



La Dame d'Esprit: A Biography of Marquise Du Chatelet

Judith Zinsser

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The scintillating life of the most brilliant woman of the French Enlightenment, the lover of Voltaire and translator of Newton

Gabrielle Emilie le Tonnelier de Breteuil was born to the highest circles of the French aristocracy, married a marquis at the age of eighteen, and indulged in all the pleasures of her class. Then at twenty-seven, defying convention, she became the mistress of poet and playwright Voltaire, embarking on an extraordinary and transformative intellectual journey as his patroness, his lover, and his companion. In this sparkling life, Judith P. Zinsser vividly explores how the Marquise Du Châtelet transformed herself from courtier, wife, and mother into one of the leading intellectuals of the French Enlightenment.

Freed by her wealth and status to pursue a life of the mind, Du Châtelet developed swiftly into an accomplished mathematician, physicist, translator, and author of original works of philosophy and science. At the end of her life, pregnant by a young new lover, she raced to complete her translation and commentary on Newton's *Principia*. The only woman of the Enlightenment to be recognized for her genius, Du Châtelet was centuries ahead of her time. By bringing this singular woman to life with style and wit, Zinsser at last gives this revolutionary her due.

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