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Turkey with truffles</td>
<td></td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicken Patties of Rouen</td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sauerkraut of Strasbourg</td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olives of Marseilles</td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rocquefort Cheese (in pot)</td>
<td></td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anchovies in Oil</td>
<td></td>
<td>30</td>
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<tr>
<td>Spiced Bread of Rheims</td>
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<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Prunes of Tour</td>
<td></td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Levant Rice</td>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhum from Jamaica</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brandy from Dantzig</td>
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<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognac</td>
<td></td>
<td>30</td>
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<tr>
<td>Muscat Wine from Toulon</td>
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<tr>
<td>Malaga Wine</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhine Wine</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bordeaux Wine</td>
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<td>Mocha Coffee</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cayenne Coffee</td>
<td></td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

46 A. D., E-1699; E-1714; E-1713.
47 A. D., E-1712.
Although the household consumed less wine than Walpole’s Houghton Hall, Tavanes kept a respectable cave. His main stock was Beaune and Médoc in 240-bottle lots supplemented by several hundred bottles of assorted wines ranging from white Champagne and Malaga to a few more exotic labels—Smirna, Cyprus, Montliban, Tokai, Noyau brandy and a Crème de Barbade. Yet the cost was not excessive. A cask of Médoc ordered from Bordeaux in December 1787 cost only 376 livres plus 2 per cent commission. The entire cellar was estimated at less than 1,000 livres in 1784. When the duke reduced the annual pension of his daughter because she lived with him, the 4,000 livres allotted for her maintenance was certainly more than ample.

What of the stables? The fact that the duke was officially attached to the royal stables does not mean that he had any particular interest in horses. His own stables were modest. Seven horses were sufficient for the carriages and cost about 1,400 livres a year to feed. Forage was expensive by the 1780s. The duke had seven carriages of various ages and sizes, including a large green English coach with silk draperies and a large “S-T” on the trains, another berline for the country, two diligences, two smaller phaetons, and a cabriolet. A new diligence cost 3,200 livres; a good horse, 1,000 livres; and new harness, 450 livres. Apparently, only two or three of these conveyances were used. The others were simply left in the stables, having almost no resale value. The coaches were kept in working order, polished and cleaned, under yearly contract for 540 livres. Altogether, expenditure for equipage was not excessive. 48

If wages for carpenters and stable masters were modest, the salaries for domestics would surely be less. In the provinces, servants’ wages rarely exceeded 200 livres and were almost always in arrears. It was considered sufficient for a servant to be housed, fed, and kept in livery. Moreover, except for the richest provincial families, four or five servants in the townhouse were usually adequate. But Paris standards were different, though still short of those set by English lords. The Paris household of the duke’s father included fifteen servants at the following wages:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Paris Household of the Saulx-Tavanes, 1786</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Colmach (Maitre d’Hotel)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poisson, Cook</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fauveau, Coachman</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

48 A. D., E-1713 to E-1719; E-1728; E-1699.
In contrast to provincial custom, these wages were paid promptly. Qualified domestics were probably harder to come by in the capital. Moreover, a break with family practice by the duke's father made the burden greater. Small legacies, usually a year's wages, were not unheard of in the provinces, but never legacies ranging from 1,200 to 6,000 livres. No doubt, the seventy-year-old count thought this fitting. His son, the duke, seemed less enthusiastic, for he converted most of the legacies into life-annuities at eight to ten per cent. Still, this represented an annual charge of about 4,000 livres, and many of the recipients had twenty years to live. The duke kept the younger ones on, but the obligations were there too.

What other expenses did the duke have? He reserved loges at the Comédie-Française and the Royal Academy of Music for the season for 1,625 livres. If other social obligations cost as much, the duke's amusements would have been a heavy burden. But judging from the bills, entertainment, excluding household provisions, does not appear high. Of course, it is quite possible that the duke did not record his gambling losses (or gains) like Marquis de Castries. What about his obligations at Versailles? Whatever else can be said about the court, it did not have to cost the courtier very much, apart from his attire. Apartments at Versailles were paid for out of the budget of the royal household and provisions of wood, oil, candles, and food could be had for less than 1,000 livres per month. Aside from the prescribed tips for each lackey or stable-boy, the opportunities for large spending were limited, strange as
this may seem at the pinnacle of high society. To be sure, one must make place for trictrac and fara; the Queen's gaming tables may account for the failure of the duke to live within Godard's 60,000-livre budget for personal expenses.

