

PHILIPPE ARIÈS

CENTURIES OF
CHILDHOOD

*A Social History of
Family Life*

Translated from the French by
ROBERT BALDICK



VINTAGE BOOKS
A Division of Random House
NEW YORK

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	9
--------------	---

PART ONE: THE IDEA OF CHILDHOOD

I THE AGES OF LIFE	15
II THE DISCOVERY OF CHILDHOOD	33
III CHILDREN'S DRESS	50
IV A MODEST CONTRIBUTION TO THE HISTORY OF GAMES AND PASTIMES	62
V FROM IMMODESTY TO INNOCENCE	100
CONCLUSION: THE TWO CONCEPTS OF CHILDHOOD	128

PART TWO: SCHOLASTIC LIFE

I MEDIEVAL SCHOLARS YOUNG AND OLD	137
II A NEW INSTITUTION: THE COLLEGE	155
III THE ORIGINS OF THE SCHOOL CLASS	176
IV THE PUPIL'S AGE	189
V THE PROGRESS OF DISCIPLINE	241
VI FROM DAY-SCHOOL TO BOARDING-SCHOOL	269
VII THE 'LITTLE SCHOOLS'	286
VIII THE ROUGHNESS OF SCHOOLCHILDREN	315
CONCLUSION: SCHOOL AND THE DURATION OF CHILDHOOD	329

PART THREE: THE FAMILY

I PICTURES OF THE FAMILY	339
II FROM THE MEDIEVAL FAMILY TO THE MODERN FAMILY	365
CONCLUSION: THE FAMILY AND SOCIABILITY	405
CONCLUSION	411
NOTES	419
INDEX	441

Copyright © 1962 by Jonathan Cape Ltd.

All rights reserved under International and Pan-American Copyright Conventions. Published in New York by Random House, Inc., in Toronto, Canada, by Random House of Canada Limited, and in London, England, by Jonathan Cape Ltd.

Originally published in French under the title
L'Enfant et la vie familiale sous l'ancien régime,
© 1960 by Librairie Plon, Paris.

MANUFACTURED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

◇ IV ◇

A MODEST CONTRIBUTION TO THE HISTORY OF
GAMES AND PASTIMES

THANKS to the diary kept by the doctor Heroard, we can imagine what a child's life was like at the beginning of the seventeenth century, what games he played, and to what stages of his physical and mental development each of his games corresponded. Although the child concerned was a Dauphin of France, the future Louis XIII, his case remains typical for all that, for at Henri IV's court the royal children, legitimate or illegitimate, were treated in the same way as all aristocratic children, and there was as yet no real difference between the King's palaces and the gentry's castles. Apart from the fact that he never went to college, as some of the aristocracy already did, young Louis XIII was brought up like his companions. Thus he was given fencing and riding lessons by the same instructor who, in his academy, taught the young aristocracy the arts of war: M. de Pluvinel. The illustrations of M. de Pluvinel's manual of horsemanship, the fine engravings of C. de Pas, show Louis XIII on horseback at the riding-school. In the second half of the seventeenth century the monarchical cult separated the little prince at an earlier age – in infancy in fact – from other mortals, even of noble birth.

Louis XIII was born on September 27th, 1601. His doctor, Heroard, has left us a detailed record of all his activities.¹ Heroard writes that at seventeen months he 'plays the violin and sings at the same time'. Before that, he had played with the usual toys given to very little children, a hobby-horse, a windmill and a whipping-top. But as early as seventeen months a violin was put into his hands. The violin had not yet won recognition as a noble instrument: it was still the fiddle played for the dancing at village weddings and fêtes. At the same age we find him playing mall: 'The Dauphin, playing mall, muffed his shot and injured M. de Longueville.' This is just as if an English boy were to start playing cricket or golf at the age of seventeen months. At twenty-two months we are told that he 'continues to beat his tambourin with all sorts of rhythms': every company had its own drum and its own drumbeat. He started to talk: 'They are making him pronounce the syllables separately, before saying the words.' The same month, August 1603, 'the Queen, going in

to dinner, had him brought along and placed at the end of her table.' Prints and paintings of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries often show a child at table, perched in a little high-chair out of which he cannot fall; it must have been in one of these chairs that he sat at his mother's table, like other children in other families. This little fellow is barely two years old, yet now we find him being 'taken to the King's apartments and dancing all sorts of dances to the music of a violin'. Again we see how early in life music and dancing were introduced into the education of the little men of this period: this explains the frequency, in the families of professionals, of what we should now call infant prodigies, such as the young Mozart; such cases would become rarer and at the same time seem more prodigious as familiarity with music, even in its elementary or bastard forms, grew less common or disappeared.

