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Castle Oron

The Memoirs of a School Girl



The castle of Oron is home to a library of 18,000 ancient books, of which one third used to belong to H el ene Potocka. Apolline H el ene Massalska, who became Princess de Ligne through marriage, then Princess Potocka, was born in 1763. She was educated until she was 16 by the nuns of the Ab-baye au Bois in Paris, together with daughters of the upper Parisian nobility.

During the 9 years she spent there, she wrote her memoirs. The manuscript which was at the Oron castle until ca. 1880 had disappeared. It was deemed lost, but was rediscovered in 1997 in Warsaw.

The Society for the Preservation of the Castle of Oron decided to publish it, along with a complete biography of H el ene Potocka.

18th century testimonies such as this one are extremely rare and unaccustomed. The memoirs of Apolline H el ene Massalska are the first known documents describing the life of a young maiden at a boarding school. They make for an interesting read for those who are eager to discover the day-to-day life of a young girl in those times.

The boarders of the noble abbey have illustrious names, and display all the enjoyments of wealth and vanity. However, they pay a hefty price for all these privileges. No tenderness,

no family life, absent fathers, mothers busying themselves with a life of parade. They are the victims of their name.

For example, when she is 12, Miss de Bourbonne is married to an old gentleman; then she is brought back to the convent, where she starts crying every time her old husband asks for her in the parlour.

And they find escapes with whopping pranks, such as pouring ink in the holy water font, so that the nuns smear themselves when coming in to sing at the night mass.

One day, against a mistress who is not liked, all the boarders, except for a few shy ones, revolt, occupy the kitchens, camp in them during two days and one night, and send emissaries to negotiate their conditions.

Useful information:

This 297-page, 15 x 21 cms book, with 32 illustrations, is sold for Frs. 20.-.

It is available at the exit.

