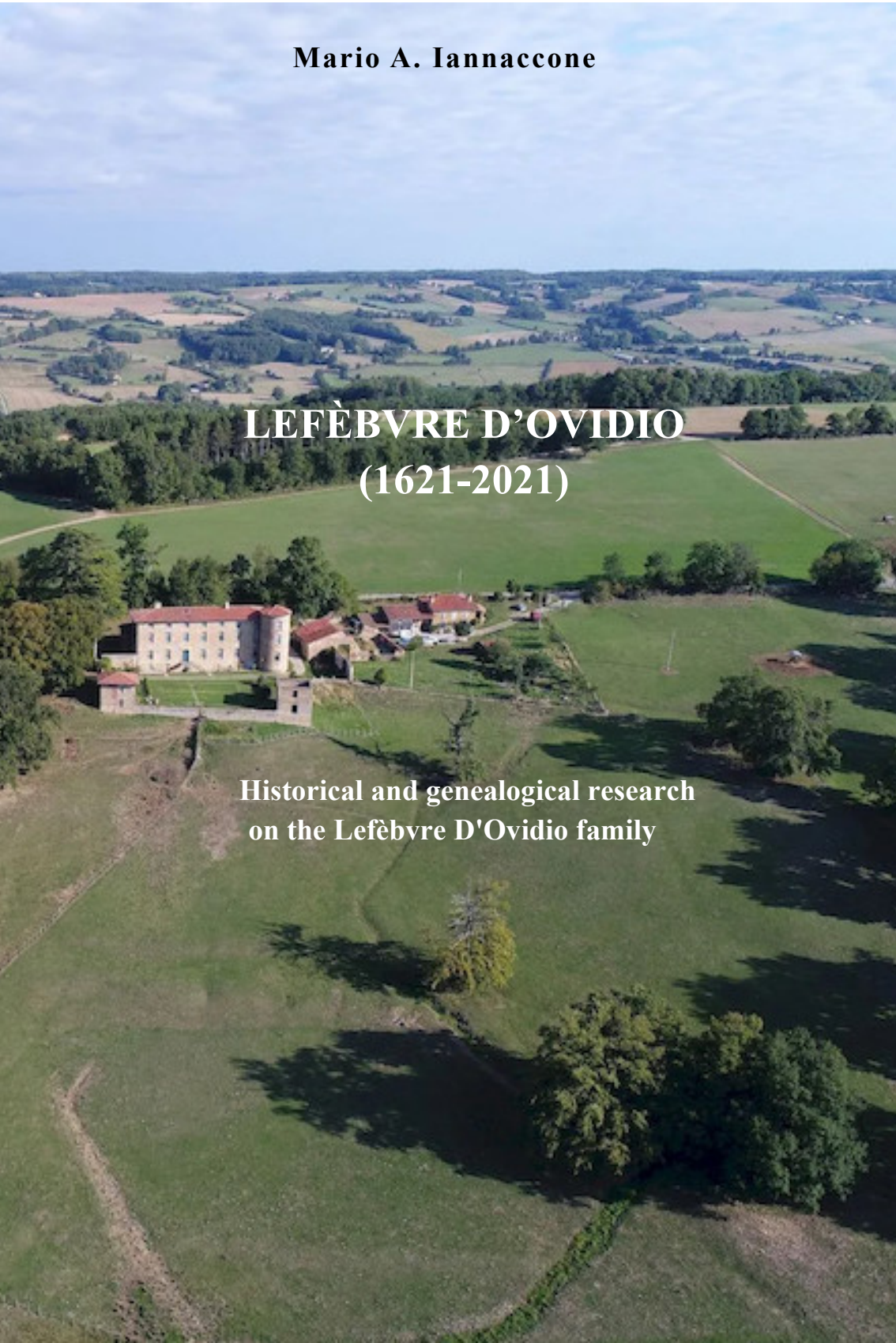


Mario A. Iannaccone

LEFÈBVRE D'OVIDIO (1621-2021)

**Historical and genealogical research
on the Lefèbyre D'Ovidio family**



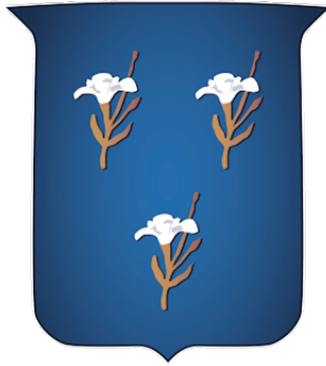
This research, conducted in 2021, represents the first attempt to trace the origins of the Lefèbvre D'Ovidio family, in the Lefèbvre branch, back to the late 16th century.



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Introduction

On the origins of the Lefèbvre D'Ovidio family, for the Lefèbvre genealogy, a family destined to play an important role among Italian entrepreneurial dynasties between the 19th and 21st centuries, a highly probable hypothesis survives today, corroborated by concomitant circumstances, that linking ancestors who lived in the Dauphiné, Franche-Comté and Île de France to the vast Lefèbvre or Lefèvre d'Ormesson family (sometimes referred to as Lefèbvre in texts and documents). Solid clues, although as yet no absolute proof, link its emergence in France to a branch of the aforementioned family, composed of high bureaucrats and ennobled ministers since the 16th century known, in its main branch, as Lefèvre d'Ormesson, but also consisting of various cadet branches.

The hypothesis defended here is that the Lefèbvre would constitute a cadet branch of the Lefèvre d'Ormesson, a branch produced in the first decades of the 17th century probably in Normandy where the name Lefèbvre was widespread; later, it spread to the Île de France and thirdly to the Dauphiné and Franche-Comté, where the best-known ancestors of the Lefèbvre are to be found and where the family history can be reconstructed with precision. The hypothesis, as mentioned, is supported by clues, concurrences of dates and converging elements that will be listed in this paper. Even if one waits to find a queen proof, a document, the outlined picture can already be defined as precise and convincing in the eyes of any historian.

Thus, the Franco-Italian branch of the Lefèbvre family, which moved to Italy from 1808 and then became Lefèbvre

D'Ovidio from 1911 – following the birth of the first child of Elvira D'Ovidio and Carlo Ernesto Lefèvre – would cross paths with that of one of the most powerful families in France. This would explain some otherwise unexplainable anomalies, such as the marriage of a Peer of France, Boisgelin-Raigecourt, in the monarchical period, to a daughter of the Lefèvre, Flavie Lefèvre, who died in 1834, a marriage that would not have been part of the customs of the Counts of Raigecourt had there not been, so to speak, genealogical insurance.

Let us not forget that at that time genealogy was highly regarded to seal pacts between families and marriages. Indeed, the young Lefèvre born in Naples married the Count de Raigecourt when she was of childbearing age, not as a widow or late in life. Their marriage could therefore have produced children who would have entered the Count's genealogy, who at that time had only one son. Only by adverse fate did the girl die young and there were no other offspring. The same reasoning can be made for the marriage between Ernesto Lefèvre and Teresa Doria, which took place in the mid-19th century and was a member of one of the oldest, most powerful and branched Italian noble families.

This research intends to line up one after the other all the data in our possession in order to reason about the connection between the two families, a fact that may also be of interest to historians given the importance of one in the political and financial field and the other in the industrial and financial field from the 17th century to the present day.

Chapter 1

The origins of the Lefèbvre family Historical-genealogical dissertation

Today, the genealogy of the Lefèbvre D'Ovidio family is largely known, having been reconstructed over the last ten years thanks to a series of studies that have traced its importance in the Napoleonic and especially post-Napoleonic, Bourbon and Unification Italy.

This is a French family that played an important role in the economic history of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies. Not the only one – we can recall for example, for equal importance, the Degas – but the most conspicuous certainly. Before the Revolution, several of its members played important roles in the administration of the Monarchy, in Paris and in the provinces, especially in the departments of Alpes-Maritimes and then Franche-Comté and the Dauphiné.

After the Revolution, the centre of gravity of the interests of the branched Lefèbvre family, which at the end of the 18th century had split into various branches with numerous cousins, was located in Paris. The capital was not, as first thought, chosen as a result of a move but as a return to a place where its members had lived for centuries. The centre of the family was therefore Paris – and many otherwise inexplicable facts prove this – but several of its members received important posts in the provinces or moved, for business and various matters, to the provinces especially in the south-west (Dauphiné, Franche-Comté, Alpes-Maritimes), giving rise to descendants who

tended to return, perhaps after several generations, to Paris and Versailles. Here, in fact, they could count on friendships, support and alliances that did not diminish as the decades passed.¹

Thereafter, there is a division: some of the Lefèbvre brothers born in the third and fourth quarters of the 18th century remain in France and become linked to important members of the central and peripheral royal bureaucracy, while others move to the capital of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, where only one will find considerable fortune.

Much more recently, after being ennobled for merits of work and loyalty in 1854 by Ferdinand II (1825-1859), Charles Lefèbvre entered the small Neapolitan constitutional parliament of 'peers'. Subsequently, a great-grandson of Charles joined in marriage the family of academician and senator Francesco D'Ovidio (1849-1925), whose matrilineal part, too, they kept the surname. While this part of the story is now known, even in its genealogical aspects, there are still interesting questions about the origin of the family.

It is indeed possible to think that the Lefèbvre are a collateral branch of a well-known French family, the Lefèvre d'Ormesson. This hypothesis covers genealogical, historical and political issues. Apparently, the Lefèvre d'Ormesson and the Lefèbvre shared only a common name in medieval France originally written as Le Fèbvre, a spelling that later stabilised.

Both the Lefèvre d'Ormesson and the Lefèbvre for much of the 17th and 18th centuries showed fluctuations in the spelling of their surnames in documents; thus, four forms could coexist for the same persons, depending on the documents:

¹ André-Isidore Lefèbvre, *Souvenirs*, AB, XIX 4480, v. 1, p. 15.

Le Fèvre
Le Fèbvre
Lefèbvre
Lefèvre

Sometimes the name even lost its accent. But this phenomenon was common in the Ancien Régime period throughout Europe: stabilisation occurred especially after the establishment of parish registers made compulsory by a decree of the Council of Trent on 11 November 1538. On the origin of the French Lefèbvre family settled in Naples there is a manuscript text, deposited in the Naples State Archives, the work of an amateur genealogist, *MEMORIA per la famiglia Lefèbvre de Clunière. Quarto. Ava materna del Principe di Sant'Antimo, Gioacchino Ruffo di Bagnara*.²

This memoir was written when Senator Gioacchino Ruffo di Bagnara (1879-1947), nephew of Maria Luisa Lefèbvre (1823-1854), wished to present his titles of nobility to the judging commission that had to decide on his admission to the Knighthood of Malta. Her father, Fabrizio Ruffo di Bagnara (1843-1917), had in fact been admitted to the Knighthood of Malta as a Knight of Honour and Devotion. However, it does not appear that the feat succeeded his son. The reasons are unclear but are not related to quarters of nobility, as his father had already been admitted. The duke had submitted his application in 1908; the following year, in 1909, he married Princess Flaminia Odescalchi (1882-1948), but the marriage immediately entered a serious crisis and was annulled by the Sacra Rota in 1911.

² State Archives of Naples, Private Funds, Ruffo Bagnara, I, b. 135.

In 1915, he married a Michela Monetti (?-1936), who had no noble titles and this fact, in addition to the annulment of his previous marriage, the reasons for which may have been considered serious at the time, may have prejudiced the outcome of his admission. Indeed, the Order of Malta's rules regarding election to the Knighthood of Honour and Devotion are strict. Consequently, the Duke's non-acceptance into the knighthood is probably not related to the question of proving all the quarters of nobility.



Joachim Ruffo of Bagnara

As far as Lucia Lefèbvre Ruffo was concerned, noble quarters were well documented on her father's side, i.e. that of Gioacchino di Saluzzo (1811-1874), count by title and

awarded a second title, later disputed, of marquis. On the maternal side, Bourbon documentation dating back to 1854 by sovereign rescript could easily be found.

As for Gioacchino Ruffo di Bagnara, as his father's eldest son, he held many titles: he was 13th Duke of Bagnara, 7th Duke of Baranello, 11th Prince of Motta San Giovanni, 12th Prince of Sant'Antimo, 6th Baron of San Lucido, Neapolitan Patrician, Lord of San Lorenzo, Amendolea, Fiumara di Muro, Soleto and Gabella Catona since 1917. Descended by a quarter, from a grandmother who was of more recent nobility, he needed to present a *Memoria Private Funds* That same documentation, or another one that has not reached us, had been presented by his father, who had in fact been admitted to the Order.

Let it be clear that this discussion is not intended to force historical data nor to elevate historical hypotheses to the rank of historical proofs, but only to contribute to the discussion of long-term family memory within and discussing the maintenance of identities and ties at a distance of time. Moreover, the history of the Lefèbvre family, later Lefèbvre D'Ovidio, presents itself as a case of great historical interest precisely because of the alternating events, and changes in rank and activity, that have characterised its history over a very long period of time: some four centuries.



Centre, Gioacchino Ruffo di Bagnara between head gardener Tito Mercalli and Professor Giorgio Roster (about 1906), Villa Lucia, Castellamare di Stabia.

What matters to us here is to examine the soundness of the arguments brought in favour of the ancient Lefèbvre nobility.

The *Memoria*, transcribed on parchment paper and reproduced in several copies, was the result of the work of the lawyer Raffaele Sassone Corsi (c. 1880-post 1940), who was at the time an esteemed genealogist.³ The latter was a lawyer

³ His name and works are frequently cited in genealogical works. Sassone Corsi, Raffaele (19th-20th centuries); Naples. The 'Carte Sassone Corsi' were donated to the State Archives of Naples by Mrs. Adriana Sassone Corsi. The fund mainly testifies to the activity carried out by Sassone Corsi in his capacity as expert genealogist and therefore preserves a considerable amount of documentation produced and received for research and commissioned studies. The archive is housed in eight envelopes, the first three of which contain genealogies, notes taken from archival and bibliographic sources, memoirs, coats of arms,

but also a genealogist expert who was frequently called upon by Neapolitan noble families on similar occasions, particularly for applications for admission to the Order of Malta, and was trained in archival, historical and diplomatic research. He had carried out the research on behalf of Gioacchino Ruffo di Bagnara, nephew of Maria Luisa Lefèbvre and son of Lucia Saluzzo.

Research was reportedly carried out to produce documents proving the antiquity of the Lefèbvre noble quarter required for admission into the Order of Malta. This research lasted from 1904 to 1907 and was, according to Sassone Corsi himself, very difficult. In the paper, the author recalls that he was unable to go into certain aspects of the family in documentary detail. The ancient nobility had been proven or given for certain as far as Ruffo di Bagnara's father was concerned, but his son, Gioacchino, decided to resubmit all the documentation, entrusting the research to Sassone Corsi. The latter's idea was that the Franco-Napolitan Lefèbvre descended from the large Lefèvre d'Ormesson family, but practical difficulties prevented him from delving into the family's past. For example, he could not travel to France to research the required documents, travel was difficult and, above all, he could not devote himself full-time to research. He wrote several times in France to dignitaries and officials (mainly mayors), tried to obtain original documents: family trees,

documents in copy and in original (birth, marriage and death extracts, processes of nobility, notarial deeds), relating to various families whose members requested Baron Sassone Corsi's expertise in order to obtain recognition of noble titles, or to be enrolled in the official lists of the Italian nobility or to be admitted to the Sacred Military Sovereign Order of Malta.

affidavits, extracts of birth, death and marriage, transcripts of parish registers, obtaining little, if any, birth extracts.

He had no family sources, such as that *Libro di memorie* of Charles Lefèbvre (1775-1858) mentioned by his cousin André-Isidore, who disappeared after the turn of the century (probably with the eviction of the Balsorano palace in Naples), nor did he have the latter's *Souvernirs* and other oral sources. This resulted in some facts being reconstructed by imagination, such as Charles' escape during the Revolution of 1789, (14 years old and an 'orphan').

We reproduce the first three pages of the document for completeness:

The adverse events to which ancient France was subjected when, like a whirlwind, the revolutionary wrath was unleashed on France, which demolished the throne and altar, uncovered tombs and destroyed everything that could remind us of the hated regiments – put the Applicant in a difficult position to search for documents to prove the more than two hundred years of nobility of this ancient French house, its ancient noble quarter. Indicative of these difficulties – made even more difficult by the fact that the search had to be carried out in a foreign country, governed by a republican form of government and dominated by democratic ideas – is the fact that Carlo Lefèbvre's birth certificate was found in Pontarlier (doc. I), whereas his death certificate declared him to be a native of Besançon, where nothing could be found (doc. III), because, perhaps, only of that country remained the vague, fearful memory in Carlo Lefèbvre's childish mind, when in 1789, orphaned and at the age of fourteen, he had to leave France, to escape, as a nobleman, from the violence of the prevailing demagoguery. Forcing the Applicant to produce documents reflecting only the said Carlo Lefèbvre, (sic) he availed himself of the provision of Ordinances 52° of Title Receipt (*Hierosolimitan Code* printed in Malta in 1782)

which allows that "proofs of family origin from a priory other than that of the Pretender must be made according to the laws and customs of the Priory of origin".

And, in the exact legal and customary interpretation of the requirements demanded by the aforementioned order, and from the documents he presents for his bisavo (doc. IV Carlo Lefèbvre family tree) – in which the recognition of ancient nobility and new royal favours concur – he will be able to see whether he fulfils exactly what order 22 of the same title 2 received for knights of French origin requires, namely

"avent a prouver, qui leur Bisaieux paternels, et maternelles soyent gentilhommes de nom et d'arme, et leurs descendants; et ce partemoignages, titres, contracts, enseignements ou obissainces rendus aux Seigneurs. In autre faire blasonner les armes des quatre lignes..." (SIC).

Gentleman of name and arms is noble, and noble of generous nobility, because such is indistinctly the nobility required by the statutes in which the name of fathers means all ascendants up to the stipe (St. XXII Rich.) – a stipe that the Sacred Order determined for the French in the bisavi (Ord. 22), for the English and Germans in the trisavi (Ord. 44) and for the Italians and Spaniards in that ascendant of ancestors living, respectively, 200 (Ord. 29) and 100 years (Consuet.) ahead.⁴

Here Sassone Corsi briefly reminds us of the requirements for proving one's nobility. There is a lack of papers proving ancient nobility, of at least 200 years from the applicant's birth. One would therefore have to go back to the last two decades of the 17th century by identifying a great-grandfather of

⁴ *Memoria*, pp. 1-3, in State Archives of Naples, Private Funds, Ruffo Bagnara, I, b. 135.

Charles Lefèbvre. The genealogist explains that he, having had to flee revolutionary France, had not been able to bring any documents with him.

After reporting on other issues concerning the demonstration of titles of nobility in Italy, which are of little interest to us here – because they concern the Ruffo di Bagnara family –, Sassone Corsi attempts a history of the Lefèbvre family, starting on pp. 12-15 of his *Memoria* (which has remained in manuscript form), clarifying that, according to the laws in force at his time, it would have been sufficient for him to prove the nobility of his great-grandfather Charles Lefèbvre appointed Count of Balsorano by the King of Naples in 1854 for himself and direct descendants up to the fourth degree. But, considering the special statutes of the Order of Malta, he sought to go back further. And so he writes:

But to demonstrate the previous novelty of Carlo Lefèbvre de Clunière he submits to the Supreme Authority of the Order that in the concession of the title there is no mention of a weapon because it is already one, i.e.: azure to the silver cross accompanied on its head by three stars of azure the noble house of Lefèbvre de Clunière used (See Doc. VI). That prior to this concession, the King of Naples elevated Carlo Lefèbvre to the high office of Peer of the Realm (Doc. VII) and received members of this family at the royal b hand-kissing (See *the Neapolitan Herald*, p. 283, year 1882). That the major families of the Kingdom, such as the Saluzzo (8 November 1840 - see Vo. 1° doc. IV) and the other Dogale Princely Doria family (14 November 1847, see Vol. VIII) were united in kinship with him, giving us of his nobility that tacit but important proof that Rogado mentions (Op, cit, p. 203) in the words: '*the dictate of the laws can make the Magistrates repute someone as Noble, but not that others take his daughter for a wife, or in other ways contract kinship with him, or in other needs of social life repute him as noble*'.

Unfortunately, the file conserved in the State Archives of Naples no longer contains the parchment mentioned that bore the words of the blazon 'azure to the silver cross accompanied by three azure stars' that would have been in use by the noble house of Lefèbvre de Clunière. This document was probably given to the Knights of Malta and is therefore probably present in their archives today. Precisely by virtue of this *previous nobility*, writes Sassone Corsi, the King of Naples 'elevated Charles Lefèbvre to the highest dignity' of Peer of the Kingdom and received the family at the royal 'hand-kissing', an honour granted only to the nobility of the Kingdom. Moreover, Sassone Corsi continues, the ancient Doria and Saluzzo families were united in marriage with the Lefèbvre in the persons of Teresa Doria (1822-1911) married by Ernesto Lefèbvre (1817-1891) and Maria Luisa Lefèbvre (1821-1854) married by Carlo Saluzzo from whom Lucia Saluzzo (1846-1923) was born, wife of Fabrizio Ruffo, Duke of Botta Bagnara (1843-1917), mother of the man who was applying for knighthood: Gioacchino Ruffo. At the time of the request he was still very young, having been born in 1873.