The Dauphin began talking. Heroard keeps a phonetic record of his chatter: 'Tell Papa' for 'I shall tell Papa', *équivez* for *écriviez*. He was often given a whipping: 'Naughty, whipped (for refusing to eat): calming down, he asked for his dinner and dined.' 'Went off to his room, screaming at the top of his voice, and was soundly whipped.' Although he now mingled with adults, playing, dancing and singing with them, he still played at children's games. He was two years seven months old when Sully presented him with 'a little carriage full of dolls'.

He liked the company of soldiers: 'The soldiers are always glad to see him.' 'He played with a little cannon.' 'He conducted little military actions with his soldiers. M. de Marsan put a high collar on him, the first he had ever worn, and he was delighted.' 'He played at military engagements with his little lords.' We know too that he played tennis as well as mall – yet he still slept in a cradle. On July 19th, 1604, when he was two years nine months old, 'he saw his bed being made with great joy, was put to bed for the first time.' He already knew the rudiments of his religion: at Mass, at the Elevation, he was shown the host and told that it was *le bon Dieu*. We might note in passing this expression, *le bon Dieu*, which is constantly employed nowadays by priests and churchgoers, but of which no trace can be found in religious literature of the ancien régime. We can see here that at the beginning of the seventeenth century, when the expression was probably not very old, it belonged to the language of children or of parents and nannies when talking to children. It contaminated the language of adults in the nineteenth century, and, with the effeminization of religion, the God of Jacob became *le bon Dieu* of little children.

The Dauphin could now talk, and occasionally came out with those cheeky remarks which amuse grown-ups: 'The King showed him the

birch and asked him: "Who is that for?" He answered angrily: "For you." The King could not help laughing.

He was three years old when, on Christmas Eve 1604, he took part in the traditional festivities. 'Before supper he saw the Yule log being lit, and he danced and sang at the coming of Christmas.' He was given some presents: a ball, and also some 'little baubles from Italy', including a clockwork pigeon, toys intended as much for the Queen as for him. During the winter evenings, when he was kept indoors, 'he amused himself by cutting paper with scissors.' Music and dancing still occupied an important place in his life. Heroard writes with a hint of admiration: 'The Dauphin can dance all the dances'. He remembered the ballets which he had seen and in which he would soon be taking part, if indeed he had not already begun doing so: 'Remembering a ballet performed a year ago [when he was two years old], he asked: "Why was the little Ram bare?"' 'He played Cupid stark naked.' 'He danced the galliard, the saraband, the old bourrée.' He enjoyed playing Boileau's mandora and singing the song of Robin. He would be four years old in a few days' time, and he knew at least the names of the different strings of the lute. 'He played with the tips of his fingers on his lips, saying: "Here is the bass."' But his early acquaintance with the lute did not prevent him from listening to the less aristocratic fiddles played at the wedding of one of the King's chefs - or to a bagpipe player, one of the masons who were 'repairing his fireplace': the 'Dauphin listened to him for quite a long time'.

This was the time when he was being taught to read. At the age of three years five months 'he amused himself with a book of characters from the Bible: his nanny named the letters and he knew them all.' Next he was taught Pibrac's quatrains, a collection of rules of etiquette and morality which children had to recite from memory. At the age of four, he was given writing lessons by a clerk of the palace chapel called Dumont. 'He had his writing-desk taken into the dining-room to write under Dumont's guidance, and said: "I am putting down my example and going to school."' (The example was the handwriting model which he had to copy.) 'He wrote his example, following the impression made on the paper, and followed it very well, taking pleasure in it.' He started learning Latin words. When he was six a professional scribe took the place of the chapel clerk: 'He wrote his example. Beaugrand, the King's scribe, showed him how to write.'