Education costs were almost negligible. Before her marriage, the future Comtesse de Kercado lived in a convent school for less than 500 livres per annum. Her piano lessons cost only 36 livres monthly. Medical care, such as it was, was equally cheap. The quaint medicines consumed by the duke's father before he died in 1784 cost 661 livres for an eleven months' supply. But if teachers and doctors could be had for small sums, it was not the same for lawyers.

Tavanes had more than the usual family litigation in the 1780s. First, there was the considerable expense entailed by the elevation of the Burgundian property into a duchy—at least 25,000 livres in 1786 and 1787. Then there were the law cases over the droit d'indire and the new terriers. Equally important, though more difficult to estimate precisely, were legal expenses relating to inheritances. A great noble family like the Tavanes expended considerable energy on the arrangement of advantageous marriage alliances and the recuperation of legacies and inheritances. Not in vain had the Tavanes males married into wealthy robe families since the seventeenth century. But inheritances falling under the competences of various customary law codes required legal advice. Inventories had to be drawn up, settlement claims carefully established, mortgages and creditors classified.

In addition to the legal counsel of his agents—Godard and Billard were advocates—the duke employed at least two other lawyers in Paris. Monsieur Bro, family lawyer, negotiated with the creditors, occasionally liquidated debts, and more often arranged for new loans. Monsieur de Laune gave more technical legal advice to the duke, especially between...
THE BURDEN OF STATUS

1782 and 1786. Here is a partial account, suggesting a considerable expenditure of time as well as money in the office of the advocate:

Consultation with M. de Laune ........................................ 24 livres
Counsel regarding transactions on the second marriage ................ 24
Drawing up 64 rolls ......................................................... 192
Counsel of the terriers of Lux .............................................. 24
Examination of the extracts of all family acts ............................ 72
Consultation (five hours) .................................................... 60

De Laune charged 12 livres an hour for his legal advice and presented a bill for 2,094 livres in April, 1786. Two months earlier, M. de Joigny presented his note for handling the inheritance of the duke’s father; it was an additional 2,400 livres. The total legal costs for 1786 were 4,756 livres, not including the expense of the “duchy.”

No wonder Tavanes was concerned about the threat of lawsuits from the villages of his Burgundian estate. He had enough legal expense in Paris.

Despite the fragmentary nature of the above expenditures, it is still possible to draw up an approximate annual budget for Duc de Saulx-Tavanes for the year 1788:

Personal Expenses of Duc de Saulx-Tavanes in 1788

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clothing, jewelry, gifts</td>
<td>20,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Townhouse (rent, repair, upkeep)</td>
<td>7,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heating</td>
<td>3,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food</td>
<td>6,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Servants (including legacies)</td>
<td>10,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equipage (stables)</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Versailles (three months?)</td>
<td>3,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal fees</td>
<td>5,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medicines</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theater</td>
<td>2,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charities (in Paris)</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taxes (in Paris)</td>
<td>2,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>62,000</strong> livres</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: This list is based on bundles of receipts and bills. There is no summary account available. A. D., E-1713-20.

50 A. D., E-1712; E-1713; E-1721 (Billard accounts).
This list of expenditures suggests a great deal about what a Parisian nobleman considered important. A family budget, not unlike a national budget, establishes an order of priorities, a measure of consumer preference. Note the large proportion of total expenditure for outward display—20,000 livres for clothing and accessories—almost one-third of the total spending for the year. The maintenance of the household accounts for about one-half, including 10,000 livres for the servants. By contrast, consider the small sums expended on education, medicine, or even theater, not to mention the negligible amounts set aside for regular charities. Possibly Tavanes distributed pocket-money to the ubiquitous Parisian beggars, sums not recorded on receipted bills. As for other amusements, probably the most prevalent form of entertainment was the souper and the salon tea, so well documented by Horace Walpole and Madame du Deffand. These items would appear under household and food expenses. And food absorbed only about ten per cent of total expenses, a modest proportion by twentieth-century middle-class French standards. There is no evidence that Tavanes traveled, even though watering spas were already popular with the upper nobility. Taxes in Paris were light, about two per cent of revenue. If the two twentieth taxes paid in Burgundy and Normandy are included, the total tax burden was about six per cent of gross income.