According to French and Italian armorial inscriptions, the words 'azure with a silver cross accompanied by three azure stars' should show an armorial with a silver cross in the middle and three azure stars on the sides.

And that these presumptions are true is deduced from the observation that Carlo's father, Carlo Lefèbvre de Clunière, held, before the revolution (1775), the high office of receiver of the royal bailiwick of Pontarlier (Doc. III), i.e. one of those offices used by the kings of France to be given to the most distinguished and meritorious gentlemen.

This is true.

The high offices held in the royal administration by Charles Lefèbvre's father and his ancestors were, moreover, similar to those held by the Lefèvre d'Ormesson family, who were also ennobled for this in 1553.

That the Lefèbvre family had been noble in France since ancient times is not in doubt, noting from the accurate publication *Annuaire de la noblesse de France*, year 1888, p. 302, that all branches of this family trace their origin back to Sire Lefèbvre, who owned fiefs in Crecy in 1360. From irrefragable documents it appears that Nicola Lefèbvre, Lord of Branslicourt, in 1524 gave rise to four main lines, namely that of the Lefèbvre de Branslicourt, De Wadicourt, De Ligescourt and D'Estrees, which were further subdivided, giving rise to various other lines that were called: D'Hellencourt, Du Hodent, De Fontaines, Du Grosriez, Du Mesnage, Du Loncuiadin, Du Merouseliers (?), De La Houssaye, De Sauveuses, D'Aboual, De Becourt etc.; all of which lines varied in their arms, retaining, however, always the main parts, i.e. the azure field and the three silver stars accompanied either by the fauna or the silver cross. It must therefore be admitted that the Lefèbvre de Clunière family was precisely one of these branches, which the accurate publication did not mention. As can be seen from the document (?) Peter had four sons, the only survivor of whom was the oft-mentioned Carlo, who went to Italy after the French Revolution and had his ancestral nobility recognised with a special title.

The genealogical lines of the first four named families can be traced and reconstructed. The Lefèbvre of Branslicourt and the Lefèbvre de Wadicourt are linked to the lordship of Abbeville and are a known family nucleus. Another family nucleus or genealogical branch consists of the Lefèbvre de Ligescourt, Lefèbvre du Grosriez et des Fontaines and

Lefèbvre du Grosriez: these are secondary branches of a single family. They were Lefèbvre who had received *surnames*, nicknames, depending on places and castles they owned, but which were not linked to particular titles. They were, therefore, lords of Riez, Crécy, Ponthieu and Wadicourt. These families named Lefèbvre did not belong to the genealogy of the better-known Lefèvre d'Ormesson: they were, except for links caused by marriages, which there were, different families.

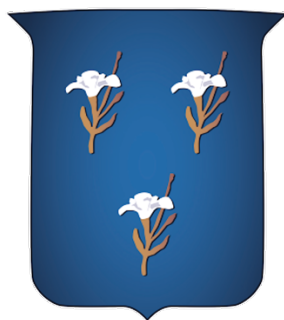
Sassone Corsi's information is accurate and takes us back to the extreme complexity of the genealogies of the Ancien Régime and its rules.

There were several Lefèbvre families, some noble and some not. Saxon Corsi also raises an important question: were the Lefèbvre, who by the mid-17th century already occupied important posts as administrators in the Du Boffin family and then in the Demanio, one of the many branches of the Lefèvre d'Ormesson family?⁵ The question is not out of the air and should be seriously discussed. On the contrary, it is supported by some clues that are more than clues, starting with a very important one. Sassone Corsi had the blazon of the Lefèbvre de Clunière drawn as it had been deposited in the royal archives and as it was described in the heraldic repertoires of the time, where it was described as "Three legged field lilies in a sash on a blue background" with the words – on the outer sash – "Lex, Decus, Labor", which, however, were not shown on the blazon drawn and coloured in watercolour and enamel and attached to the *Memoria* file in the Naples State Archives.

⁵ Étienne de Séréville - Fernand de Saint-Simon, *La Société française au XX^e siècle*, Contrepoint, Dictionnaire de la noblesse française, vol. 1, Paris 1975, p. 17.

The blazon is reproduced below in an improved version by a modern graphic artist. As can be seen, it is an armorial bearing three 'gambuti lilies of the field in a band on a blue background', as we read in the text by Luigi Spreti, who describes it. Therefore, the version presented by Bagnara Ruffo corresponds exactly to the one that was made for the ennoblement of the Lefèbvre by the King of the Two Sicilies and that was associated with the hereditary title of Count of Balsorano.

LEFEBVRE



Lefèbvre D'Ovidio family coat of arms.

If the phrases *Lex*, *Decus*, *Labor* are perfectly in keeping with the personality of Charles Lefèbvre, the lilies certainly recall France, even if they are not lilies of France (and therefore linked to the royal family) but lilies, lilies of the field. Apart from the reproduction in this file there are – at the moment – no other reproductions of this image, probably lost or ended up in some repository after the sale of the Lefèbvre's movable and immovable properties, sales that took place in several stages between 1898 and 1915. Where they were

drawn, and they certainly were on the buildings, they were removed in the changes of ownership. But there is a first aspect that gives one pause for thought.

To illustrate this aspect, it is worthwhile to return to Sassone Corsi's discussion, because this is the oldest existing historical-genealogical discussion of the family.

And here we point out that, if the favour of the Court could allow the Dorias and Saluzzos to bind themselves to a person who had recently been ennobled (and it is well known how jealous these two families were of their ancient nobility), it would certainly not have imposed this mend to an ancient and very noble French family. Indeed, we read on p. 16 of vol. VI of the work *Titre, Anoblissements, et Pairies de la Restauration 1814-1830* published by Viscount Albert Révérend, current editor of the aforementioned *Annuaire de la Noblesse de France*, that the Marquis of Raigecourt, Rolando Paolo Emanuele de Raigecourt de Gournay, Peer of France, married Onorata Gabriella Flavia of Balsorano, daughter of Carlo, on 18 June 1935: i.e. when not yet on the head of Carlo Lefèbvre had rained the favours of the Royal House of Naples and all his nobility consisted in his surname.

Very significant were the marriages celebrated between members of the jealous aristocracy of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies and France in 1835, 1840 and 1847 that in quick succession linked the Lefèbvre to the nobility. Apart from great wealth, was it possible for three such marriages to succeed before ennobling?

Lefèvre-Raigecourt marriage (1835)

The issue of the marriage celebrated in Paris in 1835 between Flavia Lefèvre (1813-1843) and Raoul Boisselin de Raigecourt-Gournay (1804-1889) raises interesting questions. Raoul was a Peer of France, a member of one of the oldest and most powerful families in the Kingdom of France. The legal obligation to marry a noblewoman on the part of the Peers of France had been abolished by the law of 29 December 1831, but it still existed in custom.

The first-born sons of the Peers of France carefully chose their consorts from noble families. Raoul de Raigecourt's first wife had been Lucie de Leusse (1806-1828), a noblewoman of France, daughter of the Marquis Emmanuel del Leusse (1766-1829), who, before dying very young, had given birth to two children, one of whom was a son and thus the continuation of the dynasty.

Lucie was noble, so the preservation of the quarters of nobility was assured. So one wonders, is it possible that Raoul, Peer of France, decided to bind himself to a bourgeois, albeit a very rich one (he had received a splendid château de la Loria, entirely rebuilt, as a dowry)? Possible but unlikely. Love marriages existed, but a man in the position of Raoul de Raigecourt, Peer of France and part of the private councils of the post-Napoleonic royals, was obliged to marry a noblewoman by respecting convention rather than law. If Flavia Lefèvre had not been noble at the time would he have married her? The Lefèvre family for a long time – more than a century at the time of Flavia's marriage – had held important positions in the administration of the State, especially in Pontarlier and Grenoble, but also in Paris, so is it possible that they did not belong to the Nobility of the Robes or even to an

older nobility? Hard to believe. The marriage between Raoul and Flavia was the result of shrewd diplomacy that had engaged the mother when she had stayed in Paris for almost a year with her daughter, ensuring that her high-ranking friendships introduced her into the most exclusive salons.

However, Charles Lefèbvre, Flavia's father, always signed himself De Clunière and this name referred to an ennobling function, linked to the office of Charles' father, Pierre, who like his grandfather François-Joseph was a high magistrate of the Dauphiné.

The Saluzzo-Lefèbvre marriage (1840)

Sassone Corsi deals with another very interesting argument, which is also a very solid one: the King's favour consecrated in noble prestige a rich and well-known family in the Kingdom. But such prestige, such an aura of nobility could have linked the aristocrat Gioacchino di Saluzzo with Maria Luisa Lefèbvre in a marriage celebrated in 1840, thus well before ennobling. Of course, there were marriages celebrated between nobles and rich members of the world of finance or commerce, but before 1848 they were rare.

The Doria D'Angri-Lefèbvre marriage (1847)

Teresa Doria D'Angri (1822-1911) belonged on her father's side to one of the richest families loaded with honours and titles in the entire Kingdom (particularly on the Doria side), branched out in every Italian State and particularly powerful in the Kingdom of Naples as well as in Genoa (Doria) and

Rome (Doria Pamphili). But equally prestigious nobility, and equally considerable wealth, came from the family of his mother, Giulia Caracciolo (1807-1890). It is therefore for the third time scarcely credible to suppose that, in this case, the son of a bourgeois, Ernesto (1819-1891), who did not possess any titles of nobility until 1854 (apart from the De Clunière, which he used occasionally), however rich and powerful, could marry the exponent of one of the oldest, richest and most aristocratic families of the Peninsula. Of course, this could all be part of a policy of wealth preservation, as Teresa's marriage to the eldest son of an innovative industrialist, who in 1848 was the most important taxpayer in the Kingdom, and who was already close to ennobling, was judged to be good for both families. However, one has to wonder whether it is possible that so many aristocratic families, marquises, dukes, counts, could marry so easily in both the female and male branches to a family that could not itself boast nobility. This, fundamentally, is the reason for Sassone Corsi's perplexity and brings us back to the fundamental question: there had to be a nobility of blood that had been maintained in the family's memory, even if in everyday usage, the Lefèbvre branch we are dealing with being a cadet branch, did not entitle it to use. The use of a title is one thing, the quarters of kinship are another, and it was these that Sassone Corsi intended to assert.

The marriage between Teresa and Ernesto was celebrated in May 1847, seven years before the comital ennobling of Charles and his descendants. Charles Lefèbvre had become a Peer in 1845 and was, in fact, on the King's council in economic and financial matters. For this reason Ernesto had been able to marry Teresa Doria D'Angri (1825-1912). Sassone Corsi again writes:

We would also like to note that in France the high offices dependent on the Finance Ministry were held in the highest name and constituted generous and transmissible nobility. We read, in fact, in vol. IV of the aforementioned work by Viscount Révérend on p. 273, concerning the Lefèbvre of Wadicourt 'Maintenue de noblesse comme fila d'un conseiller trésorier payeur des états... Z'.

And Rollario Romano p. ... page ... notes that S. Pius VI with a bull of d... established that the Receiver of the Venetian (was) to be granted transmissible generous nobility [...] However, the office of Receiver of the Royal Ballroom of Pontarlier, which Pietro Lefèbvre had held since 1772, being superior to that of a treasurer of Artois, because they were directly dependent on the sovereign rather than on the Ministry of Finance, would have given him the generous nobility required by the statutes of the Holy Order if he had not already been a noble family. Order if he had not already been from a noble family. Therefore, if the well-founded presumption that the Applicant's maternal ancestor belonged to the ancient family of Lefèbvre is not to be accepted, he now has good reason to hope that the evidence produced for this noble quarter will be favourably received; as he has proven for the family of French origin the nobility emanating from Tritavo instead of Bisavo, as required by the Statutes of the Sacred Order.

Saxon Corsi's reasoning is fully reflected in legal and historical literature, in the texts that regulated the titles of high officials such as Charles Lefèbvre's father, grandfather and great-grandfather, and perhaps even further back. We shall speak of their functions, to note in the meantime that Albert Révérend's book cited by the genealogist on pp. 270-267 of the 4th volume of *Les familles titrées et anoblies au XIXe siècle* mentions several Lefèbvre who had been ennobled during the 19th century for their function as Nobility of the Toga.⁶

⁶ Albert Révérend, *Les familles titrées et anoblies au XIXe siècle*, Paris,

Is there a branched Lefèbvre family that was largely ennobled in the 18th century and was probably connected by ancient descent with the Lefèvre d'Ormesson? It is probable. In various genealogies, consulting Révérend's book, one notes that the D'Ormesson genealogy is not complete in all its parts. If there is a dividing point between the Lefèvre d'Ormesson, ennobled in the mid-16th century, and the Franco-Napolitan Lefèbvre, it must lie within the first part of the 17th century.

This preliminary discussion, which ties in with Sassone Corsi's writing, leads us to an observation: the Lefèvre d'Ormesson, from the mid-16th century) have, as their own, a blazon in *azure (azur)* background with three lilies (*3 lis de jardin d'argent tigés et feuillés de sinople posés en pal*) in the field, gambuti (stelluti). These are similar to the lilies (*3 lis de jardin*) of the Lefèbvre family of Balsorano and are placed in the same position. Italian and French noble coats of arms show extreme variety, but these two coats of arms have striking similarities. Moreover, some branches of these Lefèbvre show three blue stars on a silver cross, and this heraldic symbol, too, has, as we shall see, its own weight.

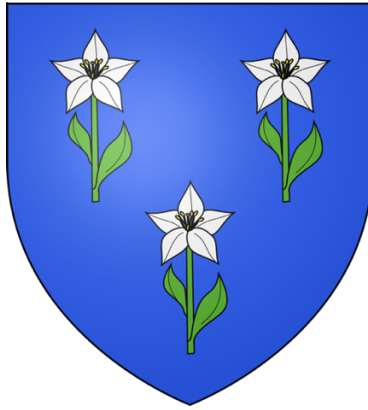
The coat of arms that Charles Lefèbvre wanted and obtained for his family very clearly recalled that of the Lefèvre d'Ormesson. Could this be considered a whim? Hardly, in that world: rather, it is probably a signal as Sassone Corsi believes.

Presumably, then, a kinship existed between the two families, perhaps distant in time when the branches split, but real and not forgotten by all. At the moment, we have nothing to documentally support this hypothesis other than a series of very significant circumstances, and this can be considered one

of the most important in addition to the clues already mentioned. Moreover, if the motto of the Lefèbvre of Balsorano was *Lex, decus, labor*, that of the Lefèvre of Ormesson was *Grande decus Gentis Lilia semper erunt*, where the word *decus* reappears.

Also important is the fact that both families worked in the same field of tax collection: André Lefèbvre (1577-1665) was a magistrate of finance, as was his son Olivier Lefèvre d'Ormesson (1616-1685) and André III Lefèvre d'Ormesson, lord of Amboile (1644-1688). Thus Henry Lefèvre d'Ormesson (1751-1808), Intendant of Finance in Paris, Contrôleur général des finances from 29 March to 21 November 1783.

At that time, the Lefèbvre family, the one we are concerned with, worked, in its various branches, in that very French department and this lasted for over 20 years, first under the Ancient Régime and then under Napoleon. These are significant though not yet decisive circumstances, which nevertheless deserve historical investigation, at least preliminary. One hypothesis, as mentioned, leads one to think that it may have been a long-detached collateral branch, which had lost the documents of its nobility (which had to be proved, especially in certain periods, at the request of the King or particular commissions), which then found it again in the Kingdom of Naples and recalled its past and claimed, in some way, kinship through signs such as the blazon.



The Lefevre d'Ormesson family coat of arms.

It was almost certainly, therefore, an interesting case of stubborn memory keeping. The one reproduced above is a stylised coat of arms belonging to the Lefèvre d'Ormesson family. As can be seen, the similarities are remarkable: the shape of the armorial is the same; the three fleurs-de-lis (gambuti or stelluti) are arranged in the same way, two at the top and one at the bottom. The blue background is the same.

Chapter 2

The beginnings: from Touvet (Isère) to Revel-Tourdan

The first Lefèbvre, whose genealogical lineage we will find in Italy in the early 19th century, emerges in documents in the mid-17th century. We are in the golden age of Louis XIV (1638-1713), when around 20 million inhabitants of the Kingdom of France felt they lived in a well-governed, ancient and powerful State, in what Pierre Goubert called 'the optimal balance' between population density and resources.⁷

The first is called Michel Lefèbvre (1621ca-1670) and is administrator of the Barbarin estate at Revel Tourdan, on the road from Chambéry to Grenoble. He married Marguerite Roux (1626ca-1667) in Touvet (Isère). The two were probably originally from that village or were employed by the lords of the Castle of Chambéry. Five children were born to them, Ennemond (born 1646), Gaspard (born 1657), Balthasar (1660), a Marie whose birth and death dates are unknown and Joseph Lefèbvre (1647-1728). Their son Joseph became *châtelain* of the Revel Tourdan castle but also, probably, of the castle of Barbarin, the same locality. The surname Lefèbvre was widespread in the spellings 'Le Fèbvre', 'Le Fevre' and

⁷ Pierre Goubert, *L'ancien régime. La société, i poteri*, transl. it. Jaca Book, 1976, pp. 50-51. A series of circumstances suggest that the Joseph Le Fèbvre, born in Leiden in 1647 and then emigrated, and his namesake, born in 1647 and died in 1728 in the South of France, were the same person.

'Lefèbvre', especially in the North-West of the Kingdom of France: Normandy, Brittany but also Picardy.⁸



Du Boffin family coat of arms.

If Michel is '*fermier*', administrator of the large Barbarin estate that included arable land and fruit trees as well as livestock, Joseph is referred to in the available documents as '*châtelain de Revel*', a generic term that can mean *inhabitant*

⁸ In the mid-19th century, a member of the family, André-Isidore Lefèbvre (1799-1885), noted that a cadence that he called Nordic persisted in the various generations of the family. The name is still widespread in northern France, in the current departments of Normandy (approx. 50,000), Picardy (approx. 22,000), Nord-Pais-de-Calais (100,000) and Île de France (10,000). In the Rhône-Alpes region, there are only 350 individuals with this surname, representing 30 to 40 households. Meanwhile, we note that most branches of the Lefèvre d'Ormesson family were located in Picardy and Normandy in addition to Paris.

of the castle of Revel but more properly administrator. In Revel (Tourettes, Nice) there were two castles: one of strategic importance, now reduced to a few ruins, and then the castle of Barbarin, large and ancient. So, a large estate, important at that time because it was on the border between marquisates and principalities.

The first building had belonged since the mid-17th century to the family of the Marquis Du Boffin, who abandoned it after 1789, when riots and violence led to its destruction. It was then used, for at least a century, as a quarry for salvage material. Parts of it remain, ruins, on a rocky promontory 560 metres above sea level, but they are enough to give an idea of its former grandeur. Unfortunately, the documents it held were destroyed during the revolutionary raids. The castle of Barbarin, on the other hand, still exists today.⁹

⁹ At that time, the lords of Revel were the descendants of the Du Boffin d'Uriage line, namely: a) Félicien du Boffin (1515-1581) and his wife Claudine de Viennmoise (1534-?); b) Félicien II du Boffin, Baron d'Uriage and Advocate General at the Parliament of Grenoble (1560-1631), married to Urbaine de Vacher (d. 1635) and later to Jeanne de la Croix-de-Chevrieres, lady-in-waiting to the queen. Felicién II was a doctor of law and Advocate General at the Parliament (De la Chenaye-Desbois, *La Dictionnaire de la Noblesse*, Tome III, Libraire-Imprimeur du Roy, Paris, 1774, p. 447).



Ruins of the castle of Revel-Tourdan.

The Du Boffins, an important dynasty with numerous descendants, did not reside in Tourettes, where the castle of Revel stood, but in Paris as was the custom among the old nobles who had long since renounced their freedom to live in the golden idleness but also in the tedium of Versailles, under the gaze of the King. Someone therefore had to administer the castle. Judging by the title attributed to him, *châtelain*, and the important career of his son in Grenoble, the castle administrator must have been Joseph Le Febvre. But it is likely that he also had a role in the castle of Barbarin at which, with probable activities as administrator of the fief and factor, his father worked.¹⁰

¹⁰ In 1606, Pierre Thaon, son of Philippe Thaon (d. 1635), married Camilla Michelotti (d. 1580), daughter of the Italian Melchiorre Michelotti (d. 1547) and Brigitte Doria. The lady inherited the fief of Revel in Tourette-Levens (site of the Revel castle), near Nice, and the

What seems important is that, both the lords of the castle of Barbarin, Octavien Emé de Saint-Julien (1551-1624), his son Ennemond Emé de Saint-Julien (1605-1670), first baron of Marcieu, and his grandson Laurent Joseph, second marquis de Marcieu (1676-1742), held various posts in the Dauphiné Parliament where Joseph's sons would go on to have careers. Although we do not know what exactly were the relations between the Lefèbvre, the Du Boffins and the Marcieu, one and the other (advisers to the king, *avocats général* at the Grenoble Parliament) probably favoured the careers of the Lefèbvre sons and grandsons. Lefèbvre's grandchildren were also installed in Grenoble in the same capacity.¹¹

The *châtelain* Joseph Le Febvre married Espérance Mistral (1670-1718). His wife's name is typical of the Rhone Valley and Provence. Several children were born of the marriage. One of these, christened Jean-François, born in 1680, was to be the ancestor of the Lefèbvre family of Naples. Other siblings were Marguerite Philiberte (born 1682), Philibert (1685), François (1687), Claude (1688), Joseph (1690) and a Marguerite born in 1695 (after another born and died two years earlier) and Angélique (1693). At present, the genealogical consistency of each of these descendants is unknown. But from each of the Lefèbvre males, in particular Claude, Philibert and François, a lineage may have originated that explains the presence of so many Lefèbvre cousins in Paris and Versailles a few decades later. Jean-François, at the age of 38, in 1718, married Marie Anne Sibille (1696-1788), the 22-year-old daughter of the

fief of Saint-André, in Saint-André-de-la-Roche.