He still played with dolls: 'He played with some little toys and a German cabinet [wooden miniatures made by Nürnberg craftsmen].

M. de Loménie gave him a little nobleman splendidly dressed in a scented collar... He combed his hair and said: "I am going to marry him to Madame's [his sister's] doll.'" He still enjoyed paper-cutting. He had stories read to him too: 'His nanny told him the stories of Renard the Fox, Dives and Lazarus.' 'In bed, he was being told the stories of Melusina. I told him that they were fairy-stories and not true stories.' (A remark which already foreshadows modern educational practice.) Children were not the only ones to listen to these stories: they were also told to adults at evening gatherings.

At the same time as he played with dolls, this child of four or five practised archery, played cards, chess (at six), and adult games such as 'racket-ball', prisoners' base and countless parlour games. At three, he was already playing at crambo, a game common to both children and young people. With the pages of the King's Chamber, who were older than he was, he played at 'Do you like company?' 'He was the master [the leader of the game] now and then, and when he did not know what he had to say, he asked; he played these games, such as the game of lighting a candle blindfold, as if he were fifteen years old.' When he was not playing with pages, he was playing with soldiers: 'He played various games, such as "I want your place", fiddle-de-dee, hand-clapping, and hide-and-seek, with some soldiers.' At the age of six he played trades and charades, parlour games which consisted of guessing trades and stories that were represented in pantomime. These were also games played by adolescents and adults.

To an ever increasing extent, the Dauphin mixed with adults and took part in their amusements. At the age of five 'he was taken to the meadow behind the kennels [at Fontainebleau] to see Bretons from the King's workshops wrestling.' 'Taken to join the King in the ballroom to see the dogs fighting the bears and the bull.' 'He went to the covered tennis-court to see a badger race.' And above all he took part in the court ballets. At the age of four and a half 'he put on a mask, went to the King's apartments to dance a ballet, and then refused to take off his mask, not wishing to be recognized.' He often dressed up as a 'Picardy chambermaid', a shepherdess or a girl (he was still wearing a boy's tunic). 'After supper he watched some dancing to the songs of a certain Laforest', a soldier-choreographer who was also the author of some farces. At the age of five 'he watched without great enthusiasm a farce in which Laforest played the comic husband, the Baron de Montglat the unfaithful wife, and Indret the lover who seduced her.' At the age of six 'he danced a ballet, smartly dressed as a man, in a doublet and breeches on top of his

tunic.' He watched the ballet of the devils and magicians devised by the Piedmontese Jean-Baptiste [another soldier-choreographer] danced by soldiers under M. de Marsan's command.' He did not dance only ballets and court dances, but also took part in what we should now call folk-dances. When he was five, he took part in one which reminds me of a Tyrolean dance which I once saw some lads in leather breeches perform in an Innsbruck café: 'The King's pages danced the branle "There are cabbages on Midsummer Day" and kicked each other in the bottom; he danced it and did as they did!' On another occasion he was dressed as a girl for a play: 'When the farce was over, he took his robe off and danced "There are cabbages on Midsummer Day", kicking his companions in the bottom. He liked this dance.'

Finally he joined the adults in the traditional festivities of Christmas, Twelfth Night and Midsummer Day; it was he who lit the Midsummer Day bonfire in the courtyard of the Château of Saint-Germain. On the eve of Twelfth Night: 'He was the King for the first time. Everyone shouted: "The King drinks!" God's share is left: he who eats it has to pay a forfeit.' 'Taken to the Queen's apartments, from which he watched the maypole being set up.'