It has been argued that such conspicuous consumption has its economic advantages. Heavy expenditures on luxury goods were certainly a boon to merchants and suppliers along the Rue de St. Honoré. Many a Parisian jewelry might be considered more than an accessory to adornment; it is an investment or "hoard" of precious stones. Unfortunately, the bills are too scattered to present a meaningful breakdown. The jewelry of the duke's mother was valued at 5,000 livres in 1784. Legacies inflate this item by about 4,000 livres. Madame de Genlis remarked about the number of "poor" she had seen in one day's outing. She distributed her "petite monnaie," about two sous to each beggar. Genlis, Mémoires, p. 126.

Professor Behrens maintains that the French nobility was as heavily taxed as the English. Although the burden of the English land tax is far from established, it was certainly more than six per cent of gross income. See B. Behrens, "Nobles, Privileges, and Taxes in France at the End of the Ancien Régime," Economic History Review, Second Series, XV, No. 3 (1963), 451-75. The duke did not assume any of the taxes of the tenants by accepting lower rents.

sian middleman might well regret the first emigration and look back on the Ancien Regime with some nostalgia. How much of this revenue “filtered” down to the producers of fine cloth (spinners, weavers, finishers) or to the handlers of luxury products (apprentices, voituriers, and barrel boys), not to omit coiffeurs, innkeepers, cooks, carriage makers, and stable boys? What we know about wages in these occupations does not suggest opulence, but without a luxury market, many of these individuals might have been unemployed or, at best, have inflated the ranks of agricultural labor. It is a fact that court aristocracy, with its outward disdain for the future and almost psychopathic need for display, did increase the savings-consumption ratio of which economists speak.  

The Tavanes “saved” nothing. They placed no fresh capital in land, rentes, or even in strong boxes. The family functioned like a sort of sponge, syphoning off public funds by sinecures, absorbing the capital of other families by marriage, and maximizing the revenues of the land at each new lease. This money was spent either on direct consumption or on portions and dowries that were in turn lavished on conspicuous expenditure. True, dowries were sometimes invested in land, when they were not used to pay old debts, but the land was promptly mortgaged to raise still more money for consumption. The Tavanes had absorbed more than one landed estate of the robe nobility, which served primarily to assure family creditors. And behind most robe fortunes was a maternal ancestor from the world of “finance” and perhaps even “commerce.” In this manner, capital was drained from more than one social group, from more than one economic sector, to feed the appetite for luxury goods and services in the capital.

In a century that has some grasp of aggregate economic growth, one might well ponder the effects of this kind of demand on the allocation of resources and on the productive energies of the nation. Could the French economy in 1788, “afford” sewing sets at 14,000 livres or women’s dresses at 10,000 livres? The Tavanes were draining their estates in Burgundy of every possible sou in order to spend profusely on luxury items in the capital. If a substantial portion had been reserved for reinvestment in the land, leading to an increase in food production, such conspicuous “waste” might have been tolerable. But a reinvestment rate of only four-

per cent, including current repairs, was hardly enough. Had not Tavanes and his agents refused, because of the initial capital outlay, every proposal by the tenants that might lead to increased productivity? One does not have to make a moral case against luxury to establish the nefarious economic consequences of such an allocation of capital. Food production was deprived of the capital it urgently needed so that luxury trades could flourish.57 Worse, members of the high aristocracy like Saulx-Tavanes imposed on the economy their own consumer tastes to the detriment of an industrial production more suitable to the consumption needs of the great mass of people.58

Maintaining an aristocratic style of life in Paris in the eighteenth century placed a greater strain on agriculture and manufacturing than is usually recognized. These economic consequences were much more important than the fact that this pattern of consumption left little for private charity. Furthermore, such “needs” encouraged a flagrant inequality of incomes that even the most tolerant society might call into question. Tavanes, far from the richest nobleman in Paris, had an income in 1788 between five and six hundred times the annual subsistence wage. He spent close to 80,000 livres a year on current expenses.

* * *

Unfortunately, the duke’s fixed obligations did not permit him this much current expenditure. In 1788, the interest obligations reached 120,689 livres, three-quarters of the income in that year. Indebtedness of this magnitude was not unknown to the Tavanes. A generation before, after the death of the duke’s grandfather in 1761, the family underwent a severe financial crisis. They weathered the storm by the sale of a seigneurie and the timely division of the inheritance of the duke’s mother.