¹¹ Archivs du Dauphinat, Grenoble, 3E 1140.

pharmacist of Revel-Tourdan.¹² Although the Lefèbvre family of this period was a collateral branch of the Lefèvre d'Ormesson, as certain circumstances suggest, the branch was temporarily 'gentrified', so to speak.



Barbarin Castle in Revel-Tourdan,
where the first known Lefèbvre, Michel, worked.

Jean-François Le Febvre (1680-1764) and Marie Anne (or Marianne) Sibille lived in the village of Revel-Tourdan, the place of origin of his wife but probably also of her husband. This was then an agricultural village ennobled by a series of elegant and austere historical buildings including the Château de Barbarin,

¹² *Les LeFebvre*, genealogical research 2008. Even today, there are people in the village of 1,000 souls who bear the name Lefèvre (without the 'b' as in the 18th-century spelling).

where Jean-François' father had worked, as we know.

Their marriage was also fruitful: they had six children, some of whom lived to a ripe old age. Married at the age of 38, as mentioned, Jean-François inherited all the family fortune by 1729, when – his mother having already been dead for 10 years – his father also passed away on 30 September 1728.

After that, or perhaps even before (but we have no record of this), Jean-François made a rapid career in the royal bureaucracy. He was in fact *employé dans les affaires du Roi* starting in 1729, and within five years became director of the *Dauphiné* bursar's office (*directeur des éconômats de Dauphiné*) in 1734.

It was an extraordinary social ascent that involved studying law. Had he been helped by someone? At the moment we cannot explain, except by interventions that came from Paris where appointments were decided. This career greeted his entry into the high provincial bureaucracy and required ennobling.¹³ Without military merit, it was virtually impossible to obtain such a title unless one was part of a larger and more important family network. And it is precisely the shadowy part of the Lefèbvre family of that period, with the frequent appearance of relatives and cousins, especially in Paris, that attracts the researcher's attention and suggests that the Lefèbvre of the *Dauphiné* must have been part of a larger and older circle.

The appointed position, in practice 'director of finance' of

¹³ Provisions d'offices 1720-1790. V/1/ Jean-François Le Fèbvre. Conseiller maire de la communauté de Revel-Tourdon. Provisions des 21 & 28 juillet 1723 (V/1/255 pièces 29 & 61). Secrétaire greffier de la communauté de Revel. Provisions du 29 mars 1737 (V/1/311 pièce 85). Conseiller secrétaire greffier de la communauté de Revel. Provisions du 26 août 1736 (V/1/306 pièce 365).

the department, imposed obligations but also considerable privileges, as mentioned: good income, excellent contacts, a house suitable for receiving the local nobility. A royal edict of 1638 had transformed the Parliament, endowed with its own specificity unique in the Kingdom, into a veritable Court of Accounts with around sixty officials.¹⁴

Lefèbvre du Grosriez (Picardy)

From various sources – the Sassone Corsi text as well as family recollections of silverware and furnishings, there is mention of a coat of arms with three stars. This is also a trail to follow. Of all the Lefèbvre families, apart from the Lefèvre d'Ormesson, the only one with three stars on its coat of arms is the Lefèbvre du Grosriez family of Picardy. This family had in fact formed several branches, all established in Picardy:

- a) the Branslicourts
- b) the Wadicourts
- c) the Ligescourt who had settled in Abbeville, Picardy, in the early 17th century
- d) the Wadoucourts (this name is actually not found)

This Lefèbvre branch is named by Sassone Corsi precisely because of the three stars on the blazon that had evidently been shown to him by the Neapolitan Lefèbvre heirs as proof of kinship. Were they separate branches of one large family?

¹⁴ René Favier, *Le Parlement de Dauphiné*, Presse Universitaire de Grenoble, Grenoble 2001.

For the time being, let us stick to these four *surnoms* that did not amount to any other title than the informal title of *seigneur de*. The only branches that still existed in the 19th century were the Ligescourt (with the d'Ellencourt branch) and the Wadicourt (subdivided into du Hodent, des Fointaines and du Grosriez), plus of course the d'Ormesson who were related to the former but had played a more important historical-political role in the history of France.¹⁵ Once again, the division must have occurred much earlier, around the end of the 16th century. As for the three stars on the coat of arms, the only thing that can be said is that various early 21st century Lefèbvre family sources recall the existence of early silverware and family objects bearing that particular mark.



¹⁵ Notice généalogique sur la famille Lefèbvre Du Grosriez en Picardie, Au bureau de l'annuaire de la noblesse, Paris, 1888, p. 1.

Chapter 3

Lefèbvre de Wadicourt, Du Grosriez and Des Fontaines

The Lefèbvre de Wadicourt branch of the family, collateral to the D'Ormessons and often marked in documents simply as 'Lefèbvre', also presents many interesting elements. In its various generations, it shows how members assume different *surnoms* that sometimes pass on, sometimes do not, sometimes skip a generation, depending, evidently, on whether or not certain positions were held. But it seems clear that the Lefèbvre family with these different *surnoms* (and others) was a single family: what remained constant, apart from the surname, was the inheritance of the profession of clerk and lawyer, sometimes of very high rank, of finance.

These Lefèbvre were also lawyers in the central parliament, like the other Lefèbvre branches. For example, Charles Lefèbvre de Wadicourt (1642-1694), lord of Grosriez (the place from which the branch called Lefèbvre du Grosriez was named), lived his entire life in Abbeville (Somme) in various positions.¹⁶ They were included in the *Annuaire de la noblesse de Paris* published in the capital in 1888. This Charles Lefèbvre married Jeanne de Ponthieu in 1670 and reportedly had only one son, François born in 1672.

¹⁶ Notice généalogique sur la famille Lefèbvre Du Grosriez en Picardie, Au bureau de l'annuaire de la noblesse, Paris, 1888, p. 15-16.

♂ **Charles LEFEBVRE DE WADICOURT**

🕒 Sosa : 256

- Né le 3 août 1642
- Décédé le 14 novembre 1694, à l'âge de 52 ans
- Greffier

Parents

- Jacques LEFEBVRE DE WADICOURT, *Sieur du Grosriez* 1605-1673
- Louise CRIGNON

Union(s) et enfant(s)

- Marié le 8 décembre 1670 avec Jeanne DE PONTHEU dont
 - ♂ François LEFEBVRE 1672-1718

Frères et sœurs

- ♀ Elisabeth LE FEBVRE 1647-

Notes

Notes individuelles

Greffier en chef de l'élection de Ponthieu, grenier à sel d'Abbeville, par Foresmontiers, et chambre de Rue

The De Wadicourt title is reported for Charles, but not for his son François Lefèvre (1672-1718), who nevertheless had a blazon registered in the Armorial Général de France. The latter married Marianne Pappin des Fontaines in 1713.

The names of dignity Du Grosriez des Fontaines thus come from the bride, will be carried by all the children and derives from a place, Fontaines, in the Dauphiné. François did the same job as his father, the *greffier*, a term used at the time to describe a clerk in a court of law. Which shows how the cadet branches of the Lefèvre d'Ormesson family could also take on more 'menial' jobs in the provinces, such as the administration of a castle or an agricultural estate. But François and Marie Anne Pappin of the Fontaines had two sons, one of whom was named Charles Lefèvre du Grosriez et des Fontaines (1715-1790). He was a lawyer in the Paris parliament and thus held

an office in Paris equivalent to that held by the other Lefèbvre in the Dauphiné.¹⁷

♂ François LEFEBVRE

🕒 Sosa : 128

- Né le 4 octobre 1672
- Décédé le 10 août 1718, à l'âge de 45 ans
- Greffier

Parents

- Charles LEFEBVRE DE WADICOURT 1642-1694 (Greffier)
- Jeanne DE PONTHEU

Union(s) et enfant(s)

- Marié le 14 mai 1713 avec Marie-Anne PAPPIN DES FONTAINES 1672- dont
 - ♂ Charles LEFEBVRE DU GROSRIEZ ET DES FONTAINES 1715-1790
 - ♀ Anne-Thérèse LE FEBVRE 1718-1812

Notes

Notes individuelles

Fit enregistrer les rmories dans l'Armorial général de France (généralités par d'Amiens) suivant le certificat de Charles d'Hozier du 08/08/1698

The Lefèbvre du Grosriez, where the last predicate was a locative, bore in their coat of arms the three stars named in some Lefèbvre documents, and lived in Abbeville, in the Somme, halfway between Amiens and the river mouth. These Lefèbvre du Grosziers had 7 branches with many descendants thanks to the fecundity of the marriage of Charles du Grosriez (who therefore no longer bore the *surnom* Wadicourt) with Marie-Marguerite de L'Estang de Richemont (married in 1742) from whose union 14 children were born, of whom only 5 names are known, 2 boys and 3 girls (why the other names are not available is unknown, although they were probably mostly children who died in infancy).

¹⁷ He has three sons, one (1762-1819), a soldier, who died childless; a daughter Marie Marguerite (1758-1790) and a Charles Lefèbvre (1757-1827) who lived in Abbeville all his life.

♂ Charles LEFEBVRE DU GROSRIEZ ET DES FONTAINES

Sosa : 64

- Né le 8 juillet 1715
- Décédé le 4 février 1790, à l'âge de 74 ans
- Avocat au parlement, greffier en chef, conseiller du Roi, magistrat, secrétaire

Parents

- François LEFEBVRE 1672-1718 (Greffier)
- Marie-Anne PAPPIN DES FONTAINES 1672- (Greffier)

Union(s) et enfant(s)

- Marié le 29 janvier 1742 avec Marie-Marguerite DE L'ESTANG DE RICHEMONT dont
 - ♂ François-Charles LEFEBVRE DES FONTAINES 1747-1819
 - ♂ Charles-Claude LEFEBVRE DU GROSRIEZ 1752-1818
 - ♂ Charles-Maurice LEFEBVRE DU GROSRIEZ ET DES FONTAINES, *Sieur d'Aboval* 1757-
 - ♀ Marie-Marguerite-Charlotte-Emilie LEFEBVRE DU GROSRIEZ ET DES FONTAINES 1758-1780
 - ♂ Charles-Alexandre LEFEBVRE DU GROSRIEZ ET DES FONTAINES 1762-1819
 - ♂ ? LEFEBVRE DU GROSRIEZ ET DES FONTAINES
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Frères et sœurs

- ♀ Anne-Thérèse LE FEBVRE 1718-1812

Charles Lefèbvre du Grosriez des Fontaines served as Avocat au Parlement central de Paris, was King's Councillor, magistrate and secretary, certainly at different times. No direct connection with the Lefèbvre de Clunière line appears, but at that time there was a Lefèbvre, in the Dauphiné, not related to the family we follow, who was Avocat au Parlement in Grenoble. It is hard not to think that this Lefèbvre (who was not a descendant of Michel Lefèbvre) was, however, not related to the latter's family because of cousinship ties. This Lefèbvre worked as a lawyer authorised to deal with parliament like the Lèfèbvre from Revel-Tourdan who, in its various branches, De Clunière, De Rochenu, De Revel etc., had lawyers, tax magistrates as well as landowners.

Even more significant is the fact that François-Charles Lefèbvre des Fontaines (1747-1816) in 1816 obtained a letter of confirmation of nobility and held the position of *avocat du Parlement* in Grenoble, the very city where the Lefèbvre descendants of the châtelain of Revel, another singular 'case', had practised. This concentration of Lefèbvre lawyers with the same functions in the local parliament is curious and needs to be explained.

Some branches of these Lefèbvre later became extinct, but among those who lived in the period coeval with the Lefèbvre there are currently no historically based links on documents that suggest a single family, while the hypothesis of a common descent remains standing. At the moment, the 'three stars' also mentioned by Sassone Corsi remain a suggestive element. Curiously, popular tradition in Isola del Liri designates as 'casa Lefèbvre' an old house in the locality of Carnello (where a Lefèbvre factory was built) where Charles Lefèbvre is said to have lived when he arrived from Naples, from the beginning of the century until 1818. On the stone lintel of the doorway of this house there are actually three stars that are not found in other buildings in the area.



Lintel with the three stars of 'Casa Lefèbvre',
Carnello, Isola del Liri.

So was there a connection with this family, a collateral branch of a wider parental network? It is possible, indeed quite probable, because such a rise can only be explained by previous contacts, and perhaps much would be explained by knowing more about the figure of Michel Lefèbvre who died in 1670. The branches of the various Lefèbvre families descended from the main one, which held more prominence in history and was known for the *surnom* attached to the D'Ormesson title and castle, showing possible, extensive collateral cousins. Above all, there is still no certainty as to who was the grandfather of Joseph Lefèbvre born in 1647 and died in 1728, father of Michel Lefèbvre (c. 1621-1670). We shall discuss this fact in the remainder of this text.

Chapter 4

Cadet branch hypothesis

The hypothesis that the Lefèbvre were a secondary branch of the Lefèvre d'Ormesson is supported, as we have seen, by two fundamental elements: their coat of arms and their belonging to the same administrative circles that had their centre in Versailles. We must, however, overcome the difficulty of understanding – if this hypothesis is true – where the cadet branch might have originated, since we currently have no documentary evidence. We do know that Michel Lefèbvre's father, born around 1620, is not known. In the Lefèvre d'Ormesson dynasty of finance bureaucrats and ministers, two characters may attract our attention: André and Olivier. Let us take a brief look at their biographies, briefly introducing the origin of this family: the first member of the Lefèvre, later d'Ormesson, is Pierre Lefèvre born in 1439, father of Jean Lefèvre (died 1530). From here descends Olivier (1525-1600), secretary to the King, who received the comital nobilitation in 1553. However, these generations remain little known, and the collateral kinships are equally unknown at the moment, although the tradition cited by Sassone Corsi wants these Lefèvre, as we have said, to be related to the already known branches. It is therefore necessary to find other traces and clues of kinship, apart from the similarity of the blazon, after these centuries and decades.

♂ Pierre LEFÈVRE

- Né - Ormesson, Enghien-les-Bains (95)

Parents

- Pierre LEFÈVRE †1439/ (Laboureur, fait reconnaissance en 1439 au Conétable de Montmorency pour la terre qu'il possède dans la paroisse d'Ormesson.)
- ??

Union(s), enfant(s), petits-enfants et arrière-petits-enfants

- Marié avec ?? dont
 - ♂ Jean LEFÈVRE †1530 Marié avec Madeleine GAUDART dont
 - ♂ Olivier Ier (anobli) LEFÈVRE, secrétaire du roi 1525-1600 Marié en 1559 avec Anne d'ALESSO, dame de Lezeau 1540- dont :
 - ♀ Marie LEFÈVRE 1560
 - ♂ André Ier LEFÈVRE d'ORMESSON, sieur d'Ormesson 1577-1665
 - ♂ Nicolas LEFÈVRE, seigneur de Lezeau

Sources

- Personne: Jean-Louis Beaucarnot / Apollon

Aperçu de l'arbre



André d'Ormesson (1577-1665)

The family historian, author of the *Souvenirs* written from 1874 onwards, André-Isidore Lefèbvre (1798-1889), starts his family history from this character. He did not know of Michel's existence and states that he lacks documents to take his family history further back: he simply did not know who Joseph's father was. Was Michel perhaps related to André Lefèvre d'Ormesson? Were Michel and Joseph members of a collateral branch of the many Lefèbvre who worked in the offices in the bursar's office in other regions (Picardy, Somme, Dauphiné and Île de France) and acquired titles of Nobility of the Robe?

The book *Les Intendants des finances au XVIII^e siècle. Les Lefèvre d'Ormesson et le "Département des Impositions (1715-1777)*, shows us many members of this family, more or less well known, who worked for long years in the provinces

and ended up detaching themselves from the main nucleus of the family that maintained its centres in Paris and the Château D'Ormesson.¹⁸



André Lefèvre d'Ormesson

André Lefèvre d'Ormesson, who was born in 1577 and died in 1665, is said to have had, according to simplified genealogies, only one son, Olivier, but actually had ten of whom little is known. It must also be remembered that, although the family had bought the Château D'Ormesson, their

¹⁸ Françoise Mosser, *Les Intendants des finances au XVIII^e siècle. Les Lefèvre d'Ormesson et le 'Département des Impositions (715-1777)*, Droz, Geneva-Paris 1978.

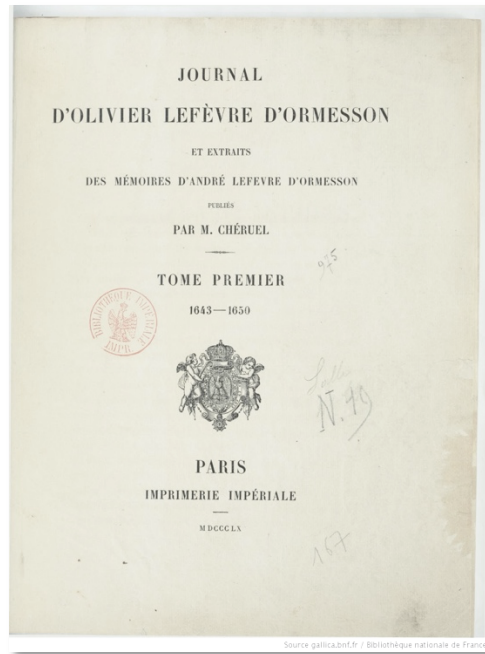
base was in Paris: that is where they lived. André was the family's first important magistrate. He was a jurist, a statesman in the central administration and married Anne Le Prévost, scion of a rich family of magistrates. The Lefèvre were also originally a wealthy bourgeois family, and their second name, d'Ormesson, was derived from the location of the family home, Château d'Ormesson, in the Marne Valley.

Their ennobling by function of robe took place in 1553 by King Henry II (1519-1559).

Note in the picture the three gambutian field lilies that were included in the family coat of arms from 1553 and are also present in the portrait of André.

All indications are that he, André, was the originator of the Lefèbvre branch that later worked in the King's finance and state administration. This is why he is placed at the origin of the Lefèbvre family. There are documentary gaps in the life of this couple. André and Anne had 10 children from their marriage celebrated in 1604. However, there are two other children born to André before their marriage in the family genealogies. Of the fate of these we do not know: natural children were usually assured a position away from their family of origin.

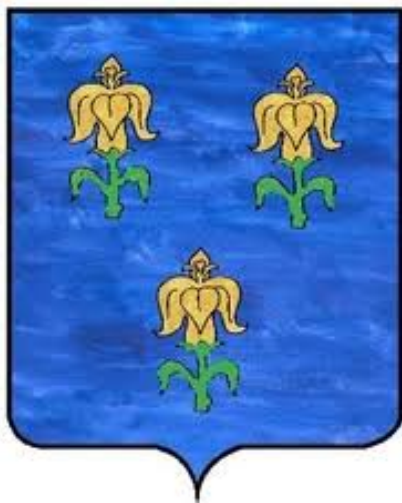
The date of Michel Lefèbvre's birth (before 1621) may make André the father of Michel, who, perhaps, removed and engaged in less important administrative activities in castles in the eastern province of the Kingdom, would nevertheless have retained in the family those acquaintances and adherents who within two generations would bring his descendants back to Versailles where they worked.



At the moment we can consider this news a mere supposition, especially since we do not know whether the mother was another woman, whether after Le Prevost's death there was another woman in the life of André, who survived his wife by 13 years. The continuing relations, in Versailles, of the Lefèvre de Clunière and de Revel with central financial circles in which the Lefèvre d'Ormesson worked do not appear to be the result of chance but a sign of deep and ancient ties. The cadet branch of the Lefèvre de Clunière, as soon as it was granted, also took up the coat of arms, symbolically linking itself to the Lefèvre who had their centre in the castles of Ormesson and Amboile as well as Versailles.

Olivier left a very interesting Journal dealing with political

and economic issues but also with frequent travel, acquaintances, accidents.



Lefèvre d'Ormesson coat of arms.
Armorial de Paris, 17th century.

Olivier Lefèvre

Olivier III Lefèvre d'Ormesson (1616-1686), son of André lord of Ormesson and Amboile, married Marie de Fourcy (1625-1685), daughter of d'Henri de Chesy, president of the Court of Auditors, and Marie de la Grange-Trianon. Olivier Lefèvre d'Ormesson (1616-1686), was intendant of the généralités de Rouen, Riom and Soissons, councillor at the Parliament (1636) and Maître des Requêtes au Conseil d'État (1643); deputy magistrate at the Paris intendant (1650), intendant in Picardy (1656), and then at Amiens et Soissons (1662). As a judge he was involved in the famous trial of the superintendent Nicolas Fouquet (1615-1680) in 1662-1664.

