

# The Man Who Outshone The Sun King

In the glittering court of Versailles, where Louis XIV reigned as the Sun King, there was one man who dared to outshine him: his younger brother, Philippe, Duc d'Orléans.



## The Man Who Outshone the Sun King: A Life of Gleaming Opulence and Wretched Reversal in the Reign of Louis XIV by Charles Drazin

★★★★☆ 4.7 out of 5

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Philippe was a man of extraordinary contradictions. He was both a devout Catholic and a notorious libertine. He was a brilliant military commander and a spendthrift who squandered his fortune on lavish parties and mistresses.

Philippe's life was a whirlwind of scandal and intrigue. He was accused of everything from incest to murder. He was exiled from court on several occasions, but always managed to find his way back into the king's favor.

Philippe's story is a fascinating and revelatory window into the world of Versailles. It is a tale of power, ambition, excess, and redemption.

## **The Early Years**

Philippe was born on April 21, 1640, at the Château de Saint-Germain-en-Laye. He was the second son of King Louis XIII and Queen Anne of Austria.

Philippe's childhood was marked by tragedy. His father died when he was only three years old, and his mother was a distant and aloof figure. Philippe was raised by a series of governesses and tutors, who instilled in him a love of learning and the arts.

Philippe was a precocious child. He was fluent in several languages and had a deep understanding of history and philosophy. He was also a talented musician and dancer.

## **The Court of Versailles**

At the age of 16, Philippe was introduced to the court of Versailles. He quickly became one of the most popular figures in the king's entourage. Philippe was handsome, charming, and intelligent. He was also a skilled courtier, who knew how to ingratiate himself with the king and his ministers.

Philippe's rise to power was meteoric. He was appointed to several important positions, including Grand Master of the Horse and Colonel-General of the French Army.

Philippe's military career was marked by both success and failure. He distinguished himself at the Battle of Seneffe in 1674, but he was also

responsible for the disastrous defeat at the Battle of Cassel in 1677.

Despite his military setbacks, Philippe remained a close confidant of the king. He was one of the few people who dared to speak his mind to Louis XIV.

## **Scandals and Intrigues**

Philippe's life was not without its share of scandals and intrigues. He was accused of having affairs with several women, including his own sister-in-law, Liselotte von der Pfalz.

Philippe was also implicated in several plots against the king. In 1671, he was accused of conspiring with the Chevalier de Rohan to poison Louis XIV.

Despite these allegations, Philippe always managed to escape punishment. He was a master of manipulation and intrigue, and he knew how to use his charm to his advantage.

## **Later Years**

In his later years, Philippe became increasingly devout. He spent less time at court and more time reading and praying. He also became involved in several charitable projects, including the founding of a hospital for the poor.

Philippe died on June 9, 1701, at the age of 61. He was buried in the royal chapel at Saint-Denis.

## **Legacy**

Philippe d'Orléans was one of the most colorful and controversial figures in French history. He was a man of great contradictions, who both fascinated and repelled his contemporaries.

Philippe's legacy is complex. He was a skilled military commander, a patron of the arts, and a generous philanthropist. He was also a notorious libertine and a scheming courtier.

Despite his flaws, Philippe d'Orléans remains a fascinating and enigmatic figure. His story is a reminder that even the most powerful and glamorous of lives can be filled with scandal, intrigue, and ultimately, redemption.



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