57 Even the food consumption of an aristocratic family tended to favor exotic delicacies and fine wines rather than vegetables and cereals. The physiological effects of such a diet on the working efficiency of the consumer are also worth investigation.

58 See H. Luethy, La banque protestante, II, 21-25, for a discussion of aristocratic consumer habits. In a different context, C. E. Black writes: “A large investment in consumer goods will benefit the population but will reduce the productive capacity of the economy.” Here the large investment in consumer goods by an elite of spenders would appear to do little for either sector of the economy. C. E. Black, The Dynamics of Modernization (New York, 1966), p. 19.
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Table III.1 The Charges on the House of Tavanes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1763</th>
<th>1788</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Charges</td>
<td>Livres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perpetual Rentes</td>
<td>44,115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life Annuities</td>
<td>7,149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest on Capital</td>
<td>958</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gross Revenue: (1754)</td>
<td>52,222</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Paid at Dijon | 8,984 | Paid at Dijon | 12,691 |
Paid at Paris | 43,238 | Paid at Paris | 107,998 |
Family Charges | 25,350 | Family Charges | 73,732 |
Capital Repayable with Interest | 19,278 | Capital Repayable with Interest | 319,840 |
Capital Repayable without Interest | 138,923 |
(Approximately 33,000 to Dijon merchants and 12,000 to Paris merchants) |

(Approximately 91,400 to Paris merchants) |


Heiress to the Tessé fortune. But in 1788, conditions were less favorable for reducing indebtedness. Let us compare family indebtedness in 1788 with the financial situation twenty-five years earlier (see Table III.1).

Notice that the margin between gross income and fixed obligations was about the same in both instances, between 40,000 and 45,000 livres. It was not a case of narrowing margin between income and interest charges. It was rather the greater difficulty of meeting current expenses with the same sum as in 1763. This was partly because the price of all consumer goods—and luxury goods—had risen over the time span of one generation, but also because the duke found it necessary to spend more profusely than his father or grandfather. This is indicated not only by the existing receipts, but also by intendant Godard’s special review of family obligations in 1788. In this summary all the debts to Paris merchants date from 1770, contracted by either the duke or his wife. Over 50,000 livres of this capital was borrowed in 1786 and 1787 at the time of the marriage of the duke’s children.

Even more important than the spurt of spending and wedding gifts, trousseaus, and the like were the terms under which the new loans were contracted. In 1788, a substantial amount of money was borrowed on notarized drafts (obligations devant notaires), with a stipulated time limit for repayment. Despite efforts to convert these drafts into perpetual rentes, eliminating the legal obligation to refund the capital, the duke
THE HOUSE OF SAULX-TAVANES

was obliged to find ever larger sums of liquid capital to repay older drafts, many of which specified a one-year time limit. Equally striking was the difference regarding interest payments on such drafts. In 1763, almost all of these obligations were non-interest bearing, while in 1788 all the drafts explicitly stipulated an interest of five per cent, and in a few cases, six and seven per cent. The crisis of 1763 was apparently brought about by defaulting on interest payments on rentes; the crisis of 1788 was caused by increasing needs for cash to repay capital sums borrowed on short term.  

For example, before 1763 merchants and shopkeepers, whether at Paris or Dijon, did not charge any interest on Tavanes’s mounting obligations. But by the 1770s, explicit interest charges for this kind of obligation begin to appear and, by the 1780s, they are the rule. It is not likely that the duke frequented a more financially sophisticated type of shop or caterer than his father or grandfather had twenty-five years before. It is more likely that even small merchants were less and less inclined to extend credit to aristocrats like Tavanes interest-free. In 1787, Monsieur Normand, cloth merchant of the family for a number of years, submitted a statement for 10,641 livres “payable January 1, 1791 at six per cent.” In the same year, a master tailor made his bill for 10,777 livres “payable January 1, 1791,” and specified on a separate note an interest of 777 livres, almost eight per cent. The lawyers did the same. In 1789, Monsieur Roard, procureur at the Châtelet, lent Tavanes 20,000 livres, but withheld 1,000 livres interest in advance. Clearly, the usury laws which prohibited any stipulated time limit for the repayment of capital as well as interest rates above five per cent were more or less openly flaunted. No doubt the money market was becoming tighter for everyone in these years of growing national financial crisis, but surely the Tavanes were