His impartiality during the trial saved the accused from beheading by proving the conspiracy hatched against him and refused to grant the death penalty that had been requested. His sense of justice was to cost him dearly: he lost his stewardship in Picardy in 1664 and the King did not allow his father to become councillor of State. He continued to petition the King for a seat on the Council of State until almost his death. In 1667, he sold his position as Maître des Requêtes for 234,000 French lire. He retired to the Château de Ormesson, where important people such as Madame de Sévigné, Racine, Boileau, La Fontaine, Bossuet and others visited him. Very rich, he left more than a million French lira in gold at his death. He is known for being the author of a long *Journal*, started in 1643, and for having written, together with the magistrate Guillaume de Lamoignon, *L'Art d'orner les jardins*.

There is another André, Director of Finance and Councillor of State, who died in 1665 apparently leaving no children. But, as we know, records are not always accurate and genealogies can hold many surprises, especially in the less studied side branches.



Olivier Lefèvre d'Ormesson

Another André Lefèvre d'Ormesson (1644-1684) was intendant of finance in the provinces. In 1676, he married Éléonore le Maître de Bellejamme (1653-1681), by whom he had two sons who continued the family tradition: they were intendants of finance in Paris and in the provinces, particularly in Lyon and Franche-Comté, in Grenoble. He worked in the Parliament building where the Lefèbvre family, whose genealogy we follow, were active.

Henry Lefèvre d'Ormesson (1681-1756) married to Catherine La Bourdounnaie (?-1758) and had a son, Marie-

François (1710-1775), who was the first marquis by letter patent. This means that the previous ennobling, that of the mid-16th century, was less bureaucratic in nature and was linked to the word of the King. It was only from this generation and the year 1758 that the D'Ormessons became marquises with all the privileges of the case and the inalienable and inalienable right to bear the title of Marquis d'Ormesson, which not even the King could revoke.¹⁹ Is it possible to hypothesise the existence of unregistered children, perhaps born in widowhood and then naturalised? These were very frequent family affairs. At this time, in the absence of certain proof, one can only consider this hypothesis, given the concomitance of evidence, as probable.



There is some evidence to suggest that the main and oldest branch, from which the others, named in this text and mainly engaged in the administration of the State, extended, descended from the Lefèvre family known as the d'Ormesson

¹⁹ Jean-François Solnon, *Le D'Ormesson au plaisir de l'État*, Fayard, Paris 1992.

family, which then continued from generation to generation under this name until today (the ninth count of Ormesson is Olivier, born in 1953).

All other Lefèbvres named here are to be considered certain or hypothetical collaterals. The rich and crowded family tree of this family contains a few constants, and one is the proximity to State positions mainly related to the world of central administration, in Versailles.

Antoine-François Lefèvre (1651-1712)

Antoine Lefèvre cannot be the origin of the line that originated with Michel Lefèvre for anagraphic reasons: Michel was born before 1621, Antoine in 1651. However, his commitments in the central and provincial administrations are, once again, of interest to us, since when he died, still young, it was in those administrations that Joseph and Pierre Lefèbvres began their careers at Pontarlier and Grenoble. So a kinship is more than likely and they may have had an ancestor in common.

Master of Requests at the Council of State from 1684, intendant of the generalities of Rouen, Riom, Soissons, Antoine wrote a *Mémoire sur l'état de la généralité de Riom* in 1697. On 21 December 1682, he married his cousin Jeanne Françoise Lefèvre de La Barre (proof of the branching of the Lefèbvres family), daughter of Antoine Lefèvre de La Barre, one of his predecessors at the Auvergne intendency, governor of Nouvelle-France since that year. The marriage contract, signed on 20 December 1682, testifies to the wealth of the two branches of the Lefèvre family: 150,000 gold lire for the groom and 120,000 for the bride.

From this union were born Jeanne Marguerite Lefèbvre (1685-1744), who was to become the wife of a president of the Paris parliament, Jean Baptiste Charles du Tillet, Marquis de La Bussière (1687-1744). In 1666, he was appointed councillor of the Grand Conseil after the resignation of his elder brother André (1644-1684), shortly before his death. In 1684, he became Maître des Requêtes de l'Hôtel du Roi. He was then intendant of the generality of Rouen (1684-1695) and then of Riom (1695-1704) and finally of Soissons, until his death on 21 February 1712.

The *Mémoire* of 1697 was written under the responsibility of the Intendant d'Ormesson although it is generally considered likely that some parts may have been written by his subordinates under his direction. It is the result of important research, the collation of 31 different enquiries that the King had asked him to carry out in the Kingdom and which was intended to enable the Duke of Burgundy to have a better knowledge of the different parts of his future kingdom. The idea had come from Paul de Beauvilliers, Duc de Saint-Aignan, who was looking after the prince's education. The series of offices held by this character is impressive, and all in the financial sphere.

Chapter 5

Landing in Grenoble

Let us record another fact. Apart from the Château D'Ormesson, the family of the powerful administrators of the King's finances and magistrates had as their base the Château de Fargerau, which is located in Franche-Comté, one of the Lefèbvre's expansion areas we are concerned with. This may be a suggestive but significant case, considering the hundreds of ancient French castles. And again by chance, which may be significant, the castle came into the ownership of the Boisgeline Marquises of Raigecourt during the 18th century, who ceded it to the Anisson du Perron family with whom an André d'Ormesson (1877-1957) married an Anisson du Perron. So, for a while, while Flavia Lefèbvre was married to Raoul Boisgeline de Raigecourt, the two families became close, then Flavia's death rendered everything vain.²⁰

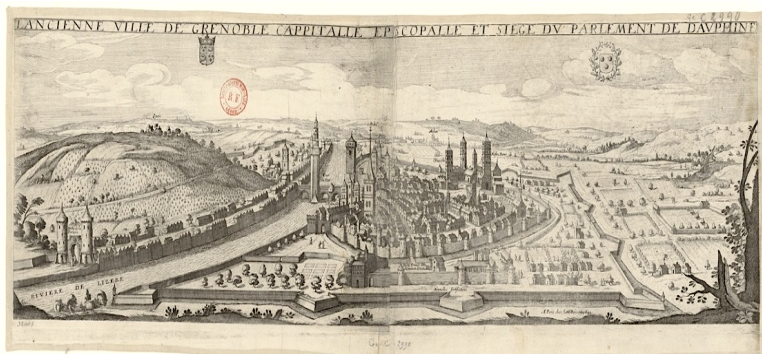
We have to imagine for the Lefèbvre of this generation a comfortable life and the honours that rank entailed. During the *Ancien régime*, the Dauphiné province comprised the current departments of Isère, Drôme and Hautes-Alpes. Its capital, Grenoble, had 15,000 inhabitants, a considerable population when compared to the average size of cities at the time. Situated on one side of the river Isère, leaning against the relief

²⁰ Benzoni Juliette, *Cent ans de vie de château*, I. La Belle Époque, Paris, C. de Bartillat, 1992, pp. 38-39, 49, arch. pers.

on which the local Bastille still stands today, it had schools, a theatre and several royal academies. Grenoble grew up along the ancient Via Francigena, the road that since the early Middle Ages connected Rome with Paris and the Holy Land and from which an important branch road led to Santiago de Compostela.

Therefore, in 1729, Jean-François and his wife moved to Grenoble as an *employeu*. The move took place 11 years after their marriage and several of their children were born and baptised there. His new prestigious position entailed supervising the finances of the Dauphiné, with a margin of discretion for current expenditure. Lefèvre's trips to Paris were frequent, at least twice a year, to the offices in Versailles where the powerful Lefèvre d'Ormesson family dominated: what was the relationship between these families?

Grenoble at that time was inhabited by a prosperous bourgeoisie partly of bureaucratic extraction and partly of merchants and craftsmen specialised in the production of gloves and textiles. During the course of the century, the production of gloves for Swiss and Italian markets increased tenfold: from 15,000 pairs at the beginning of the century, this rose to 160,000. The Dauphiné enjoyed great prosperity until 1788; at that time as many as 64 factories were active in the city and the surrounding area. Its main feature was its commercial and cultural ties with western Italy, through Savoy and the marquisate of Saluzzo.



Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

The couple's children grew up in the quiet, elegant town and were most likely educated there by tutors and then at the local Jesuit College (active from 1722 to 1763).²¹

The education of sons at this boarding school was practically obligatory for the city's wealthy families. Of the six children, all distinguished by their surnames and a locative nickname, the first André Lefèbvre (with the *surnom* de Revel) was born in 1719; a second, Henry Jean-Baptiste, baptised on 24 June 1721, left some trace of himself in the records as a landowner and owner of at least three houses: one near Bourget, one in Rochenu and one in Revel.²² Third was a female, Catherine (1723), who made a good marriage to a notary of the Salomon family and had numerous offspring. But of the 11 children she bore, a little over a century later, a nephew, André-Isidore, reported only one he knew to have died in war during Napoleon's expedition to Egypt.

Fourth was Jean-François (*surnom* du Duchalay), born in

²¹ Which would later become the Collège Royal where Champollion, the decipherer of Egyptian hieroglyphic writing, taught.

²² Andrée Collion, *Autrefois Primarette. 121 à 1890. Une commune du Viennois*, private edition 2002, p. 318.

Grenoble in 1730. As mentioned, honorary locatives, also called nicknames (*les surnoms*) by André-Isidore, were already present among Jean-François' sons in the early 18th century, and in particular starting with André-Lefèbvre born in 1719. Other sons came later, notably the twins Joseph (later de Rochenu) and Pierre (*surnoms* de Clunière) born on 28 February 1733 in Grenoble and baptised in the parish of Saint-Hughues.²³ In 1734, François, *surnom* de Sibille was born. We have no record, at this height, of letters confirming nobility, as is the case with the Lefèbvre du Grosriez and the other Lefèbvre of Picardy and Paris, but this may simply be a documentary gap.

²³ Grenoble Municipal Archives. Alphabetical Rep., antique series GG 105. The twins Joseph and Pierre are qualified in this document as 'sons of the director of the provincial bursars'. The parish archives of Saint-Hugues are accessible at: archives-isere.fr under the heading: Grenoble/Saint-Hughues. répertoire alphabétique. Coll. Communale 9NUM/AC185/70 - 1716-1768.



View of Grenoble, engraving, 17th century.

Chapter 6

Noblesse

The function of tax collector and tax controller paid well because pay was calculated on a fixed basis and according to the volume of tax revenue. The Dauphiné was a rich area, devoted to trade, not exclusively peasant. At this point in his life, Jean-François already belonged to the *noblesse de robe*, the professional nobility of royal officials employed in the public administration in the judicial and fiscal fields. Normally, the honorary title was conferred after a certain period in which one had served the King; the conferment entailed the payment of a sum, a *taille*, and in theory could be resold but subject to stringent rules that did not make it easy to pass on.²⁴ The conferment, with the addition of an honorary lease – he now signed himself Jean-François Lefèbvre de Clunière – must have taken place the year before he entered the Dauphiné Parliament, to become effective in 1762. Proof of this is a noble privilege dated 1761 linked to a place called Clunière, not far from Grenoble. The title 'de Clunière' (sometimes 'des Clunières' in the plural) was transmitted to his sons by Pierre, who appear in documents as 'Le Fèbvre Clunière'.

It was in fact the general rule – even though the legislation

²⁴ However, he no longer appears in the names of Charles Flavien Lefèbvre Clunière's successors. Roland Mousnier, *The Institution of France under the Absolute Monarchy 1598-1798*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago 1984, p. 324.

governing this matter was extremely complicated – that those who had served the King for at least 20 years over two generations became robed nobles. This leads us to assume that Jean-François' father, Joseph Lefèbvre, may also have been a high royal official, as well as an administrator of the Du Boffin family. And this brings us back to the vast Lefèbvre family from which the De Wadicourt, Grosriez, Des Fontaines and others descended. And it leads us to think that the reasoning of the expert genealogist Saxon Corsi, who had to base his thinking without documentary support, was correct.

Pierre Goubert, historian of the forms of the French Ancien Régime, writes about the acquisition of the dignity of the toga:

Indeed, conditions vary from one office to another, from one province to another and from one period to another. The only constant is that of the venality of offices, which are bought, bequeathed and sold at a high price. [...] certain offices made their holder immediately and entirely noble, on the condition that he held them for twenty years or that he died still 'in office'. These were the most sought-after and expensive offices. In contrast, the others only conferred a 'gradual nobility': for the novelty to be definitively acquired for the benefit of the descendants, at least two generations had to exercise it for a period of twenty years (with the usual rule of 'death in office') [...] Parliaments made their councillors, their 'king's people', and not infrequently their chief chancellor, immediately noble (immediately or in the second generation).²⁵

²⁵ Pierre Goubert, *op. cit.*, p. 210.

Weddings

The first important marriage, for the future development of the family, was that contracted between André Lefèbvre (1719-1794) and Jeanne Magnard (whose life details are unknown). The two had three children, one of whom, Joseph-Isidore (1759-1831), was the father of a memoirist in the family, André-Isidore (1799-1887). As a young man, Joseph-Isidore held very important posts in Paris and attended the Palace of Versailles. It was only when he was approaching middle age, due to the drastic political changes that continued to take place and the change of some leaders, that he suffered a considerable social downgrade. Probably, among the Lefèbvres of his generation, he was the one who suffered the most, tried his luck and failed to rise again. Others, especially the cousins of the De Clunière branch, of his and the following generation, had happier fortunes.

In Paris, Joseph-Isidore held important positions in the Finance Administration. Only later would he move to Naples, after the bankruptcy of several banks and financiers with whom he was connected, before returning to Le Puy-le-Dôme. Another Lefèbvre family descended from the Lefèvre d'Ormesson family in this town. We do not know the exact degree of kinship between André-Isidore and these other Lefèbvres.

A twin brother of Joseph-Isidore, Pierre Lefèbvre (1733-1808), had a brilliant career, becoming *avocat* of the Grenoble Parliament after studying law. The only place he could study close to home was Valence where young *Grenoblois* were trained. Previously, Grenoble had hosted a university that was later suppressed and merged with that of Valence. Unfortunately, the historical archives of these universities

have been badly damaged over the centuries and Pierre's inscription could not be found. The city university of Grenoble would only be re-established in the Napoleonic era. Meanwhile, Jean-François, after an industrious life, died at the age of 84 in December 1764, having made his will at Revel on 6 August 1763 in favour of his surviving children.

These data are reported by the descendant André-Isidore who claims to have the documents he speaks of in his hand, probably also the birth and death certificates, and are in any case confirmed by consulting the archives.²⁶

During this period, the spelling of the name was stabilised from Le Fébvre to Lefébvre and this is how it is marked in documents. Pierre married at the age of 29 in 1772 to Gabrielle Maillard (1747-1795), originally from Pontarlier, born in 1747 and daughter of Claude B. Maillard *avocat au Parlement*.²⁷

Among the witnesses to the marriage is François Blondeau (d. 1748), 'councillor to the Ling, judge of the waters and forests at the *baillage* of Pontarlier', related (probably brother) to the future Napoleonic general Antoine Blondeau de Charnage (1747-1825) who was to serve in the Regiment of Doubs, Franche-Comté, in which Charles Lefébvre, Pierre's nephew, also served as captain.²⁸

²⁶ AB XIX 4480, I, pp. 15-17.

²⁷ Like Lefébvre, Maillard (or Maillart) is also a name concentrated in the north of the country (Nord, Aisne, Pas-de-Calais, Oise, Normandy) and widespread in Rouen and Nantes. The presence of different *enclaves* in homogeneous areas is generally explained by French historians as the result of population movements during the religious wars of the 16th-17th centuries. A group of 'northerners', State officials, would have repopulated an area stripped by emigrations and epidemics following the religious wars of the Iron Age.

²⁸ Albert Révérend, *Armorial du Premier Empire*, I, Picard et Fils, Paris 1894, p. 133.

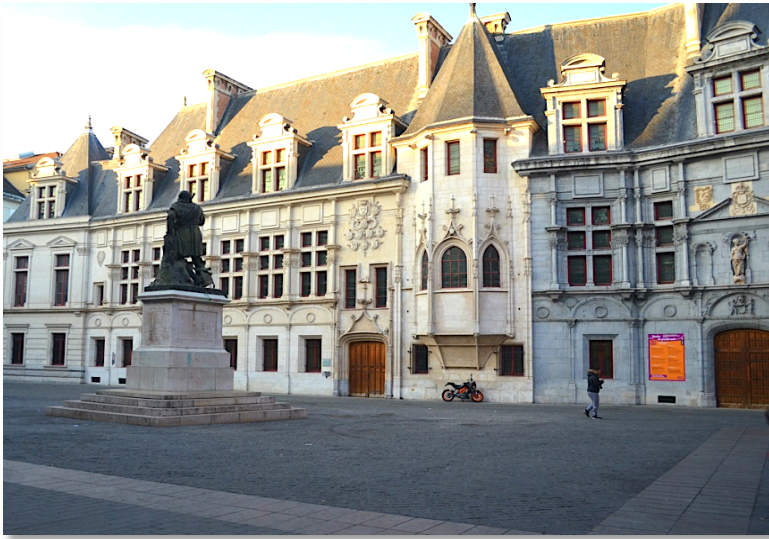
Blondeau held other positions: he was mayor of Baume-les-Dames and *avocat au Parlement* locale in Grenoble. He was part of the highest local administration and his presence at the ceremony suggests that Pierre had made important friendships and improved his social position even in comparison to his father.²⁹ Blondeau was a *baillie*, a bailiff judge in charge of enforcing justice and supervising the administration of state lands (*domaine royal*). From the beginning of the 18th century, when his sphere of competence was defined, the bailiff had mainly financial and fiscal control tasks. At the time of his marriage, Pierre was already *avocat au Parlement* in Grenoble.

In 1777, when his son Nicolas-François-Joseph (who died at the age of one year) was born, Pierre Lefèvre was defined *receveur du domaine du Roy au barau de Pontarlier*, and *controleur des actes à Besançon*. He was thus a member of the bureaucracy of the Grenoble Parliament and a *receveur d'impôts de barau de Pontarlier*, a position that guaranteed a certain and constant income and was worth hundreds of thousands of French lire at the time.³⁰ He held more than one office and was also an administrator with notary control functions in Besançon.³¹

²⁹ Registers of the Parish of Saint Benigne & Saint Etienne of the town of Pontarlier. Marriage Deed No. 594.

³⁰ Roland Mousnier, *The Institution of France under the Absolute Monarchy 1598-1798*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago 1984, p. 307.

³¹ Pontarlier parish registers, Baptism No. 1396, 27 April 1775. Genealogical Research - Les LeFèvre, 2008, p. 8.



Parliament of the Dauphiné ,
where members of the Lefèbvre family worked.

In the elegant and prosperous city of Besançon – which had a population of around 25,000 in 1775 – he held a further office and moved there around 1793. This was not an actual emigration, but a move within the same region, a rather typical move, moreover, of that France still dominated by stability and the permanence of the same families for many generations in the same territory.³² Lefèbvre's line therefore extended its interests to two areas of eastern France: the Dauphiné (Grenoble) and Franche-Comté (with Besançon and Pontarlier).

³² Pierre Goubert, *op. cit.*, p. 60.

Family leases

Pierre Lefèbvre worked at the Parliament and his ennobling fell under the matters regulated by the Droit Annuelle or Loi Paulette (1604), which allowed, through the payment of an annual tax, his office to be passed on to his children.³³ Concerning, in particular, the name 'de Clunière' or 'Clunières', which appears in documents, it must be said that members of the high central and provincial bureaucracy could bear the name of a locality linked to an office and this seems to be the case. A 1761 publication, *Nouveau Code de taille et de reueuil*, names three localities called Clunière in the villages of Aiguzon, Lage and Pourret.³⁴ The name added by the Lefèbvre must have been linked to Pourret (near Grenoble).³⁵ Judging by its isolated location, Clunière must have been a locality with a farm, mill and small village. The issue of family leases, however, is not confined to France alone; during the 19th century it was also found in that section of the Alps known today as the Aosta Valley.

André-Isidore Lefèbvre, recalling the births and names of some of the 22 children born to Jean-François Lefèbvre and Marie Anne Sibille or Sibille (one of whom was his grandfather André Lefèbvre de Revel), writes 'de Clunière' next to many male names, but not female ones: this makes us realise how it was a nickname of dignity and office that was transmitted through the male line like noble titles, in fact.³⁶

³³ Jean-Christian Petitfils, *Louis XIV*, 2002, Perrin, Paris, pp. 54-57.

³⁴ *Nouveau Code de taille et de reueuil*, III, Praul, Paris 1761, p. 282.

³⁵ The notarial deed that must have regulated the purchase of the property in Clunière is currently missing.

³⁶ Archive nationales CARAN, Paris: AB XIX 4480-4483 Fonds André-Isidore Lefèbvre. Livre Premier 1680 à 1822.

But other names appear alongside De Clunière. The 6 male sons of Jean-François gave rise to as many lineages, all but one of which are now extinct. Moreover, we have seen that even the Lefèvre family that acquired the title of Counts of Ormesson from 1553, in its various branches, used locatives such as Du Grosriez or De Branslicourt or De Wadicourt. In the hierarchy of honours, therefore, a title such as De Revel indicated a dignity not of the ducal, comital or marquis type but 'Di Toga' that was often a prelude to other honours.