Things changed when he was nearly seven: he abandoned his childhood clothes and henceforth his education was entrusted to men; he left 'Mamonglas', Mme de Montglas, and came under the jurisdiction of M. de Soubise. An attempt was now made to persuade him to give up the games of infancy, and in particular to stop playing with dolls: 'You must stop playing with these little toys [the German toys] and playing the wagoner: you are a big boy now, you are no longer a child.' He started learning the arts of riding, shooting and hunting. He played games of chance: 'He took part in a raffle and won a turquoise.' It seems indeed that this age of seven marked a stage of some importance: it was the age usually given in the moralistic and pedagogic literature of the seventeenth century as the age for starting school or starting work.² But we should beware of exaggerating its importance. For all that he had stopped playing, or should have stopped playing, with his dolls, the Dauphin went on leading the same life as before: he was still given a whipping from time to time, and his pastimes scarcely changed at all. He went more and more to the theatre, and was soon going nearly every day: a sign of the importance of comedy, farce and ballet in our ancestors' frequent indoor and open-air entertainments. 'He went into the great gallery to watch the King tilting at the ring.' 'He listened to some naughty stories by La Clavette and others.' 'Played in his apartments with some little

noblemen at heads or tails, like the King, with three dice.' 'Played at hide-and-seek' with a lieutenant of the Light Horse. 'He went to play tennis and then went to the great gallery to watch them tilting at the ring.' 'Dressed up and danced the Pantaloon.' He was nine years old now: 'After supper, he went to the Queen's apartments, played blind-man's buff, and made the Queen, the princesses and the ladies play it too.' 'He played "I sit down"' and the usual parlour games. 'After supper the King's nanny told him some stories, and he enjoyed this.' At thirteen we find him still playing hide-and-seek.

Rather more dolls and German toys before seven, and more hunting, riding, fencing and possibly playgoing after seven; the change was almost imperceptible in that long succession of pastimes which the child copied from the adults or shared with them. The novelist-cum-historian Sorel would write a treatise on parlour games intended for adults. But at the age of three Louis XIII was playing crambo, and at six, trades and charades, all games which occupied an important place in Sorel's *Maison des Jeux*. At five he was playing cards. At eight he won a prize in a raffle, a game of chance in which fortunes used to change hands.

The same was true of musical or theatrical entertainments: when he was three, Louis XIII was dancing the galliard, the saraband and the old bourrée, and taking part in the court ballets. At five, he was watching farces, and at seven, comedies. He sang, and played the violin and the lute. He was in the front row of the spectators at a wrestling-match, a ring-tilting contest, a bullfight or a bearfight, or a display by a tightrope walker. Finally he took part in the great collective festivals that were the religious and seasonal feast-days: Christmas, May Day, Midsummer Day... It seems, therefore, that in the early seventeenth century there was not such a strict division as there is today between children's games and those played by adults. Young and old played the same games.

* * *

At the beginning of the seventeenth century this polyvalency no longer applied to the very small children. We are familiar with their games, for, ever since the fifteenth century when the *putti* had made their appearance in iconography, countless artists had depicted little children at play. In their pictures we can recognize the hobby-horse, the windmill, the bird on a leash... and sometimes, though not so often, dolls. It is obvious that these dummies were reserved for little children. Yet one is entitled to wonder whether this had always been true and whether these toys had

not previously belonged to the world of adults. Some toys originated in that spirit of emulation which induces children to imitate adult processes, while reducing them to their own scale. This is the case with the hobby-horse, at a time when the horse was the principal means of transport and traction. Similarly, the little sails spinning round on the end of a stick could not be anything but the imitation by children of a technique which, unlike that of the horse, was not very old: the windmill technique introduced in the Middle Ages. The same reflex governs the children of today when they imitate a lorry or a car. But while the windmill has long ago disappeared from our countryside, the child's windmill is still on sale in toyshops and market or fair-ground stalls. Children form the most conservative of human societies.