59 For an excellent introduction to the problems of private finance in eighteenth-century France, see G. V. Taylor, “Types of Capitalism in Eighteenth-Century France,” English Historical Review (July 1964), 468–97. See also A. R. Turgot, “Mémoire sur les prêts d’argent,” Œuvres (Paris, 1844), 1, 119–20. The usury laws remained on the books, but business mores were changing, and in a manner less favorable to the debtor.
60 A. D., E-1687, Register of Debts, 1763.
61 A. D., E-1715, Detail, 1788.
62 Ibid.
63 A. D., E-1717, Accounts, 1789.
an especially poor risk. More mature business practice was perhaps joined by less confidence either in the promises of the “Great” or, at least, in their unbounded capacity to pay.

As the table indicates, indebtedness to merchants or suppliers had doubled in twenty-five years. Yet these debts were not the most pressing obligations. They were dispersed among many creditors, and although individual debts often exceeded 10,000 livres, they were more easily converted into perpetual *rentes*. In the 1770s, the countess would buy “on credit” from Buffault, cloth merchants on the Rue Saint-Honoré, and eventually the count would “pass” a contract of “constituted rent” for the sum owed and pay five per cent annually. More troublesome were obligations to financiers like the *fermier-général* Augerard. This loan combined all the worst features from the duke’s point of view. It was for 21,000 livres, “interest included”; it was a draft by private signature (*billet sous seing privé*), renewable annually; it was subsequently converted into a notarized draft (*obligation devant notaire*). Much to be preferred were the two loans of Chalert, another *fermier-général*, for 65,000 livres in the form of “constituted perpetual *rentes*” at five per cent. Here the capital could not be demanded unless Tavanes defaulted on his five per cent for two consecutive years. Apparently, the duke preferred to borrow from friends and private individuals rather than from “bankers.” The register of debts for 1765 included a larger number of professional financiers such as Crozat (38,000 livres), Moras (30,000 livres), Fargès (30,000 livres), and Fortia (48,000 livres), in addition to at least three Dijon parlementarians—Bouhier (18,000 livres), Macheo de Premeaux (20,000 livres), and Charpy (38,000 livres). In 1788 and 1789, there were fewer “bankers” among the seventy-two creditors of the Tavanes family. It may well be that professional bankers preferred safer investments. The history of the famous Rohan-Guémenée bankruptcy

64 A. D., E-1709, Bills of Comtesse de Tavanes.
would suggest that the desperate borrower was forced to seek capital more frequently among the small creditors—les petites gens.  

In 1757, the family estate manager Seguin had suggested in the name of orderly accounting that the interest on all family obligations be paid on February first of each year. But the count’s other financial advisors quickly cautioned that such a schedule would require too large a sum at one time. They advised paying at three- or six-month intervals from the date of the original contract and periodically renegotiating the schedule with individual creditors when money was short. This pragmatic, haphazard approach made it difficult for Seguin to estimate annual expenditure in advance, but it did give the Tavanes maneuverability. A generation later, however, the intendant Godard seemed less able to echelon interest payments in this fashion. Creditors preferred January first and apparently had their way. Of course, the duke frequently renewed his drafts, extending them over several years, but he eventually had to pay, and often only by fresh borrowing. Even the duke’s own brother, who had lent him 45,000 livres by draft in 1780, would not be put off forever. Persistent, he was repaid in 1789, entirely in silver.

Yet these adverse changes in the creditor-debtor relationship could have been circumvented, had it not been for the weight of the family charges (see Table III.2). Contrast the family obligations twenty-five years earlier: a son’s annual pension of 24,000 livres, and only 1,350 livres interest due on the dowries of two daughters! This was quite a different situation, and since an eldest son’s pension was the most easily deferred charge, the burden was certainly manageable, if not light.