Below is a diagram of the branches originated by Pierre's sons:

- a) André Lefèbvre 'de Revel' (no. 1719)
- b) Henry Jean Baptiste 'de Hauteville' (b. 1721)
- c) Jean-François Lefèbvre 'de Duchalay' (b. 1730)
- d) Pierre Lefèbvre 'de Clunière' (b. 1733)
- e) Joseph Lefèbvre 'de Rochenu' (twin of the previous one, born in 1733)
- f) François Lefèbvre 'de Sibille' (1734)

The Lefèbvre family enjoyed privileges under the ancient law of the Kingdom of France where the names served to differentiate the different family lineages. During the 19th century, only two lineages would continue: that of the Lefèbvre de Clunière and that of the Lefèbvre de Rochenu, the latter would, however, become extinct in 1817 with the death of Joseph Lefèbvre de Rochenu.

We are certain that Revel and Rochenu were Lefèbvre estates, and a local study of period documents mentions Rochenu as a grange, a cultivation unit, a farm, owned by Joseph Lefèbvre, which was entrusted to a Mr. Claude Bland and later to a Sieur Roux Antoine.

Joseph therefore rented or gave in usufruct an agricultural

property.³⁷ A large property is then found in the commune of Primarette, in Isère: even today, a road marks out a large stretch of cultivated land with a house and a forest in the middle. The owner of this place is André Lefèbvre, *Sieur de Revel*. It does not appear that this also indicates a particular power over the castle of Barbarin or Revel, although usually, that title indicates the possession of an important house or castle.

André-Lefèbvre was 'lord of Revel', a place, like Duchalay, Rochenu (which can be linked to a locality not far from Grenoble) and Hauteville (today Hauteville-Lompnes), a small town about a hundred kilometres from Grenoble where Henry Jean-Baptiste later moved.

Catherine Lefèbvre (1723-1798) who died in Bossin (Isère), where she lived, remained Lefèbvre until the end of her life like all the women in her family. As is known, according to the regulations of the time, females acquired a new name through marriage or otherwise remained in their maiden name, as they could not acquire positions in the royal, central or provincial administration.³⁸ In place of a local lordship, they were settled with a dowry, sum or possession upon marriage. Instead, offices and titles passed to the male lineage.

All of Pierre's sons who had followed their father's career thus bore "surnoms" (as André-Isidore Lefèbvre calls them) of locative type, as origin, and of dignity as cause. Moreover, his nephew André-Isidore, who is very precise about honorary titles

³⁷ Andrée Collion, *Autrefois Primarette. 121 à 1890. Une commune du Viennois*, private edition 2002, p. 60; p. 75; p. 308; p. 318; p. 369.

³⁸ These lands, in the 16th century, were attributed to Ludovico II Marquis of Saluzzo, President of the Senate of Grenoble, and many of them still belonged, two centuries later, to his descendants. Rinaldo Comba, *Ludovico II marchese di Saluzzo. Condottiero, uomo di Stato e mecenate (1475-1504)*. Soc. Studi Stor. Archeologici, Saluzzo 2005.

and offices, wrote in his memoirs about Charles that he belonged to a branch of the Lefèbvre family known at the *time* as 'de Clunière'.³⁹ Does he mean to say that later it was no longer known as such? Pierre Lefèbvre is 'connu sous le nom de Clunière' and worked in Paris at the headquarters of the Ministry of Finance in the same offices in which Henry Lefèvre d'Ormesson had management roles.⁴⁰

This explains the close acquaintances between the Lefèbvre and various important families of the royal administration. André-Isidore's parents had a close friendship with a gentlewoman from the royal circle, Madame Juliette Récamier, whom we will meet again later in our story.

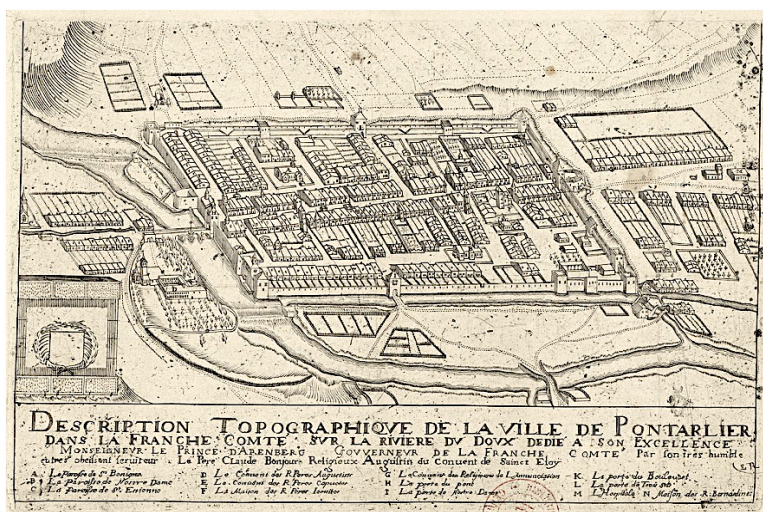
Meanwhile, the new couple formed by Pierre Lefèbvre de Clunière and Gabrielle Françoise Maillard settled in the small town of Pontarlier in Franche-Comté. This town had been important since the Middle Ages as a stop along the Via Francigena and known for its customs post.⁴¹

Pontarlier at that time had only 3,000 souls but was renowned for the production of absinthe, a distillate that was widely consumed until it was banned in 1915. Pierre, a tax collector and controller, moved there in exchange for a more advantageous economic position even though the place was less prestigious than Besançon. In Pontarlier, he was the only person in charge of the office and therefore had the highest executive rank (second level, apparently).

³⁹ AB XIX 4482, vol. IX, p. 271. Charles-Flavien's sons did not use the title 'de Clunière' for over 50 years. This reappeared in use at the end of the 19th century.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ Moreover, one of the meanings of *Maillard*, which originated as a nickname, is 'official in charge of collecting basic taxes'. There were large families of the petty toga nobility especially in the north of the country.



At Charles-Flavien's birth, Pierre is defined in his role as 'receveur du domaine du Roy au Barau de Pontarlier' after his previous position that lasted from 1770 to 1776.⁴² It was at Pontarlier, in a dignified stone house, that the couple's many children were born: some died very young, others lived long lives.⁴³

In 1775, Charles-Flavien, who was to become the most successful member of this family in the 19th century, was born.⁴⁴ The parish register records his birth on 4 April 1775:

⁴² Parish register. Pontarlier. Bapt. N. 1081.

⁴³ S.v. *Carlo Lefèbvre*, in Achille Lauri, *Dizionario dei cittadini notevoli di terra del lavoro*, Forni, (anastatica 2015), Bologna 2012.

⁴⁴ This is the case of Marie-Jacinthe Bonaventure (born and died in 1773), Nicholas-François (born and died in 1777) and Etienne Dominique Hypolite (lived a month and died in the summer of 1784). Municipality of Besançon, Civil Status Offices. François Noël was born and baptised on 18 November 1781. Another son, Charles François Edmond (Ennemond), was born in 1786 and died in 1790.

Charles Flavien fils de Monsieur Pierre le Febvre Clunière [...] et dame Gabrielle François Maillard son épouse [...] est né le quatre avril mille sept cent soixante et quinze et le lendemain a été baptize, son parrain a été monsieur François Bonaventure...⁴⁵

Charles Flavien son of Monsieur Pierre Le Febvre Clunière and [...] of Madame Gabrielle François Maillard, his wife [...] was born on 4 April 1775 and was baptised the next day, his godfather being Monsieur François Bonaventure...

Only a year later, in 1776, Auguste was born, followed by Denise Gabrielle (1779-1822) and François Noël (1781-1850).

In 1786 94-year-old Marie-Anne Sibille Lefèbvre died in Grenoble where she was buried. On 4 May 1790, Denise Monique Flavie was born with a twin brother, who died at the age of 6 on 20 March 1796.⁴⁶ At the birth of these last two children, Gabrielle Maillard was 43 years old.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Parish register. Pontarlier. Bapt. N. 1081. It should be noted meanwhile that the bureaucratic spelling still bore the separation of the article "le" from "Febvre", which would later become one in the name, while the patrician "de" falls away and the name appears completed by a simple "Clunière".

⁴⁶ Not to be confused with Monique Flavie Lefèbvre, Pierre's sister and his survivor, see ADD, Besançon. Sous Series Q 6Q/909. Mutations après décès. No. 250 7 November 1808.

⁴⁷ ADD, Besançon. Sous Series Q 7Q/148. Returning to the meaning of the title 'De Clunière' or 'Clunière' (a locality in the ancient possessions of the Marquises of Saluzzo), it specifically indicated a 'specialised' place in the countryside, marked by a bridge, a mill, an oven or a building with a specific function. Etymology can tell us something about this. The origin of the name Clunière (with or without the accent) seems to be close to that of Cluny (geographically not far from Grenoble) which, like Clunie and Cluney (and the derivative Clunière), are names of Gaelic origin meaning 'field', 'fertile and laughing place' (*Gael*. Cluanag = *irl*. Cluain). They are most common, in various forms,

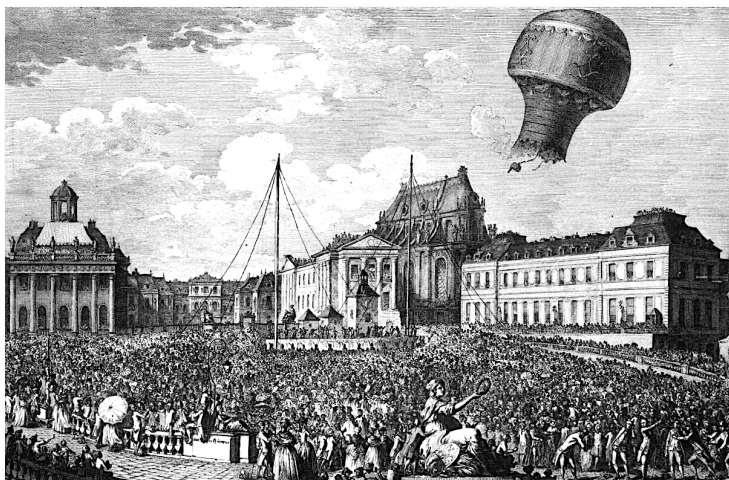
Joseph Lefèbvre at Versailles

As for Joseph Lefèbvre, he married Marie Anne Anselme on 24 May 1775, by whom he had three children: Annette Lefèbvre (1776-1856) born in Paris (Versailles); Honoré Lefèbvre, born in Paris (Versailles) in 1777 and Rosanne Lefèbvre born in Paris (Versailles) on 20 March 1783. The data provided by André-Isidore, which he took from documents he had in his possession and from which he copied, as he repeatedly stated, first of all disprove the claim that Annette and Rosanne were twin sisters, as reported in poorly controlled genealogical directories. On the contrary, Rosanne was a good seven years younger than Annette. In addition, André-Isidore's documents report very interesting news from another point of view: at least two of the three children of Joseph Lefèbvre de Rochenu and Marie Anne Anselme were born in Paris, namely in Versailles. Rosanne was born a few months before the ascent of the first balloon, which took place in the clearing in front of Versailles on 17 September 1783. We can therefore assume that Joseph and Marie Anne Anselme and their young children witnessed the historic event.

The fact that Annette and Rosanne were born in Versailles

in England, Scotland, Ireland, but some occurrence is also found in France where the best known form is that of Cluny, linked to the famous and ancient abbey. In short, Clunière must have been an ancient estate, in all probability fortified, to which a dignity of *noblesse de robe* was attached, expressly destined for the administrators of the state property and the officials of the Grenoble Parliament. A branch of the Lefèbvre family, the one featured in our story, attached itself to the one that stood in the champagne of Poirret, near Grenoble. The other two Clunières are hundreds of miles away and it is not credible that they are connected to them. Henry Harrison, *Surnames of the United Kingdom: A Concise Etymological Dictionary*, The Mobland Press, London 1912-1918 (Repr. 2005), p. 84.

does not seem unimportant, quite the contrary. In Versailles, at that time, there was the grand château and other buildings connected to the château but the present town did not exist. Everything suggests that Joseph's daughters were therefore born *inside the palace* where he occupied a high position at Versailles, in the bureaucracy of the financial administration, at court.



After the Revolution, when many bureaucrats, noble or otherwise, compromised with the Monarchy had to flee, Joseph took refuge in the Dauphiné with his brothers in the aforementioned property they owned in Primarette, La Perrière near Beaurepaire in Isère, where he lived until his death in 1817.

On 26 October 1796, 20-year-old Annette married her cousin Joseph-Isidore Lefèbvre, who was already 37 years old at the time and could offer her a good position. And here we

find some of the secrets of the Lefèbvre's later social rise: the centrality of Paris and family solidarity. Because, if it is true that some, compromised with Louis XVI, had to move away from the capital, as happened to Joseph-Isidore, others, from a later generation, would remain in Paris making a career, with ups and downs, putting down solid roots in the environment of the technical bureaucracy that did not change as regimes changed.

Not only that: the Lefèbvre, a considerably branched family that always had five or six people active in each generation, helped each other. They possessed a very pronounced family or clan solidarity so that no one ever fell socially, as could happen, beyond a certain degree.

This will help them overcome difficulties and assert themselves in the most difficult moments.



Versailles, birthplace of Annette and Marianne Lefèbvre.
Early 19th century.

The village of La Perriere in Primarette, very close to Revel-Tourdan, is still agricultural today. In the oldest houses of the village, the Lefèbvre of various branches were to be found for a few years, sporadically, until the middle of the century.



The hill of La Perrière in Primarette (Isère),
once owned by the Lefèbvre family.

The relations with Paris of these willing high bureaucrats of the Province of Franche-Comté are secure and continuous. On this subject, Françoise Mosser writes in her book on central and provincial public administration, *Les intendants des finances au XVIII^e siècle*:

In charge of important departments, the intendants of finance were very active characters. They ran their offices in Paris, worked with their principal assistants, watched over the affairs of their departments, in Paris or Versailles, met regularly with the controllers-general for a particular job. They had them come to Versailles to attend councils or sit on commissions: and if the king

moved, they were obliged to move at very short notice to get to the place where the court was, or for a council or for work with a minister, and to return to Paris to attend to the affairs of their departments (...) They also kept up a very important correspondence with the various departments of the financial administration and in particular with the intendants of the provinces, whom they received regularly when they came to Paris. They gave them an audience on fixed days.⁴⁸

The provincial intendants with their retinue of lawyers and collaborators had to go to Paris several times a year. This shows how numerous the opportunities must have been for the provincial Lefèvre to get to know the intendants-general, controllers, ministers and even the Lefèvre d'Ormesson who worked in Paris, in Versailles.

⁴⁸ Mosser Françoise, *Les Intendants des Finances au XVIII^e siècle. Les Lefèvre d'Ormesson et le "Département des Impositions (1715-1777)*, Droz, Geneva 1987, p. 226. Translation by me.

Chapter 7

Joseph-Isidore in Paris

Joseph-Isidore had conducted excellent studies in Paris where he had grown up, had then worked as secretary to Count Jean Baptiste Taillepied, Count of Bondy (1741-1821), several times prefect in the central areas of France, Receiver General of Finances before the Revolution.⁴⁹ From 1784 to 1789, he had spent the best years of his life in this position, undoubtedly in the shadow of his uncle who lived in Paris. A young man with a promising career could earn, among other things, very good money. The two Lefèbvres branches that were in Paris were, at the very least, the Rochenu and some of the Revels, to whom various De Clunière brothers such as Auguste and Noël known as Léon were to be added in the late 1780s.

Joseph-Isidore Lefèbvre and his wife Annette Lefèbvre had their first daughter in 1798. Her name was Henriette Azélie and she was born on 30 January of that year. Her brother André-Isidore described her as lively, impulsive and full of talent. He was born the following year, on 3 February 1799, also in Paris. André-Isidore points out that the first link between the Lefèbvre family and a very wealthy and important family, the Récamier, came about thanks to his father who was a friend of Monsieur Jacques-Rose Récamier (1751-1830), the banker who occupied a splendid house in Chaussée d'Antin

⁴⁹ The son of the latter, Pierre-Marie Taillepied, Count of Bondy (1766-1847), became Prefect of the Seine during the Restoration.

(later Mont Blanc, 7). This closeness and friendship had convinced him to rent (or buy, it is unclear) a house with a garden at number 5, right next to Récamier's.

At the time of André-Isidore's writing, these two buildings had already been demolished during Napoleon's urban renewal and later Haussmann's gutting.



Banker Jean Bernard.

So Annette, Rosanne and Juliette had been friends since childhood and had shared spaces and games.⁵⁰ Together they had lived, in constant anxiety, through the days of the Terror. André-Isidore remembers that since Juliette could not be a mother as she had married her own biological father for

⁵⁰ AB XIX 4480, vol. I, p. 18.

reasons of economic convenience, she had become attached to Azélie and himself as if they were substitute children. He remembers that he and his sister were often in her house or in the country house in Clichy, which had a large garden and many fields around it. André-Isidore remembers with nostalgia that time of innocence when he had other children as playmates in those enchanted places. He remembers the Theatre of the Seraphim, the Chinese shadows and the Capuchin Garden later razed to the ground to build Rue de Napoleon. The young Lefèbvre thus grew up with the daughter of the most powerful banker in France at the time.

At that time, Joseph-Isidore also had a beautiful holiday home in Marolles that was frequented by Annette and Rosanne. The siblings stayed there and the father drove back and forth between the countryside and Paris in his shiny *cabriolet* pulled by a horse. Among the elegant young people who frequented the family then were Bérard, heir to a sizeable fortune at 25, and Aurore Leblanc, daughter of a high treasury bureaucrat.

That gilded atmosphere, that sense of power and stability that had been maintained even during the Revolution dissolved in 1805 when several banks failed and the French credit situation plummeted due to Napoleon's long wars and the continental blockade. Thus came the bankruptcy and ruin of the proximal network in which Joseph worked.

The bankruptcy of Récamier, 'a banker renowned for his probity', writes the historian Thiers, 'produced the most terrible sensation', because he succumbed 'more a victim of circumstances than of his financial conduct' (*Histoire du Consulat et de l'Empire*, p. 129). André-Isidore's father, living in his orbit, is dragged into the whirlpool. The reproach that overwhelms Récamier also overwhelms him who is forced to

expatriate 'to seek, on foreign soil, the means of subsistence that he now lacked on his native soil'.⁵¹

Moreover, it appears from André-Isidore's memoirs that his grandfather, André (1719-1817), who died at the age of 98 at the La Perrière estate in Primarette, held important positions at the court of Louis XVI at Versailles and retired to the Dauphiné after the Revolution. After his retirement, he led a provincial life. This is a point to investigate in order to understand the relationship between André Lefèbvre and the Lefèvre d'Ormesson family, whose leading figure in that generation was the very powerful Henry Lefèvre Count d'Ormesson (1751-1808). Incidentally, it was after the death of the latter that André had to leave Paris and the Lefèvre family (in the du Rochenu and de Revel branches, but especially de Clunière) moved to Italy or, at least in part, to the French province

Is there a connection between the 'flight' in 1808 of a family disliked by Napoleon, or at least disgraced for political reasons, and the Lefèvre d'Ormesson family who lost their access to Napoleonic power in that very year? Moreover, in 1808, Henry Lefèvre d'Ormesson also died, who had held important positions for several decades, especially before the Revolution, but retained others afterwards in financial circles.⁵²

⁵¹ AB XIX 4480, vol. I, p. 29.

⁵² Serge de Maistre, *Henri IV d'Ormesson, contrôleur général des finances*, Lacour-Ollé, Nîmes, 2018 .

Chapter 8

A difficult era (1792-1808)

Military adventures: Charles Lefèbvre

The history of the vast Lefèbvre family has its centre in the surviving branch that had remained in the Province after the mid-18th century and would only move to the capital at the end of the century. It is among these Lefèbvre, the 'de Clunière', that a spirit of adaptation and adventure survives that the other branch that will survive the mid-19th century, the Rochenu, had to a lesser extent. The Lefèbvre de Rochenu were destined to become extinct at the end of the 19th century.

Among the Lefèbvre de Clunière family, therefore, the greatest attention should be paid to one character, Charles, born in 1775. After completing his elementary and grammar school studies with a private tutor (there were no schools in Pontarlier), while he was taking his first steps in the family business, the Revolution broke out. In Grenoble, the first signs were seen on 7 June 1788 when a mob attacked Louis XVI's troops in what was remembered as the *Journée des Tuiles*, the day of the tiles. Following the riots, the States General of the Dauphiné were organised on 21 June, considered to be the real start of the Revolution. On that day, it was decided to put an end to the Grenoble Parliament and its royal privileges and the offices of the officials who administered it were abolished. These beginnings, which were intended to put an end to certain privileges and bring certain problems to the attention of the

King, were to take a turn that none of the first rebels would have imagined, sweeping away the whole world they knew in a few months.