Other games seem to have some other origin than the desire to imitate adults. Thus the child is often depicted playing with a bird: Louis XIII had a shrike of which he was extremely fond; the reader himself may perhaps remember trying to tame a wounded crow in his childhood. The bird in these pictures is usually attached to a leash which the child is holding in his hand. Sometimes it may have been just a wooden dummy. In any case, judging by the iconographic evidence, the bird on a leash would seem to have been one of the most common of toys. The historian of the religions of Greece, Nilsson,³ tells us that in ancient Greece, as indeed in modern Greece, it was customary during the first days of March for boys to make a wooden swallow turning on a pivot and adorned with flowers. They would then take it from house to house and be given presents: here the bird or its image was not an individual toy but an element of a collective, seasonal festivity in which youth took part in the role which its age group assigned to it. What eventually became an individual toy unconnected with the community or the calendar and devoid of any social content, would appear to have been linked at first with traditional ceremonies which brought together children and adolescents – between whom, in any case, there was no clear distinction – and adults. Nilsson also shows how the see-saw and the swing, which were still frequently to be found in the iconography of games and pastimes in the eighteenth century, figure among the rites of one of the festivals provided for in the calendar: the Aiora, the festival of youth.⁴ The boys used to jump on skins filled with wine and the girls were swung backwards and forwards on swings; Nilsson sees the latter scene, which can be found on painted vases, as a fecundity rite. There was a close connection between the communal religious ceremony and the game which formed its essential rite. Later this game lost its religious symbolism and its

communal character to become at once profane and individual. In the process of becoming profane and individual, it was increasingly confined to children, whose repertory of games became the repository of collective demonstrations which were henceforth abandoned by adult society and deconsecrated.

The problem of the doll and miniature toys leads us to similar hypotheses. Historians of the toy, and collectors of dolls and toy miniatures, have always had considerable difficulty in separating the doll, the child's toy, from all the other images and statuettes which the sites of excavations yield up in wellnigh industrial quantities and which more often than not had a religious significance: objects of a household or funerary cult, relics from a pilgrimage, etc. How many times have we been shown 'toys' which were in fact miniature replicas of familiar objects placed in tombs? I am not suggesting that in the past children did not play with dolls or replicas of adult belongings. But they were not the only ones to use these replicas; what in modern times was to become their monopoly, they had to share in ancient times, at least with the dead. The ambiguity of the doll and the replica continued during the Middle Ages, lasting even longer in country districts: the doll was also the dangerous instrument of the magician and the witch. This taste for representing in miniature the people and things of daily life, nowadays confined to little children, resulted in an art and industry designed as much to satisfy adults as to amuse children. The famous Neapolitan cribs are one of the manifestations of this art of illusion. The museums, especially in Germany and Switzerland, possess complicated collections of houses, interiors and sets of furniture which reproduce on a small scale all the details of familiar objects. Were they really dolls' houses, these little masterpieces of complex ingenuity? It is true that this popular adult art was also appreciated by children: there was a considerable demand in France for 'German toys' or 'Italian baubles'. A single word was used in France to refer to this industry, whether its products were designed for children or adults: *bibeloterie* ('knick-knackery'). The *bibelot* or knick-knack of old was also a toy. The evolution of language has robbed it of its childish, popular meaning, while on the other hand the evolution of ideas has restricted the use of miniature replicas to children. In the nineteenth century the knick-knack became something for the drawing-room or the showcase, but it remained a model of a familiar object: a little sedan chair, a little piece of furniture or a tiny piece of crockery, which had never been intended for a child to play with. In the taste for the knick-knack we can recognize a middle-class survival of the popular art of the Italian crib or the German house.

The society of the ancien régime remained faithful for a long time to the little baubles which we would describe today as childish, probably because they have now fallen for good and all within the domain of childhood.

In 1747 we find Barbier writing: 'In Paris some toys have been devised called puppets ... These little figures represent Harlequin and Scaramouch [Italian comedy], or else bakers [trades and crafts], shepherds and shepherdesses [the taste for rustic fancy-dress]. These ridiculous things have taken the fancy of Parisian society to such an extent that one cannot go into any house without finding them dangling from every mantelpiece. They are being bought to give to women and girls, and the craze has reached such a pitch that this New Year all the shops are full of them ... The Duchesse de Chartres has paid 1,500 livres for one painted by Boucher.' The worthy bibliophile Jacob, quoting this passage, admits that in his day nobody would dream of getting up to such childish practices: 'Society people, who are much too busy nowadays, no longer join in such crazes as in the good old days of idleness which saw the height of the fashion for puppets: now we leave baubles to children.'