What had altered the situation so radically by 1788? First, the generations had clustered, a direct result of encouraging young marriages. The duke’s children began to marry before the portions of his brother and sister had been liquidated. Indeed, it appears from the Rieux account that two generations of unpaid portions had accumulated. Second, the portions and dowries for the younger brothers and sisters were set con-

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67 A. D., E-1715; E-1717. See Flammermont, “... La banqueroute Rohan-Guémenée,” p. 144. The Prince carried a mass of small creditors down with him.
69 A. D., E-1715.
70 A. D., E-1717. Vicomte de Tavanes promptly placed 21,000 livres in the Estates of Burgundy, a very poor investment in 1789 to say the least.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Charges</th>
<th>Livres</th>
<th>Livres</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mme. la Duchesse, wife, interest on her dowry reimbursed after the separation of 1772</td>
<td>10,589</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M. le Comte de Tavanes, son, assured income by his marriage contract</td>
<td>20,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mme. la Vicomtesse de Castellane, daughter, interest on her dowry</td>
<td>10,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mme. la Comtesse de Kercado, daughter, interest on her dowry</td>
<td>10,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M. le Vicomte de Tavanes, brother:</td>
<td>3,080</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Interest on portion from mother’s inheritance</td>
<td>3,080</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Interest on portion from father’s inheritance</td>
<td>5,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M. le Comte de Rieux, nephew:</td>
<td>8,080</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Interest on dowry of his mother, sister of duke</td>
<td>6,375</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Interest on loan to the duke, July 14, 1772</td>
<td>840</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Interest on loan to the duke, Feb. 22, 1788</td>
<td>925</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Incremental value on maternal inheritance</td>
<td>300</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Interest on his mother’s portion of the inheritance of his maternal grandfather, father of the duke</td>
<td>3,082</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Interest on his mother’s portion of the inheritance of his maternal grandmother, mother of the duke</td>
<td>3,541</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Annual Family Charges</td>
<td>15,063</td>
<td>73,732</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Considerably higher than they had been in the first half of the century, much higher than could be justified by an increase in income. See Genealogy, above. Some of this increase was made mandatory by the Norman customary law of inheritance which obliged the family to divide the Tessé fortune of the duke’s mother almost equally. But it is also clear that the duke wanted portions fixed at a very respectable round number, related more closely to those of other court families than to his own fortune. A duke could hardly dower a daughter for much less than 200,000 livres or fix a younger son’s portion below 100,000 livres. Moreover, a bonne alliance could work both ways. To marry a daughter well placed one in the right company to marry an elder son. Had not the Tavanes followed a successful practice of attracting wealthy heiresses as daughters-in-law since 1600?

It was unfortunate that the duke himself had failed in this regard,

72 See Genealogy, above.
73 A. D., E–1700. See briefs on the Tessé inheritance, especially the Mémoire à consulter, July 1766.
despite auspicious beginnings. At the age of twenty, he had been wedded to a Lévis-Chateaumorand, one of four daughters with a dowry of 400,000 livres and prospects of a substantial paternal inheritance. A letter of the inimitable Madame du Deffand suggests an ominous combination of infidelity and hard-bargaining on the part of Comtesse de Tavanes twelve years after the marriage.

One hears only about the adventure of Madame de Tavanes; no doubt you have heard about it. The separation is completed. She has 22,000 a year and will not have the care of the children. She will remain with Madame la Dauphine which displeases her husband a great deal. All of this has very much surprised me. I thought of her as a respectable woman (une dame honeste) and she is nothing of the sort.

If the scandal was ephemeral, the financial blow to the duke was not. A valuable asset had been converted into a heavy mortgage made even worse by the spending habits of the duchess. The duke must have looked to the marriage of his own seventeen-year-old son to a Choiseul with hope that his own experience would not be repeated. The lavish gifts he showered on his daughter-in-law would surely be repaid in full.

There was one more aspect to this lottery of dowries, so critical to the financial history of aristocratic families. Although the Tavanes had not waited until their permanent establishment at Paris to contract marriages in the capital, their “alliances” in the latter part of the century seemed more ambitious. Consider the marriages of the younger children. In the 1730s the daughters had married into the Vienne and Desprez families, respectable families of the robe no doubt, but hardly heading the heraldic list of d’Hosier. It would not be seemly for such families to press a Saulx-Tavanes for the prompt payment of dowries. In the last third of the century, however, marriage alliances were contracted with the Feydeau de Brou, Castellane, Kercado, and Rieux, high robe and military nobility. Such families were less reticent about money matters. The insistence of Comte de Rieux that every livre of his mother’s portion be paid does not suggest a docile brother-in-law. The following letter captures some of the dryness of a financial agreement.