The royal counter-move was intended, in essence, to cancel part of the administrative autonomy that was traditionally conferred on that part of France. In the following years, however, characterised by appeals and legal disputes between the central State and the local administration, some of the bureaucrats who formed the backbone of the State in the provinces continued to work as if the Kingdom were to continue. This state of interregnum between the old and the new regime lasted until the period of the Terror, 1793, which inaugurated the cruelly revolutionary and violent season throughout France causing upheaval and the end of many careers. After that year, Pierre moved to Besançon with his wife, where he bought a larger house and raised his younger daughters even after his wife's death in 1795. Apparently, his wealth status – unlike his social status – did not suffer. He was already a pensioner at that time and this pension was probably not revoked.

After Revel, Grenoble and Pontarlier, it was Besançon, therefore, that became the centre of life for this family of the Lefèbvre Clunière branch. Other branches had remained in the Province (Duchalay, Hauteville, and, only in part, Revel) while a conspicuous one had, as we have seen, moved to Paris where it had found solid support. Pierre, after the death of his wife, lived the last 15 years of his life in comfort in Besançon, having severed his ties with Grenoble, which had become an unsafe place for representatives of the former royal administration. From the city, known for its adherence to revolutionary ideals and its 'progressivism', came strongly radical exponents of the revolutionary regime, such as Jean

Joseph Mounier (1758-1806) and Antoine Barnave (1761-1793). The latter, in his political activities, attacked the Monarchy, the institutions, the clergy, the Church but also the provincial parliaments and its officials by threatening them with death.

At the beginning of 1792, thus before the Terror, the young Charles-Flavien Lefèbvre started working in his father's office in Pontarlier, but that employment soon came to an end when a major overhaul of the state machine was announced. It was certainly for this reason that, seeing no future in continuing the family business, certainly not any time soon, Charles enlisted – or was forced to enlist – in the Garde Nationale of Doubs, an inland region of Franche-Comté.

The Garde was a 'bourgeois' militia formed over a period of three years, between 1789 and 1792; it was joined on a voluntary basis but more often by forced conscription.⁵³ We can imagine that at a time when everything seemed questioned, an enterprising young man found in arms and adventure a field of affirmation otherwise denied him. Because of the conscription and his subsequent adventures, Charles was not able to pursue – as far as we know – regular studies. According to Achille Lauri (1884-1965), a 20th-century biographer, the first to attempt a biography of Charles but using scarce and also often inaccurate information, the young man decided to enlist because he was 'dragged along by the political events in France', which suggests necessity of some kind of conscription.⁵⁴ At that time, the family was already living in Besançon and the father was retired. As we have said, his

⁵³ Roger Dupuy, *La Garde nationale, 1789-1872*, Gallimard, Paris 2010.

⁵⁴ Achille Lauri, *Carlo Lefèbvre e l'industria della carta nella Valle del Liri con un'appendice sul castello di Balsorano*, Sora 1910, p. 3.

connections, accumulated savings and possessions had enabled him to maintain a gentlemanly standard of living.

At the age of 18, Charles-Flavien was appointed captain and was engaged in at least one campaign of the battalion commander Charles-Antoine Morand (1771-1835), Napoleon's future aide-de-camp and a native of Pontarlier (according to others of Montbenôit, 14 kilometres north of Pontarlier). He was a distant cousin of Charles on his mother's side of the family, the Maillards. According to Achille Lauri, the young man 'distinguished himself in war campaigns' and during the siege of Mayenne (Maine and Loire) he earned a sabre of honour for his courage.⁵⁵ Lauri provides no further information but, significantly, his words are identical to those reported by André-Isidore Lefèbvre in his unpublished memoirs. The latter, in turn, claims to have learned these facts from the oral accounts of his uncle Charles, who transcribed them in his own hand into a diary, a 'family book'. The source is therefore Charles himself. Lauri claims to have read these facts from this 'big book' in Balsorano before 1910.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.* The term 'honour sabre' denotes a special type of military honour 'out of order' also known as a 'weapon of honour'. These are special weapons that officers or groups of soldiers bestow on a soldier or officer who has distinguished himself or herself for some particular reason or for significant feats of arms. They are characterised by more elegant than average workmanship and high-quality materials. This tradition, once in use in major European or American armies, was lost during the 19th century (also due to the change of equipment) and has now been superseded by the establishment of more 'uniform' orders and decorations such as stelaes, medals, insignia.



General Charles Antoine Morand (1771-1835) was related to the Lefèbvre family on his mother's side, Maillard.

Many catastrophic events occurred at the castle of Balsorano in the first half of the 20th century. In 1915, the castle was severely damaged by an earthquake and fire. In all likelihood it was then that the memoir – certainly a treasure trove of details and memories – was lost.⁵⁶

⁵⁶ No trace of it could be found in any public or private archive between Rome, Sora, Isola del Liri or even in the possession of Charles-Flavien's descendants.

Charles Lefèbvre Captain

Let us now return to the wartime vicissitudes of young Charles-Flavien. According to André-Isidore, Charles, as soon as he enlisted, was immediately appointed captain of a Company of Volunteers from the Doubs, Franche-Comté, in the battalion commanded by Morand. The latter was to become a long-time general of the French armies. At this stage, during the campaign in Germany, he bore a siege from April to 23 July 1793 at Mainz, a siege in which Charles also participated.⁵⁷ His valour in battle earned him the award of the Sabre of Honour, but soon after receiving this honour – we are talking perhaps weeks – he was denounced by a People's Representative named Merlin. Imprisoned, he was taken by force to Besançon to account for his civic conduct to the revolutionary court.

It must all be traced back to the exaggerated atmosphere of the revolutionary period: Charles had probably not fully adapted to the new code of the revolutionary *citoyens*. However, he exonerated himself and was released, writes Lauri, 'by acclamation'. Despite the insistence of his friend Morand, who wanted him at his side in the army, he renounced his military career, probably for a point of honour.⁵⁸

The term Revolutionary Tribunal (Tribunal Révolutionnaire) does not refer to a generic institution but to a tribunal set up in Paris on 10 March 1793 at the behest of Georges Jacques Danton, which up to 31 May 1795 issued over 2,727 death sentences, more than half of the cases it dealt with. But was Charles-Flavien really brought to this Parisian court at the

⁵⁷ AB XIX 4482, VII, p. 47.

⁵⁸ AB XIX 4480-4483, p. 15.

Conciergerie? We don't really know: the use of this specific term would suggest so. Charles belonged to an important family and therefore might not have been tried in Besançon but in Paris, where he could enjoy many supports.⁵⁹ This would explain how he got delicate assignments right away: for the next 13 years he would be a civil administrator of increasing rank. And he would be one of the 40% or so accused who managed to escape a death sentence and an even smaller minority who escaped conviction altogether.

Such episodes of accusations and trials were not uncommon in the revolutionary climate; all it took was for a soldier to refrain from killing someone disliked by the revolutionary commissioners or to show qualms about desecrating a church and risk being denounced as a 'counter-revolutionary'. The episode concerning Charles happened before the middle of the year 1795. That he was still a soldier that year we know this from a certain document: on 26 April 1795 (7 Floral Year III), Charles-Flavien presented himself at the Besançon offices to report the death of his mother, Françoise Gabrielle Maillard, who lived in the town in Rue de la Réunion and died at the age of 48.⁶⁰ On that occasion, he presented himself with the title of Captain of the Grenadiers of the 12th Battalion of the Civil Guard. In the following months, he took leave and, helped by his cousin Joseph-Isidore, moved to Paris.

An uncle of André-Isidore, whose surname was Grand, told his nephew that he had received confirmation of these details from the living voice of the young man's father, Joseph-Isidore, and that of General Morand when the latter lived in

⁵⁹ J. Tulard - J. F. Fayard - A. Fierro, *Dizionario storico della Rivoluzione francese*, transl. It., Ponte alle Grazie, 1989. p. 907.

⁶⁰ Municipality of Besançon, Civil Status Offices. April 1795.

Fontainebleau. Indeed, Grand 'liked to repeat that if he continued his military career he would become a grand marshal of France'. Grand seemed to want to erase a stain in his relative's past, a stain that did not exist.

As we shall see, this accusation was motivated purely by politics: Charles' royalist convictions must have caused him the problems mentioned. It could also have been a religious gesture, a sentence concerning the King, something that cast doubt on his loyalty as a revolutionary. That Charles' ideology was never Jacobin or republican we know for sure; in any case, he decided to end his military career by avoiding the stigma of expulsion.

Around the age of 20, Charles moved to Paris where he could count on a network of important contacts and relatives. He was placed under the protection of his uncle Joseph-Isidore Lefèvre (1759-1838), 17 years older and already an expert in the world of finance and bureaucracy.

Chapter 9

Rue du Mont Blanc

To understand the concealed kinship of the Lefèbvre de Clunière family, we need to go back and study their life in Paris between the Revolution and the early Empire, and in particular the lives of the two branches Clunière and Rochenu. As we know, for some 30 years, several members of the Lefèbvre family of the Rochenu and Revel branches had moved to Paris. Their documented knowledge of the central administration leaves open the hypothesis that these two Lefèbvre branches, after a process of provincialisation due to the positions they held in Franche-Comté and the Dauphiné and especially in the Grenoble area, returned to Paris. In other words, it was quite common in families engaged in civil administration (and also in military administration and diplomacy, in truth) that after long-term, even multi-generational posts in the provinces, they might return to the centre of the kingdom where decisions about their fate were taken and from where they probably came. Some of Charles-Flavien's cousins were born in the capital around the 1770s and 1780s: the complete genealogy shows some births in Paris. Above all, it is the proximity to the banker Bernard that gives one pause for thought, to say nothing of the probable cousinship with the Lefèvre d'Ormesson family who had worked for centuries in the same Versailles quarters where the offices of the financial administration and taxes were located.

Uncle Joseph-Isidore was prodigal with advice and also

generous in providing contacts for young Charles-Flavien. Joseph worked in subsistence administration and was well-connected in financial and governmental circles in the capital. Thus he introduced the young man to the former bureaucrat and banker Jean Bernard (?-1828). Significantly, one of Charles-Flavien's brothers, Jean-François Lefèvre, was already working in the same circles crowded with royal bureaucrats whose expertise was also used in the Napoleonic administration. When Jean-François' tenure began we do not know exactly, but certainly after the Revolution and at the end of the 18th century.



Madame Récamier

Jeanne-Françoise Julie Adélaïde Bernard, better known as Madame Récamier, born in 1777 in Lyon, knew the Lefèvre family because they were in the same branch in which her natural father, Jean, manager of the royal finances and high bureaucrat in the tax administration, worked. Joseph-Isidore worked for them, as well as living nearby, which explains, as we have seen, why the Clunière family also went to live there.

Although still rich, Bernard had fallen from favour in 1789 and what many thought was his daughter, Juliette, had been given in marriage to the banker Jacques Rose Récamier (1751-1830), 26 years his senior. Who was, in fact, her real father. Using the cover of marriage – she had been born out of an affair with the banker Bernard's wife, Julie Matton – the girl received her considerable wealth. Bernard in 1798 had bought two large buildings in the Rue du Mont Blanc, formerly owned by Jacques Necker (1732-1804), Louis XVI's finance minister, who was also replaced in the last revolutionary phase by Lefèvre d'Ormesson.



L'hôtel de Montmorency, rue de la Chaussée d'Antin then Rue du Mont Blanc before the mid-18th century.

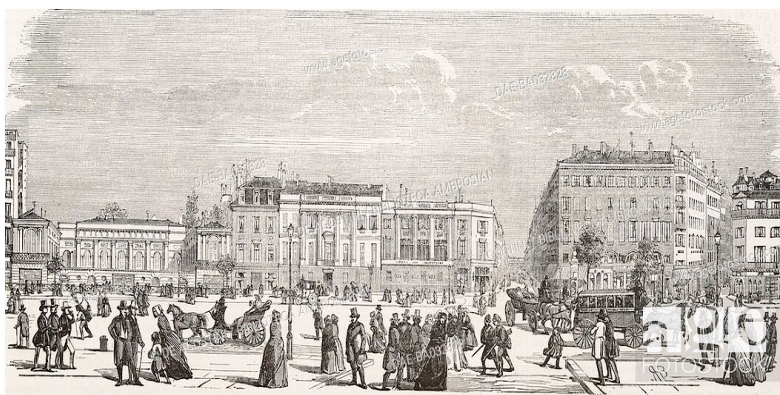
Palais Necker no longer exists today. It was built in 1775 in the street called *Chaussée d'Antin* and later *Mont Blanc*, by the architect Mathurin Cherpitel (1736-1809), in a quiet street, surrounded by gardens and prestigious houses, close to the Montmorency mansion.

The Neckers added another house overlooking a street that led in a *cul-de-sac* to the *Basse-du-Rempart* street. They sold everything in 1798, as mentioned, to Jacques-Rose Récamier. Later the property passed to the banker François Mosselman. The name *Rue du Mont Blanc* was given to the street during the Napoleonic period, but the definitive building transformation came much later than the mid-19th century.

La grand dame

The young woman, beautiful, admired, cultured and a great conversationalist, also enjoyed great wealth from her mother, the daughter of a Parisian banker.⁶¹

⁶¹ AB XIX 4481, vol. V, *passim* pp. 111-207, a vivid and documented account from the pen of André-Isidore Lefèvre in which the memoirist probably reported first-hand accounts heard from those who had known Récamier well, may be useful. A still interesting intellectual biography of the woman is Édouard Herriot, *Madame Récamier et ses amis*, Plon-Nourrit, Paris 1909; while a recent summary biographical study is Françoise Wagener, *Madame Récamier 1777-1848*, Flammarion, Paris 2001 (1990).



Rue Chaussée d'Antin, 1845. At this time it had taken on the appearance that the Lefèbvre family saw. The houses in which the Lefèbvre families lived were those on the left.

With her cordiality and her ability to understand which forms of culture were the most suitable of the period, which artists and poets and men of letters had a future, she succeeded in making her house the centre of Parisian taste and culture of the time. It was she who brought together the *gallant society* in the most important *salon* in Paris at the time, heir to the many 16th- and 17th-century salons recounted by Benedetta Craveri in *La civiltà della conversazione*, in which careers and marriages, misfortunes and fortunes, were decided during the Ancien Régime. In that place, where financiers, nobles, politicians, writers and artists met, the art of the Directory and the Empire style was forged. It was located right next to the Lefèbvre residence on Rue du Mont Blanc. The former home of Minister Jacques Necker, after its purchase, was decorated by architect Louis-Martin Berthault, who was among the creators of the Empire style and 'étrusque' furniture and accessories. Récamier herself dressed 'à la grecque', spreading the fashion of antiquity that was part of the cultural policy of the new Napoleonic Caesarism.



Madame Récamier portrayed by François Gérard in 1805.
Carnavalet Museum, Paris.

The year 1800 marked the apogee of Jacques Récamier, appointed Régent de la Banque de France. Soon afterwards, both he and the other former royalists who frequented the salon (such as Adrien de Montmorency) fell into disgrace.

Napoleon had been crowned emperor in December of that same year and had begun to view those who sympathised with the Bourbon dynasty with suspicion. La Récamier was officially

disgraced for having refused four times to accept a position as lady-in-waiting at Napoleon's court and this was considered an offence by the man who had wrested the iron crown, which had been Charlemagne's, from the hands of the Pope.

For about 12 years the *salon* of Madame Récamier remained the social centre of Paris, where business friendships were forged, political alliances made and marriages arranged. Pierre's sons and grandsons took advantage of this by forming friendships that would serve them well throughout their lives.

And here one observes, in the Lefèbvre family, a behaviour characteristic of family groups that ascend and tend to become dynasties: the ability to create lasting ties with high-ranking circles, to transmit the value of important relationships also to their children. It will be Charles-Flavien in particular who will treasure this social ability. We know that, among others, the *salon* was frequented by Pierre Lagard, with whom a Lefèbvre worked for a long time, and by the Marquis Raigecourt whose son years later married Charles Lefèbvre's daughter. Already lively and admired was the teenage Germaine Necker, daughter of Necker, the future Madame de Staël.

The environment that counted, in the Paris of the time (a city of around 500,000 inhabitants), was rather small if measured by today's yardstick, because small was the world of the nobility and high bureaucracy. The Lefèbvre family managed to enter with skill and *savoir-faire* right into the heart of that world of which they had hitherto been provincial exponents. Sisters Marie Anne and Rosanne Lefèbvre became close friends with Madame Récamier.⁶²

⁶² In addition to these two daughters, Lefèbvre 'de Rochenu' also had a son from his wife, Auguste Lefèbvre, who died while still young in 1826 in Perrière. AB XIX 4481, vol. VI, p. 42.

La Caisse du Comptes Courants (1796-1800)

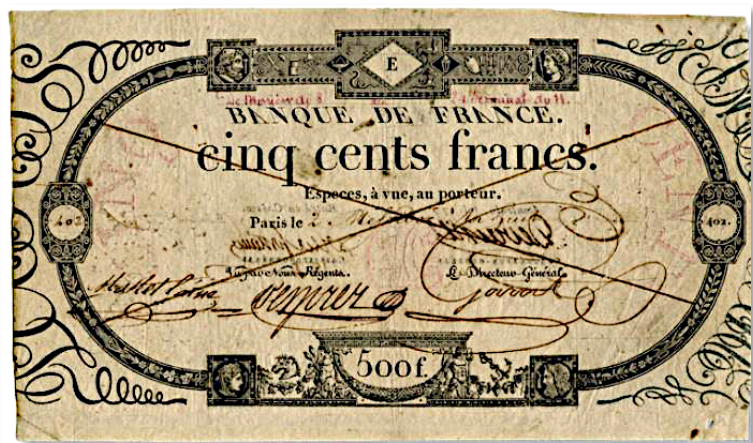
The strategic proximity between House Lefèbvre and House Bernard-Récamier was important in building the family fortune. But there is another aspect that needs to be considered: the Lefèbvre of the generation following Pierre acquired valuable relations in Paris and the opportunity to make use of opportunities, important and lucrative assignments. Was it just a question of relationships and friendships? Certainly these were important but, besides friendship, there was probably more: business.

A study by Louis Bergeron, which reconstructs the events of a financial institution called Caisse du Comptes Courants, founded on 11 Messidor IV (28 June 1796) by Augustin Monneron and Jean Godard, names among the 75 shareholders, who over the course of about 4 years collected a capital of 5 million gold francs, a certain 'Lefèbvre', who is not qualified as D'Ormesson.⁶³

This group of 75 shareholders, Bergeron writes, constituted a privileged elite that operated with confidentiality. Among them was Récamier, who held 10 shares of 5,000 francs each and became one of the people in charge of managing the bank. This first company, which lasted until the 10th snow of the year VII (30 December 1798), was followed by a second company and all these subscriptions flowed into the new Banque de France founded in January 1800 at Napoleon's behest. The state of the documents makes it impossible to know how much this 'L. Lefèbvre' had invested. Not all subscribers are reported as having invested. Bergeron makes it

⁶³ Louis Bergeron, *Banquiers, négociants et manufacturiers parisiens du Directoire à l'Empire*, Éditions EHESS, Paris (1978) 1999, pp. 87-119.

clear that he did not know who he was. That is, he was not a known Lefèbvre: for example, he was not General Charles Lefèbvre Desnouette, nor was he a Lefèvre d'Ormesson.



Was he therefore a Lefèbvre from the family whose story is told in this book? Many circumstances lead one to speculate: the central role of Récamier, who lived in the Rue du Mont Blanc like the Lefèbvre family; the fact that the Lefèbvre are attributed banking or financial activities and that they frequented Récamier and Bernard; and the fact that this 'L. Lefèbvre' could be the very François Noël Lefèbvre known to all, and for all his life, as Léon, who would go on to have a career in the central administration and who showed himself, from a very young age, to be able and courageous. The fact that he was 17 years old at the time does not seem to be an obstacle since administrative positions could be taken at that age. For example, Henri Lefèvre d'Ormesson, bachelor in law, was appointed councillor in the Paris Parliament on 4 July 1768 at the age of 17.⁶⁴

This clue, therefore, would explain how it was possible for the Lefèbvre family to quickly become part of the banking elite in late 18th century Paris and how this activity continued, for Charles, in Naples. But it still does not explain how they came to be related to the great nobility of French and Italian blood; Charles became, as we shall see, an economic and even financial advisor to the Kings of Naples and an intimate of the banking family par excellence of the modern era, the Rothschilds. The latter began to intervene, with loans to the protagonists of European politics of the time, right in the middle of the Napoleonic wars, and a particularly important year seems to have been 1805-1806.⁶⁵

⁶⁴ Serge de Maistre, *Henry IV d'Ormesson*, éd. Lacour, 2018, p.27.

⁶⁵ Niall Fergusson, *The House of Rothschild. Money's Prophets* (1798-1848), Penguin London pp. 64-80.

Chapter 10

The year 1805

After 1798 there remained another bank owned by a person very close to the Lefèbvre family who played an important role in all the affairs of the Caisse du Compte Courants and also in the foundation of the Banque de France. He was that Jacques Récamier who, in 1798, became one of the architects of the Napoleonic banking system. At the end of 1798 he founded with Alexandre Barrillon (1762-1817) the bank called Syndicat du Commerce, also based in Rue du Mon Blanc. In addition, Barillon and Récamier became suppliers to the French armies. Together with other important figures in March 1800, he was the animator of the 'Négociants réunis' initiative (and others like it), which aimed to finance the armies of the Rhine and Italy. From December 1800, operationally from January 1801, he was the director of the Bank of France, a post he occupied until 17 October 1806 in the aftermath of the Battle of Jena (15 October 1806) when Napoleon inflicted a major defeat on the German troops and shortly afterwards (21 November) decreed the Continental Blockade.

In 1805, for various reasons, his personal bank, the Récamier Bank, began to get into difficulties. In all likelihood, one of the reasons was exposures to English bankers or merchants, with whom it had become impossible to continue relations. This was also the period of the most assiduous acquaintance between the Récamier and the Lefèbvre, which began in 1798 and ended in 1811, when Juliette had to leave

Paris to take refuge in the province of Châlons-sur-Marne with Marie Joséphine Cyvoct.⁶⁶

Although we have not yet found any documents that can describe the Lefèbvre's activity in these years, we do know that they became suppliers to the army of Italy, evidently employed or commissioned by Récamier and Barillon. The younger Lefèbvre, Charles-Flavien, his brothers and cousins, began this activity from at least 1796, strengthening it after Récamier's fall from favour and the move from Rue du Mont Blanc to the much more modest flat at 12 Rue Menars. Meanwhile, Azélie Lefèbvre was being educated in a religious institute in Rue Barbette.⁶⁷

Naples 1799-1806

Shortly before General Jean Étienne Championnet (1762-1800) entered Naples, an insurgent brigand nicknamed Fra' Diavolo had led an uprising, been captured and then executed in the public square. It had happened on 3 November 1799. This fact had taught the French plenipotentiary that not all the inhabitants of that city had accepted the liberators, as they liked to call themselves, with open arms. That seaside metropolis, refined and wild at the same time, continued to arouse opposing feelings of fear and fascination.

⁶⁶ The young Marie Joséphine Cyvoct was to become his adopted daughter. André-Isidore Lefèbvre's sister Annette was also very close to Récamier and it was she who gave her brother the news of her death in 1849, AB XIX 4481, vol. IV, p. 55. Marie-Josephine's sister – Amélie Lénormant Cyvoct – who wrote a biography of Récamier, was to be one of the closest friends of Flavia Lefèbvre, Charles' daughter.

⁶⁷ BNF, AB XIX 4480, I, p. 25.

The place that would be the scene of the Lefèbvre family's life for a whole century had been in a period of dramatic political convulsions for a decade. It had all begun with the flight of Ferdinand IV of Bourbon on 22 January 1799, and the establishment of a republican regime inspired by the principles of the French Revolution: the Neapolitan Republic. The Republic, proclaimed by the Campanian Jacobins, anticipated the French who aimed to establish an occupation government in the Neapolitan area. When he entered the city, General Jean Étienne Championnet approved what the 'patriots' had done, recognising the pharmacist Charles Lauberg as the legitimate head of the Republic. He, together with Eleonora Pimentel Fonseca, founded the revolutionary propaganda newspaper *Monitore Napoletano*, which celebrated the advent of an era of freedom and equality. Lauberg was an Italian born in Teano, the son of a Walloon who had served in the Bourbon army, and was a chemist by profession.⁶⁸ Forced to flee Naples in 1794 and repaired to Oneglia, which had been conquered by the French and where revolutionary commissioner Filippo Buonarroti was serving, he enlisted in the Sanità militare. He then went down to Italy with the Napoleonic army and on 23 January 1799, by decree of Championnet, was appointed president of the provisional and constituent government of the Neapolitan Republic. Like many exiles who had returned home, he too showed excessive harshness against his compatriots and so, because of this, he was replaced on 25 February 1799 by the moderate Ignazio Ciaia. Afterwards, he went to France, took the name Charles Jean Laubert, and

⁶⁸ His Academy of Chemistry in Naples turned into a sort of Jacobin club frequented by pro-Republican students. An open Freemason, he founded the 'Patriotic Society' or 'Jacobin Society of Naples' with other lodge brothers.

continued to work as a chemist.

The republican government sent its representatives (the so-called 'Neapolitan deputation') to the Directory in Paris. Among its first proposals, included in the *General Instructions*, were the 'subversion of feudalism' and the Jansenist-inspired project to create a national church independent of Rome. Everything, however, remained in the state of the first organisation because on 13 June 1799, those who rebelled against the French Revolution exported to Naples, and in particular the so-called Sanfedist Army, which had a substantial popular base and was led by Cardinal Fabrizio Ruffo (1744-1827), reconquered the Mezzogiorno, returning much of the territory to the monarchy of the Bourbons, who had meanwhile taken refuge in Palermo.⁶⁹

After this reconquest, the Bourbons prudently remained in the Sicilian capital and even the Secretariat of Foreign Affairs, headed by John Acton (1736-1811), remained in Palermo. However, they set up some administrative bodies in Naples. At the end of the summer, the government of Naples was entrusted by Ferdinand IV to Cardinal Ruffo, who held the office of lieutenant and captain-general of the Kingdom of Citerranean Sicily. On 27 September 1799, the Bourbons conquered Rome, ending the Roman Republic and returning the Pope. But the peace did not last long: less than two years later, in an attempt to stop the French advance and secure the Kingdom's northern borders, the Bourbons were defeated at Siena by General Joachim Murat (1767-1815). This was followed by the armistice of Foligno (18 February 1801) and the Peace of Florence between the Bourbons and Napoleon,

⁶⁹ The most up-to-date study on this character is by Massimo Viglione, *La Vandea italiana*, Effedieffe, Milan 1995.

which led to the release of many of the approximately 1,300 Jacobins imprisoned in Naples.⁷⁰ In the aftermath of the Peace of Amiens (1802), the Bourbon court settled again in Naples. Less than three years later, under the impetus of Naples' aggressively expansive military policy, the French returned to the slopes of Vesuvius and occupied the Kingdom: it was the end of 1805.

The plenipotentiary appointed by Napoleon was Joseph Bonaparte (1768-1844), who entered the city on 14 February 1806, welcomed with hostility by the population. While he awaited his appointment as King, he created a moderate government, according to Napoleon's directives, while Louis Saliceti (1757-1809), an old Jacobin, was appointed to reorganise the police and General Regnier crushed an Anglo-Bourbon insurrection in Sicily. Joseph Bonaparte did his best: he organised the territory according to the French model, dividing it into provinces, districts and communities. He appoints a Council of State with an advisory role, consisting of 36 members appointed by the monarch; he separates the royal treasury from the state; he expropriates monastic property and relaxes taxation. He intends to abolish the remnants of feudal taxation but has little chance of enforcing these laws as he would need a lot of time, which he will not be granted. He also introduces some elements of modernity in the judicial system, which will persist, by instituting the Code Napoleon. His intervention in the school system is directed towards the foundation of special schools with a technical orientation. In Naples, he began a number of important works:

⁷⁰ Of these, 124 were sentenced to death, including Pagano, Fonseca, Pasquale Baffi, Domenico Cirillo, Giuseppe Leonardo Albanese, Ignazio Ciaia, Luisa Sanfelice and Michele Granata. But not all of them were executed.

he demolished a suburb of mediaeval houses in front of the Royal Palace to create a large symbolic space, a space of power but also of hygiene; he also continued the city artery of Via Toledo, proceeding, with other minor works, to redevelopment. Renovation that did not always bring benefits, if it is true that the new quarters, not respecting the slope that allowed the sewage to drain, caused problems that the city would later suffer with serious sanitary crises and cholera epidemics.⁷¹ However, he began to improve the suburban road system by inaugurating the construction of the Ottaviano and Poggioreale roads and the road to Calabrie.⁷² The Council of Civil Buildings (16 October 1816) was responsible for building cemeteries, promenades, public buildings and monuments. Corso Napoleone was built and the Capodichino hill was flattened where the city's Campo di Marte was created, suitable for military parades and war exercises.⁷³

After the Peace of Tilsit he was appointed King of Naples and no longer of the Two Sicilies. In December 1807, after the British proclaimed the continental blockade, Napoleon planned the Spanish expedition to put Joseph on the throne of Madrid. At that point, Napoleon's brother reluctantly left Naples. On 31 July 1808 Napoleon succeeded him as Joachim Murat (1808-1815), who was above all a military man by training and temperament.

During these years, while more than half of the Peninsula

⁷¹ Silvana Bartoletto, *La città che cambia. La trasformazione urbana della Napoli preunitaria (1815-1860)*, Edizioni scientifiche italiane, Naples 2000, pp. 40-41.

⁷² A. Bulgarelli Lukacs, *Rete stradale ed opere pubbliche durante il decennio francese in un inedito rapporto di Pietro Colletta*, in 'Archivio storico per le province napoletane', III, s. a XVIII 1979.

⁷³ Gino Doria, *Murat re di Napoli*, Grimaldi & C., Cava dei Tirreni 1966, pp. 71-72.

was conquered and then controlled by Napoleon directly or with governments established by him, and the other half was entrusted to the Emperor's brother-in-law, the Lefèbvre adventures in Italy began.

Chapter 11

Naples

Charles-Flavien in the Kingdom of Naples

According to the recollections of his nephew André-Isidore, Charles-Flavien had an elegant bearing, could speak, was intelligent, resourceful and courageous. In addition, his family had built up a network of relations such that he was able to obtain and maintain a civilian post 'in the administration of the subsistence of the armies'. Part of this network of relations was family-based and some links in this network we know: they led to other branches of Lefèbvre that had moved before the mid-18th century to Versailles and Paris and had played a part, as we have seen, in the pre-revolutionary and even Napoleonic financial world.

Based on these experiences and networks, André-Isidore Lefèbvre tells us, Charles 'was sent on an important mission to Venice' where he stayed 'for a long time', at least two or three years.⁷⁴ About his Venetian activities we unfortunately know very little. We do know, however, that during this period he was among the army's subsistence suppliers, which explains why he does not appear in the ranks of Murat's army and administration. His was in fact a private assignment, a consultancy of a private nature. Moreover, his brother François-Noël, known as 'Léon' (1781-1850), who worked in

⁷⁴ AB XIX 4480-4483, Fonds André-Isidore Lefèbvre. Livre Premier 1680 à 1822.

the police office of the occupying army from 1806, would be active in the lagoon city in the following years. The two had taken different paths, although they both worked for the French armies. Léon began his work in Venice when Charles was already in Naples. At different times, the two found themselves in Venice probably with the same people.

The years from 1797 to 1804 are the least known period of Charles' life. We know that he lived in Venice for a long time, from the spring-summer of 1797, returning often to Paris. He also travelled to Naples, Bari, Foggia and Lecce. As a supplier to the armed forces specialising in materials for hospitals (gauze, bandages, medicinal powders, syrups, herbs, plasters, medicines and also medical tools such as pliers, scissors, and instruments for field hospitals), he frequently travelled to the places where the most important quartering positions were established and there organised supplies in cooperation with the military.⁷⁵ At first, Charles followed the Revolutionary Army commanded by Napoleon, which advanced, city after city, until the capitulation of the Serenissima on 12 May 1797. The great army needed civilian *fournisseurs*, agents who, like Charles, bought on the market at the best price.

After 1804, when the revolutionary army had transformed into the Napoleonic Grand Armée, Charles shifted his interests to the capital of the then Kingdom of Naples. He arrived at a crucial moment when, at the fall of Ferdinand IV, the so-called French Decade (lasting from the occupation of 1805 to the fall of Murat in 1815) began under the regimes of Joseph Napoleon

⁷⁵ That he was a private contractor and not attached to the army is shown by the fact that his name does not appear in the works that list all military officials in the army, like that of Virgilio Ilari Virgilio Ilari - Piero Crociani - Giancarlo Boeri, *Storia Militare del Regno Murattiano (1806-1815)*, Widerholdt Frères, Novara 2007.

(1806-1808) and Joachim Murat. In Naples, Charles arrived with the French troops and stayed throughout the Murat period. In 1804 – presumably thanks to Récamier – he met Jean-André-Jean Vauchelle (1779-1860), Commissioner of War for the occupying troops, with whom he formed a friendship that was to last a long time. Vauchelle is a constant presence in André-Isidore's diaries and it was he who believed in Charles' abilities to the extent that he entrusted him with increasingly important tasks.⁷⁶

Between 1804 and 1805, Charles resided in Naples in a territory first at war and then almost pacified, but by force. His work was well remunerated, according to his nephew André-Isidore, also because it was very risky: it allowed excellent commissions. The nephew gives the impression that he knows but does not know everything. Some of Charles Lefèbvre's missions must have been of a very confidential nature, the kind that probably leave no trace in documents.

At the same time, Joseph-Isidore also came into Vauchelle's confidence. Charles had a brotherly feeling for this cousin that was fully reciprocated.⁷⁷ During the years when Charles travelled between Venice, Northern Italy and Naples, Joseph-Isidore remained in Paris.

In 1805, from a simple 'fournisseur' of the French armies, Charles-Flavien became 'chef de service de subsistances militaires à l'armée de Naples', a senior manager of the subsistence services. It was thanks to this development that he moved into a flat in the great Palace of Calabritto, where

⁷⁶ AB XIX 4481, vol. IV, p. 156. J-A. Vauchelle was to write a *Cours élémentaire d'administration militaire*, (Dauphine, Paris 1829) in several tomes that was to be very successful. He continued his career under successive regimes and was awarded the Legion of Honour in 1847.

⁷⁷ AB XIX 4481, vol. IV, p. 157.

Joseph Bonaparte's administration had settled and where Joachim Murat's would also settle. The detail is not of secondary importance: in that palace, where Charle Lefèbvre lived, there was, in fact, the Murat court in Naples.

The palace had belonged to the French Estouteville family, who had resided in Naples for several centuries and had Italianised as Tuttavilla. The choice of this palace also had a symbolic meaning: it belonged to Frenchmen who had made their fortune there. The palace, at the time, stood a short distance from the Chiaia shore, with its clear sandy shore, and was laid out with an elegant tree-lined promenade in 1809.

Charles managed many men under him, organised trips throughout Southern Italy as far as Calabria and Sicily still ravaged by wars and revolts. He was contracted to supply basic necessities, but at that time he was also supplying the hospitals that Napoleon's armies had installed south of Naples.



Calabritto Palace at the end of the 18th century.

From reading André-Isidore's family history, we learn that in 1805 Charles wrote a letter to Joseph-Isidore in which he extolled the opportunities that Italy could offer to the enterprising and the willing. So the latter began to think about joining his own fortune to that of his cousin. The starting date of his cousin's work is 26 October 1805, as we already know, and it is not a coincidental time: in the previous months, in fact, several banks had failed in Paris so that the network of friendships and protections that existed around Joseph-Isidore had crumbled. In 1805, Henry Lefèvre d'Ormesson (1851-1808) was also removed from office, so the dates do not appear coincidental. Especially if we consider that the exodus of the

Lefèbvre family to Naples took place immediately after their death in Paris on 12 April 1808.

The crisis at Jacques-Rose Récamier's bank, which had started in early 1805, had proved very serious, a crisis that led to the bankruptcy of the institution in the autumn of that year. Récamier decided to expatriate, and in fact remained outside France for several years. In 1811, Juliette also went into exile and never returned to live permanently in France, preferring Switzerland. During this difficult period, among those closest to her were Rosanne and Annette Lefèbvre, Joseph-Isidore's wife.⁷⁸ We know that the latter had found himself out of work as he was working as a senior clerk at Banque Récamier, and that he finally decided to follow his cousin to Italy. It was a journey undertaken out of necessity at the no longer green age, especially for that time, of 46, in an entirely new environment. The adventure he was embarking on was more suited to young people, and in fact Charles-Flavien was a good 18 years younger than him.

Joseph-Isidore's wife, Marie Anne Lefèbvre (Annette), was born in Paris in 1776. The two were married in Viénne (Isère) on 20 October 1796.⁷⁹ While her husband left for Italy, Annette stayed in Paris with her sister Rosanne and their children, André-Isidore (1799-1887) and Azélie (1798-1850).⁸⁰ Her sister Rosanne was then the fiancée of Charles-Flavien whose memory, her cousin writes, she lovingly kept in

⁷⁸ AB XIX 4482, vol. VII, p. 39.

⁷⁹ AB XIX 4482, vol. VII, p. 38.

⁸⁰ AB XIX 4480, vol. III, p. 213. Here André-Isidore specifies that he was born on the 15th of February, Year II, i.e. 3 February 1799 in Paris. And he specifies that Léon Lefèbvre is Charles Lefèbvre's brother. Azélie was born in 1798 and died at the age of 52, on 5 February 1850, AB XIX 4481, vol. V, p. 81.

her heart. The fact that the two were born in Paris to Joseph Lefèbvre de Rochenu (1733-1817) shows that he, like Joseph Isidore Lefèbvre du Revel, had moved to the capital well before the Revolution. And that, considering his residence in the Rue du Mont blanc, he was very close to the capital's most exclusive financial circles. What, however, his closeness to the Lefèvre d'Ormesson, if any, was, apart from his professional one, is not yet known.

1808: Pierre Lefèbvre dies

Before returning to the events surrounding Charles-Flavien, it is worth recalling what happened in 1808. In that year, old Pierre Lefèbvre, the patriarch, died and remained in the province, in Besançon.⁸¹ Everything suggests that he divided his inheritance as he felt close to death: in fact, not even a month passed between his last autograph deed of 20 April and his death on 16 May 1808. According to the civil register, the elderly parent lived in the large house at Rue Neuve 4 in Besançon, the same street where the writer Charles Nodier (1780-1844), after whom the street is now named, was born and grew up. The brothers called upon to divide the inheritance were François-Noël, who was at the time on a mission to Venice; Jean-François, who lived in Paris; Charles-Flavien, on a mission to Naples; Françoise Gabrielle, married Grand, who lived in Besançon and, finally, the young *demoiselle* Denise

⁸¹ These documents were transcribed in the memoirs of André-Isidore Lefèbvre and were later recovered between 2009 and 2010 and then in 2012 in the course of archival research that corroborates the accuracy of the ancient family historiographer on whose reliability we will have many opportunities to confirm.

Monique Flavie (1790-1863). Another brother, Auguste (1776-1830), is not named in the deed: he had probably been liquidated in some other way of his inheritance. As for 18-year-old Denise Monique Flavie, she took part in the division of assets but under the guardianship of her sister Françoise-Gabrielle because she was still a minor. Only the two women were therefore present at the reading because the brothers were all away.

It appears from these documents that Pierre had provided for the settlement of the children's share of the inheritance that belonged to their mother's estate. In 1808, however, they received the liquid sum – not modest at the time – of 12,000 gold francs each. With that amount, one could buy a house, even if it was not a large one, or secure an income that would allow one to live in dignity. On 1 August 1808, an inventory of the goods contained in the man's house was compiled. This document clearly mentions all five living children, the three sons, Jean-François, François-Noël and Charles-Flavien, and the two daughters, Denise Françoise-Gabrielle and Monique-Flavie.⁸²

In June, the brothers received their father's share of the inheritance: Jean-François in Paris and Charles-Flavien in Naples before Etienne Framery, in his capacity as Imperial Vice Consul of the Consulate General in Naples.⁸³ Once again, there is no mention of Auguste, who was perhaps separately liquidated with the ownership of a house. He was, after all, a

⁸² ADD, Besançon. Sous Serie 3 E 1/31 du 20 juin 1807; 1/31 du 14 septembre 1807; 1/31 du 20 avril 1808. ADD, Besançon. Sous Series 3E - 1/35 du 19 août 1808. Inventaire au domicile de M. Pierre Lefèvre.

⁸³ ADD, Besançon. Sous Series 3E - 1/35 du 6 juin 1808. Procuration; ADD, Besançon. Sous Series 3E - 1/35 du 11 juin 1808. Procuration.

difficult character and had developed ideas and a different lifestyle from his brothers. He was an original, a protester, a free thinker and an atheist, unlike his relatives, who were fervent Catholics. It is therefore possible that he was at odds, for some reason, with the family.

The difficulties of Joseph-Isidore

In the pages in which André-Isidore writes this news, drawing on his father's *Journal de Voyage*, he reminds us – *en passant* – that his father, on his way down to Italy, had stopped to visit some uncles, his father's brothers: Maximilien and Alxandrine, who resided in Saint-Symphorien, in Rével, in La Perrière. He then made a long stop in Milan where he stayed for a few weeks, coming into contact with the rich colony of French people, and there he was joined by the news of the birth of his third daughter, Jeanne Ernestine, on 12 December 1805. He was also joined by Marcel Duval, who warned him that the Récamier bank was totally bankrupt and that he could no longer count on it to work. On 16 February 1806 in Florence, he met Dareste, his friend and distant relative, whom we will meet again later in our story, and he was comforted by a letter he received from Perrière in which his uncle, known by the nickname 'Hauteville', encouraged him to be strong.

He then left for Naples where he was met by Charles-Flavien who had the opportunity to explain to him in detail the nature of the job he had proposed to him: to supply the troops with medical supplies in the territories south of Naples. It was not a desk job, far from it: it involved uncomfortable and dangerous journeys on horseback or by carriage in hostile territories. At that time, what was already called 'brigandage'

was very active, but was in fact Sanfedismo, the resistance to the anti-monarchical and anti-religious policies of the French. Alongside this was the common banditry.