74 A. D., E-1707, Lévis Papers.
75 Madame du Deffand, Correspondance complète (Paris, 1866), pp. 162–63 (Du Deffand to Duchesse de Choiseul, April 5, 1772). Madame du Deffand’s shock was not to last; she was dining with Madame de Tavanes before long.
76 Consult Genealogy, above.
THE BURDEN OF STATUS

I have just learned, my dear brother, that M. Le Boeuf, the notary, has absconded with the money which is supposed to come to us. It has considerably upset my affairs at this point and obliges me to ask you to send...2,500 livres of the 5,000 in reserve.... The money is necessary for the "establishment" of my son...[17]

The advice of the count's father on the form of payment is equally revealing. "As for the form of the contract...it should not be a notarized bill (un acte par devant notaire)."[18] The Tavanes well knew that a notarized draft had to be paid promptly.

It was in January, 1789, that Godard presented his annual report of the previous year. It included the rather somber picture of indebtedness described above. But it also indicated a substantial rise in income over the year before. Regular revenues, after deductions for taxes and other estate expenses, including interest charges in Burgundy, appeared as follows (see Table III.3).

Despite the expenses of the terriers and the new duchy, Billard had sent more money from Dijon than ever: 15,000 more than the previous

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table III.3</th>
<th>Godard Receipts for 1788</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Receipts from</td>
<td>Livres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land in Burgundy (from Billard)</td>
<td>62,456</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land in Normandy (from Poinant)</td>
<td>15,227</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dîmes from the Calaisis</td>
<td>7,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Landed Income:</strong></td>
<td><strong>85,583</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pension from the Royal Treasury</td>
<td>15,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commander of the Orders of the King</td>
<td>3,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chevalier d'Honneur of the Queen</td>
<td>10,380</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commander of the Château Taureau</td>
<td>9,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lieutenant-General in Burgundy</td>
<td>900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Appointments and Pensions:</strong></td>
<td><strong>39,180</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rentes on the Hôtel de Ville</td>
<td>6,276</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rentes on the Marquis de Mirepoix</td>
<td>1,195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rentes on the Clergy of France</td>
<td>543</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Rentes:</strong></td>
<td><strong>8,021</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sale of Effects of M. de Saulx</td>
<td>20,029</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Revenue:</strong></td>
<td><strong>152,813</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: A. D., E-1715.

year. The coming fiscal year would be even better. Godard predicted that the receipts for 1789 would increase by another 19,898 livres as new leases went into effect. If the duke could limit himself to 60,000 livres for personal “maintenance,” the “administration” would be only 6,222 livres shy of meeting all annual obligations.\(^7^9\)

In the meanwhile, however, substantial capital sums had to be raised in order to liquidate the drafts coming due. In the three years since January 1786, the duke borrowed 193,700 livres from ten new creditors, all by drafts with due dates occurring between 1789 and 1798.\(^8^0\) Just as the rents and interest payments began to come into line, a torrent of new short-term loans increased the need for ready capital. The duke could not borrow fast enough to repay old debts. He had to sell land.

The decision to sell could not have been taken cavalierly. The prestige and security that only the land could bring were not easily parted with—even if it were but a small fraction of the total estate. A Lauzun who converted his land into life-annuities was an anomaly indeed. The duke’s father had faced the same decision twenty-five years before. He ended by selling the seigneurie of Pailly in 1764. Pailly had been in Champagne, separated from the principal family domains in Burgundy, and governed by a customary law of inheritance less favorable to elder sons.\(^8^1\) The same considerations applied to the Tavanes property in Lower Normandy. Furthermore, the Norman lands were a recent acquistion, part of a maternal inheritance in 1767.\(^8^2\) It was easier to part with them than to sacrifice the patrimony in Burgundy with all of its memories of Gaspard de Saulx and Renaissance glory. The château-fort at Pailly had followed the fortress of Sully into the hands of some parvenue, bearing the elaborate and obvious titles of “new nobility.” The Tavanes would not let Lux go the same way. The Norman lands it must be.