Joseph-Isidore left Naples after a few weeks' stop heading south, probably in the company of other men, with wagons and soldiers in tow. He was weaker and less resolute than Charles, but also considerably older: at the time of these first journeys, as mentioned, he was already 46 years old. He had had to accept that job out of necessity, but he began to hate it right from the start and entrusted his own difficulties to a diary, which unfortunately has only come down to us in small part through his son's entries.

André-Isidore, who read his father's first notes written in the summer of 1806, describes his state of deep fatigue and various difficulties. Accustomed to Parisian life and quiet work, the man did not adapt to that hard life in the torrid climate of southern Italy. He went through a deep crisis in August and began to meditate about leaving the job: he was not cut out for it, he felt tired and psychologically prostrated. André-Jean Vauchelle, a long-time family friend, accompanied him on some of these trips. His presence also explains why Joseph-Isidore allowed himself to be persuaded by Charles: Vauchelle was an important member of the French bureaucracy, whose expertise was used by several regimes; his friendship guaranteed secure employment in Italy and France.

Joseph-Isidore tried to hold on. His travels, based in Naples, continued for another year and a half between the summer of 1806 and the early months of 1808. In the meantime, his son André-Isidore had fallen ill, probably of a lung disease judging by the treatment he was given: thermal baths in a resort in the centre of France where he stayed throughout the summer of 1807 with his mother Annette. Among other stops, the two had

visited Anne-Louise Germaine Necker, Baroness of Staël-Holstein, who had decided to live in exile in Coppet, near Geneva, and called herself Madame de Staël (1766-1817). She was a great celebrity of the time and her *salon in* Geneva was then the centre of the European Romantic movement. When the Lefèbvre visited her, Juliette Récamier was present. This confirms the high level of the Lefèbvre circle's frequentations; Madame de Staël was one of the most prominent figures in the cultural life of the time, inspiring French, German and Italian Romanticism as well as the group of writers around the magazine *Il Conciliatore* in Milan, such as Pietro Verri, Giovanni Berchet and Alessandro Manzoni.⁸⁴

During the same journey, little André-Isidore was taken to Revel where his great-uncle Pierre de Clunière lived (it was his last months of life) and his sons Jean-François de Duchalay and François Lefèbvre de Sibille, who had not married and remained bachelors. Very different from Charles, they would lead a quiet provincial existence without moving from the area in which they were born. They would enter a cone of shadow from which they would emerge from time to time on the occasion of relatives' visits, deaths and inheritance matters.

Charles Lefèbvre in Terra d'Otranto

On his return from his first voyage in September 1806, Joseph-Isidore was involved by his cousin in another kind of

⁸⁴ Anne-Louise Germaine Necker, Baroness of Staël-Holstein (1766-1817), had a very important literary salon in Paris until 1805, which she then moved to Lake Geneva (at Coppet) when she was finally expelled by Napoleon. Juliette Récamier would also retire to live out her last years in the same Château de Coppet.

military supply: food and comfort supplies. According to his nephew, food supplies were a more lucrative business than hospital subsistence because the volumes to be supplied were higher. Thus, Joseph-Isidore took up his duties on 25 November 1806, replacing Charles who had left Naples for the time being; expanding the area of his operations even further, he had accepted the post of official in charge of *Administration des Vivres* of the *Commisariat des Guerres* in the Terra d'Otranto. His logistical bases (with warehouses and offices) were located in Trani, Barletta and Lecce.⁸⁵ Here too, his task was to contact suppliers, establish prices and supply conditions, and ensure that the army, on its frequent journeys, never ran out of essential goods.⁸⁶

Joseph-Isidore took over for his cousin on an exclusive basis in Naples throughout 1807 and 1808, undertaking arduous journeys – often in the company of Vauchelle – as far as Barletta and Brindisi. In March 1808, he was in Barletta and then, heading north, he stayed some time in Naples. In early January, he went to stay at Palazzo Coscia Partanna where Vauchelle lived.⁸⁷ However, during this same period of time, between 1807 and 1808, it is known that Vauchelle was entrusted with a very delicate mission, which is recounted as follows by one of his biographers:

He was barely 30 years old when he was entrusted with a mission of the greatest importance. Corfu, which we had conquered, was threatened and blockaded by the British fleet. An important supply

⁸⁵ Maria Sofia Corciulo, *Dall'amministrazione alla Costituzione. I consigli generali e distrettuali di Terra d'Otranto nel decennio francese*, Guida Editori, Naples 1992.

⁸⁶ Cf. vol. 4 p. 170 ff.

⁸⁷ Again, in March 1812, Joseph-Isidore left for Brindisi together with Vauchelle AB XIX 4481, vol. IV, p. 159.

of explosives had been shipped from the Adriatic ports. It was then announced that, due to theft and losses, there was a shortage of firearms ammunition on the island. It was to Mr Vauchelle that the government of Naples, or rather that of France, entrusted the task of going to the authorities there, to obtain approval, to check whether there was sufficient explosive and, if it was lacking, to ascertain the real causes that had produced it. He embarked at night on a fragile dinghy and happily passed through the British fleet, began and successfully completed his mission.⁸⁸

Soon afterwards, however, he was captured by a Turk and freed after some time thanks to the intervention of a certain Apollon, a friend of the Sultan. Thanks to this mission, he is entrusted with 'important services' in Naples and becomes *Ordonnateur* or organiser, general manager of army logistics. Then his assignments took him to Sicily.

Unfortunately, the highly confidential nature of these actions and the lack of documents – and the need for further research – prevent us from saying more now. We ask ourselves one question: does the mission that engaged Vauchelle in the Venice area with the supplies blocked in Corfu have anything to do with the confidential 'mission' that engaged Charles and of which Lauri speaks?⁸⁹ We ignore it for the moment. On 14 August 1808, meanwhile, Joseph-Isidore was able to invest part of the proceeds of his work by entering into a partnership with Monsieur Charles-Antoine Béranger, who had set up a printing works on the Riviera di Chiaia, known as Stamperia francese, thus laying the foundations for the Lefèbvre paper empire.⁹⁰ The resourcefulness that he lacked to continue the

⁸⁸ M. Ploix, *Étude Historique sur M. Vauchelle*, Auguste Montalant, Versailles 1860, p. 8.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 7-8.

⁹⁰ AB XIX 4480, vol. I, pp. 23-24.

enterprise – he would leave Naples in 1816 to take up a modest post in Puy-le-Dome – was Charles' own and he turned the attempt into a success.

François Noël and Pierre Lagarde

To understand how the Lefèbvre family's fortune was founded, one must at this point focus on another of its exponents: François-Noël, one of Charles-Flavien's brothers, also named for his probable collaboration with the Caisse du Comptes Courrants. We know that in those years at the turn of the century, he was carrying out an assignment in Venice, in contact with the powerful Pierre Lagarde, an assignment whose delicate nature cannot be known and which is probably related to Vauchelle. Lagarde is one of those figures who had the ability to remain influential and hold important posts beyond the change of governments and regimes, such as Charles de Talleyrand; indeed, he will be found in prominent roles in the post-Napoleonic period. Exponents of a bureaucracy that has constituted the deep state of France for centuries.

At the beginning of 1807, 25-year-old François-Noël moved to Venice to work with Lagarde, 'commissaire générale chargé de la police de Venice et de l'Adriatique', as an 'employé dans les bureaux', thus reporting directly to Lagarde.⁹¹ But how had he got there? We know that the bureaucrats of the Bourbon financial administration

⁹¹ ADD, Besançon. Sous Series 3E 1/31 du 20 juin 1807; François Boyer, *Pierre Lagarde, policier de Napoléon à Venise en 1806*, Rome, Paris 1957. Some reports compiled by Lagarde and addressed to Napoleon can be found in this book.

represented a sympathetic group and that Lagarde, like the Lefèbvre, came from a family of *Riceviteurs du domaine du Roi*. His father was in the same profession as Pierre Lefèbvre and Bernard's family. As organiser of the gendarmerie, François-Noël was sent first to Amiens, then to Milan, then to Venice where he organised and led police and intelligence activities as *Directeur General*. He thus became a high-ranking member of the security and information services, what we now call the *intelligence services*. His jurisdiction included not only Venice and the Venetian hinterland, but also dependent territories in the Adriatic Sea such as the coasts of Istria and Croatia.

After the Napoleonic defeat, he was one of those officials who, like Joseph Fouché and above all the aforementioned Charles de Talleyrand, managed to stay in power by becoming minister and commander-in-chief of the National Guard under Louis XVIII. He managed to hold important posts even after the July Revolution, until his death, residing in Paris until after 1814. François-Noël remained *employé* until 1814 when Lagarde's police office was closed and the executive returned to Paris, then settled in Lyon as a state administrator.⁹²

After carrying out his duties to the satisfaction of Charles (who spent his time mainly in Lecce and returned two or three times a year to Naples), Joseph-Isidore was promoted to *attaché at the Ministry of Finance of the Kingdom of Italy* in the last months of Murat's government, a position that would earn him the considerable sum of 12,000 francs a year.⁹³ But what happened immediately afterwards, with the conclusion of

⁹² Ferdinand Boyer, *Pierre Lagarde policier de Napoleon à Venice en 1806*, "Rassegna storica del Risorgimento", pp. 88-95. Ibid, p. 88.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

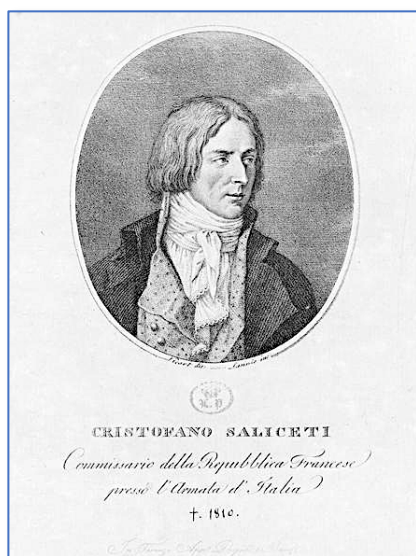
Murat's affair, also caused a reversal of fortune for Joseph-Isidore.

The parable of Joachim Murat

In the meantime, let us briefly review Murat's story in Naples, the scene of Charles-Flavien's first successes. He entered Naples on 6 September 1808 on parade, followed by his wife Caroline and children. First, the newcomer conquers Capri, which remained in the hands of an English contingent. The Kingdom of Naples is besieged by the Austrians, the British – who have a protectorate over Sicily – and the anti-Napoleonic French, and is also plagued by rebellion and turmoil. Murat suffers within a deaf but not very strong opposition also because the people are tired, the petty bourgeoisie impoverished by the consequences of the continental blockade and the languishing trade. Several aristocrats collaborated, hoping for an attenuated version of the Jacobin revolution. Murat appointed Giuseppe Zurlo, Marzio Marzilli, created Duke of Gallo by Murat, the Minister of Justice Francesco Ricciardi and the Minister of the Interior Giuseppe Capececiatti to the government. Minister of Police was Antonio Saliceti, drawn from the ranks of the Carbonari.

Vincenzo Cuoco and Giuseppe Poerio were members of the Council of State. In his policy of centralisation, Murat in 1808 removed all privileges from the municipality of Naples by purging the local bureaucracy – and this caused him no few dislikes – he also reduced the prerogatives of priests and religious orders and introduced divorce. His best activity was in the field of public education where he established high schools in addition to the pre-existing parochial schools.

Caroline established the College of Miracles for noble girls, which was to have a long life. On 30 May 1807 Joseph Bonaparte, King of Naples and Sicily, instituted two Royal Colleges for the Province of Naples, and one for each Province, dedicated to instruction in the Sciences and Liberal Arts. The Royal College of Naples was placed at the Gesù Vecchio, vacated by the Jesuits driven out the previous year. The College could be attended by internal and external pupils, including non-nobles. On 28 February 1812, the Royal College became the Liceo del Salvatore.



Murat had the library in Naples and those in the monasteries restored, established the asylum in Aversa and an Agrarian chair, built bridges and roads and reclaimed the Coroglio marshes in the then sparsely populated Bagnoli area. In the city he opened roads such as Foria, San Giovanni a Carbonara, and

roads to Posillipo and Bagnoli and continued some works begun by Joseph Bonaparte. He then divided up the larger feudal possessions and, from 1811, granted noble titles and *maggioraschi* (vast landed estates) to his collaborators to encourage modernising action.

However, his policy in certain areas worsens the situation because he liquidates feudality from a legal point of view while leaving intact the baronial properties that are no longer limited by the sovereign's power (since they no longer have feudal obligations to the sovereign). He then instituted protectionist duties and even subsidies. Some sectors benefit, others less so. Brilliant is Zurlo's financial policy that reorganises the tax system to the disadvantage of the wealthy classes. On 3 January 1813, Murat announced that he had balanced the budget but also resorted to forced donations (thus a kind of trickery). In his final years he also reorganised the land register.

In 1809 the Napoleonic order seemed to be achieved when the Peace of Vienna was signed (Schönbrunn, 14 October 1809). At that point, Murat occupied southern Italy and Calabria and organised an expedition to drive the English out of Sicily. When he married Maria Luisa of Austria in 1810, Murat was disappointed: he did not agree to Napoleon's alliance with the Habsburg dynasty. Back in Calabria, Murat ordered General Paul Grenier (1768-1827) to land in Sicily, but he refused because he was loyal to Napoleon's directives. Hence the defeat of Scaletta.

He then exempted all foreigners not yet naturalised, including Frenchmen, from military service. While Napoleon's army leaves the Kingdom of Italy, Frenchmen holding military or civil posts can stay without changing passports. Murat took part in the Russian Campaign showing loyalty to Napoleon

even though the two were getting along less and less well: Joachim in fact sought his own autonomy. In Sicily, Acton was succeeded by William Bentinck (1774-1839) who passed a constitutional charter in 1812. Murat approached Bentinck's government and sought a mandate for the unification of Italy at the cost of an alliance with Vienna. Napoleon then sent the minister Joseph Fouché (1759-1820) to Naples. He asked Murat to participate in the German campaigns and he reluctantly complied. By now he had become attached to his Southern Kingdom. There followed the victory at Dresden, in which Murat participated, and then the defeat at Leipzig which was the beginning of Napoleon's end.

Convinced that he could undertake an independent policy, which Napoleon disliked, Murat proposed peace treaties with the Austrians, which Vienna did not ratify, as they included the renunciation of Ferdinand's throne. On the 26th of the same month, however, the end of the naval blockade restored some oxygen to the gasping Neapolitan economy. Murat, in order to win popular favour, relieves taxes, encourages trade and excludes foreigners from all offices. But the population is no friend to him. The Bourbons regained strength and the liberals continued to demand the English-style constitution that even Ferdinand had to concede. Among the last important acts for Neapolitan construction during Murat's reign was the start of work on the new, large, monumental cemetery at Poggioreale, begun in 1814 and completed in 1837, when it was inaugurated.⁹⁴

When news arrived of Napoleon's escape from Elba, his brother-in-law declared war on the Austrians (with whom he had made peace) and proclaimed that he wanted to unify Italy.

⁹⁴ Cesare de Seta, *Naples*, Laterza, Bari Rome 1981, p. 215.

Within a few weeks, until the final defeat at Tolentino, his fate was sealed. After Pietro Colletta and Michele Carascosa signed the Treaty of Casalanza (20 May), i.e. the surrender, Murat fled, hoping to fight with Napoleon. He waited in Corsica until he landed in Pizzo Calabro on 8 October with a few men, where he was captured by Captain Trentacapilli who dragged him off to prison. Murat did not want to be judged by a court, he confessed and communicated. He is then shot.

Charles remained a collaborator in the French occupation army of Joseph Bonaparte (1806-1808) and then in the army of the King of Italy Joachim Murat (1808-1815). They are two formally different institutions but the civilian leaders are the same. There was a continuity that did not affect Charles; he worked continuously during the French Decade and, surprisingly, continued to work afterwards. Having become a well-known and important figure in the hierarchy of the army's suppliers, he was given accommodation in Palazzo Calabritto, the seat of central power in Murat's Kingdom.

Meanwhile, in 1812, Bernard's importance – as already mentioned – waned. His function was supplanted by that of the Rothschild Bank, founded in Paris in 1812 by James Mayer de Rothschild (1792-1868), Rothschild Frères. Within a few years, James Mayer became an advisor to the Emperor. Later, in 1821, a brother, Calmann Mayer Rothschild (1788-1855) was invited to Naples to set up a branch of the Rothschild Bank and is documented to have been doing business with Charles Lefèvre since that year. Since the Rothschilds only did business after ascertaining the patrimonial soundness of the other party, it is evident that they already knew each other or knew the family in Paris.

SOME NOTES

The function of Maître des Requêtes

In the days of French absolutism, the Maîtres des requêtes ordinaires de l'Hôtel du Roi held a prestigious and also costly office that required a one-off tax for its maintenance, ranging from 200,000 gold lire in 1710 to 100,000 in 1750, and which increased further in the second half of the century.

To take office, one had to attend a course at the Parliament and at the Chambre des Comptes for 6 years. Only children of magistrates could shorten the course to 3 years. In the early days these officials also ran the Tribunal des Requêtes de l'Hôtel, later reduced to some honorary use. The judges of this court had a judgement of last resort in matters of seals, books, printing and also in the execution of arrests requested by the King's Council. The Maîtres des Requêtes collaborated with the Chancellor of France, on whom they depended and carried out justice tasks through the Seal, and the Conseil des Parties. They held quarterly meetings with the Deans, whose head had the rank of Councillor of State. The magistrates of the Maîtres des Requêtes were members of the Paris Parliament, but no more than 4 at a time. They could only be judged before the assembled chambers of Parliament. Officials and members of the Royal Government were taken from this nursery: the Councillors of State, the Intendants of the Provinces, the Intendants of Finance, the Intendants of Commerce, the Controllers General of Finances, etc. There were 98 in 1689, 88 in 1723, 80 under Louis XV in 1752. The Maîtres des

requêtes au Conseil d'État were members of the Council of State.

Intendant des finances

The intendants of finance were agents of the financial administration of France in the Ancien Régime. Intendants organised and controlled the collection of state taxes and assisted the King's action in tax matters at local parliaments. They controlled royal land and distributed royal direct taxes. They exercised the financial protection of communities (towns) and royal and clerical establishments (manufactures, abbeys, schools, etc.) and collaborated with provincial intendants to take useful measures for economic progress in the management of roads, forests, manufactures, education. The function of the intendant of finance was created in 1552 (the name was coined in 1556). They formed a collegiate ministry of finance in a number that fluctuated several times and in 1661 consisted of three persons. From 1690, they were officers, subordinate to the Directorate General with stable, lifelong offices, which ensured the continuity of the Finance Administration. In 1777, their central functions were transferred to the Maîtres des Requêtes.

They enjoyed considerable autonomy in the exercise of their departments, corresponding directly with the Chancellor of France, the Secretaries of State and the provincial finance intendants. It happened that, on particular occasions, the intendants of finance met informally to prepare dossiers to be presented to the Royal Council of Finance. Their importance and rank continued to increase until the reign of Louis XV. Each finance intendant headed a department and was

responsible for taxation, bridges and roads, forests and state property.

Contrôleur général des finances

Under the Ancien Régime, the Comptroller General of Finances was the ministerial head of royal finances (after the abolition of the post of Superintendent of Finances in 1661). He was in charge of administering state finances, the most famous of whom was Jean-Baptiste Colbert, Controller from 1665 to 1683. The function had been created in 1547, with two holders who had to control the expenditure carried out by the Treasurer De l'Épargne, then the true master of royal finances.

Originally, the office of the Comptroller General was not one of administration or governance, functions reserved for the superintendents of finance, but only a verification function. In 1661, the last superintendent, Nicolas Fouquet (1615-1680), was arrested. Colbert was then appointed head of the Finance Administration with the title of Intendant Generale and, from 1665, with that of Controller General (Contrôleur général).

At this date, 1665, the office became transmissible but also revocable according to the will of the sovereign.⁹⁵ The function was very well remunerated: around 220,000 gold lire.

The Comptroller General was a member of the Privy Council, the Royal Council of Finance and the Royal Council of Commerce. In addition to financial administration (treasury

⁹⁵ This function suffered only one interruption during the period of the so-called Polysynodia (1715-1718). Jacques Necker headed the Finance Administration between 1776 and 1781 and between 1788 and 1790, flanked by Contrôleurs généraux, receiving the title of Directeur général du Trésor royal and Directeur général des finances.

management, tax collection, minting, etc.), he directed the entire economy and a large part of the provincial administration. In fact, it is on his proposal that most of the provincial intendants are appointed. An acquaintance and alliance, probably parental, in Paris, is the only circumstance that can explain the meteoric rise of Joseph-Lefèvre and his son in the Dauphiné: the appointment came directly from Versailles. Unlike other ministries, general financial control was organised collegially. It was divided into several departments, the most important of which was actually headed by the Comptroller General. At the end of the Ancien Régime, there were six intendants of finance. This team was often referred to as the 'lords of finance' or 'finance people'.

The staff of General Control was relatively large, especially compared to that of other ministries. The offices were mainly located in Paris, where the financiers with whom the control had to deal frequently were housed. The Controller General had offices in Paris, at the Palais Mazarin, rue Neuve-des-Petits-Champs (today: National Library of France) and especially in Versailles.

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