No effort was spared to sell at the best possible price. The land was sold in small lots of two to five acres at prices ranging from 400 to 1,000 livres per acre.\(^8^3\) About half the price was paid immediately in coin and the balance over three to four years in fixed payments at five per cent. In

\(^7^9\) A. D., E-1715, Detail, 1788.
\(^8^0\) A. D., E-1712; E-1715; and E-1717.
\(^8^1\) A. D., E-1947 (Entail at Pailly); A. D., E-1700, Mémoire on Entails, 1767; A. D., E-2023 (sale of Pailly for 190,000 livres, thirty-two times the revenue).
\(^8^2\) A. D., E-1700, Tessé Inheritance.
\(^8^3\) A. D., Calvados, E-703 to E-708.
addition, the buyer had to pay a mutation fee (lods et ventes) of one-thirteenth the price of sale and a reception fee (pot de vin) at the time of transfer. Here is the Norman agent's report on these sales which began in July, 1789, and continued through December, 1791. Looking at this report, it would almost seem that no revolution had taken place. The duke simply put his land on the market slightly ahead of the National Assembly and apparently competed with the state on favorable terms.

**Table III.4 Proceeds of the Sales in Normandy**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Sale Price Livres</th>
<th>The 13th Livres</th>
<th>Pot de Vin Livres</th>
<th>Paid in Cash Livres</th>
<th>Sums Due Livres</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1789</td>
<td>100,521</td>
<td>7,466</td>
<td>2,172</td>
<td>54,271</td>
<td>54,114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1790</td>
<td>69,986</td>
<td>5,722</td>
<td>1,729</td>
<td>35,067</td>
<td>34,515</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1791</td>
<td>99,699</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>251</td>
<td>50,493</td>
<td>49,052</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>270,206</td>
<td>13,358</td>
<td>4,152</td>
<td>139,831</td>
<td>137,681</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: A. D., Calvados, E-703.

Despite the famous decrees of August 4th, abolishing mutation fees, the "thirteenth" was paid into early 1791. Tavenes also retained a cens, to preserve his right of eminent domain and to remain seigneur. Domain land became mouvances in legal terminology. The duke also inserted the following clause in the contracts of sale:

The cens, including lods et ventes, seizure, fines, and other rights... will be redeemable if it is so decreed by the National Assembly and sanctioned by the King. But if these rights are destroyed and then reestablished, they will continue to be collected as in the past, notwithstanding any reimbursement that may have been made [to the seigneur] and without any restitution [by the seigneur]. This contract [of sale] will not be honored without this clause.84

The contract proceeded to specify that the buyer was to pay the banalités, lods et ventes, and other seigneurial obligations "like the other vassals." This is the kind of legal advice the duke received for his twelve livres an

84 Ibid., E-704, Contract of November 7, 1789. This was for the sale of about one acre (two vergés, Norman measure) to a "Sr. Renève." The sale price was 400 livres, plus 10 livres pot de vin, 34 livres, 3 sols for the "13th," and a cens of 2 deniers in perpetuity. Renève paid 210 livres en espèce and the 13th immediately, and agreed to pay the remaining 200 "without interest" on Saint Michel (September 28), 1790. It was more common to find an interest charge of five per cent in the abstracts of the contracts. See ibid., E-708.
hour. The new buyers were reminded of the uncertainties of the times and advised not to redeem their seigneurial dues. The duke was apparently successful with this warning until early 1791. In March of that year the Châtelet court in Paris handed down a special ruling requiring Citizen Tavanes to declare “that he does not intend and has never intended to make use of any clauses in his contracts that might be contrary to the decrees of the National Assembly.”

It was a curious situation indeed that required such a ruling. By this time, of course, the duke had collected over 13,000 livres in seigneurial rights, suppressed in principle twenty months before.

The financial results of this transaction were obvious and gratifying to the duke. The “Extraordinary Receipts” on Godard’s account began to assume a new interest—54,000 livres from the Norman sales in 1789 and 58,000 in 1790. Tavanes was a step ahead of the sales of national property which no doubt added to his success. In 1789, a new category appeared on his books entitled “Reimbursements” of capital. Tavanes began to liquidate his drafts—45,000 livres in 1789, 46,512 livres in 1790. Barring any new calamities, the duke had every reason to believe that bankruptcy had been avoided.

85 Ibid., E-707, Interpretive Act of March 16, 1791.
86 A. D., E-1717 (1789) and E-1719 (1790).