The puppet-show appears to have been another manifestation of the same popular art of illusion in miniature which produced the knick-knacks of Germany and the cribs of Naples. It underwent the same evolution too: the Guignol of early nineteenth-century Lyons was a character of a lower-class but adult theatre, while today Guignol has become the name of a puppet-show reserved for children.

No doubt this persistent ambiguity of children's games also explains why, from the sixteenth century until the beginning of the nineteenth century, the doll was used by the well-dressed woman as a fashion model. In 1571 the Duchesse de Lorraine, wanting to give a present to a friend who had just had a baby, put in an order for '... some dolls, not too big and up to four and six, the best dressed dolls you can find, for the child of the Duchess of Bavaria, who has recently been delivered'. The gift was intended for the mother, but was sent in the child's name! Most of the dolls in public and private collections are not children's toys, which are usually crude objects roughly treated by their owners, but fashion dolls. The fashion doll eventually disappeared, its place being taken by the fashion drawing, largely thanks to the process of lithography.⁵

By 1600, approximately, toys had become an infantile speciality, with a few differences of detail with regard to present-day usage. We have seen in connection with Louis XIII that boys as well as girls used to play with dolls. Within the limits of infancy the modern discrimination between

girls and boys was not so clearly defined: both sexes wore the same clothes, the same robe. There was probably some connection between the infantile specialization in toys and the importance of infancy in the ideas revealed by iconography and dress since the end of the Middle Ages. Childhood was becoming the repository of customs abandoned by the adults.

* * *

In 1600 the specialization of games and pastimes did not extend beyond infancy; after the age of three or four it decreased and disappeared. *From then on the child played the same games as the adult, either with other children or with adults.* We know this from the evidence furnished by an abundant iconography, for from the Middle Ages to the eighteenth century artists delighted in showing people at play: an indication of the place occupied by amusement in the social life of the ancien régime. We have already seen that from his earliest years, Louis XIII, as well as playing with dolls, also played tennis and hockey, which we nowadays consider as games for adolescents or adults. In an engraving by Arnoult of the late seventeenth century,⁶ we can see children playing bowls: children of good family, judging by the little girl's false sleeves. People had no objection to allowing children to play card games and games of chance, and to play for money. One of Stella's engravings devoted to the subject of *putti* at play gives a sympathetic picture of the child who has lost all his money.⁷ The Caravagesque painters of the seventeenth century often depicted bands of soldiers gambling excitedly in taverns of ill fame: next to the old troopers one can see some very young boys, twelve years old or so, who seem to be enthusiastic gamblers. A painting by S. Bourdon shows a group of beggars standing round two children and watching them playing dice.⁸ The theme of children playing games of chance for money obviously did not shock public opinion as yet, for the same theme is to be found in pictures portraying neither old soldiers nor beggars but Le Nain's solemn characters.⁹

Conversely, adults used to play games which today only children play. A fourteenth-century ivory shows the frog-game: a young man sitting on the ground is trying to catch hold of the men and women who are pushing him around.¹⁰ Adélaïde de Savoie's book of hours, dating from the late fifteenth century, contains a calendar which is largely illustrated with pictures of games, and games which are not of a knightly character.¹¹ (To begin with, the calendars depicted trades and crafts, except for the

month of May, which was reserved for a court of love. Games were then introduced and occupied more and more space: knightly sports such as hunting, but also popular games.) One of these is the faggot-game: one person is playing the candle in the centre of a ring of couples in which each lady is standing behind her cavalier and holding him tightly round the waist. In another part of the calendar the whole population of the village is having a snowball fight: men and women, children and grown-ups. In an early sixteenth-century tapestry, some peasants and noblemen -- the latter more or less convincingly dressed as shepherds -- are playing hot cockles: there are no children.¹² Several Dutch pictures of the second half of the seventeenth century also show people playing hot cockles. In one of them a few children appear, but they are mixed up with adults of all ages: one woman is standing with her head hidden in her apron and one hand held open behind her back.¹³ Louis XIII and his mother used to play hide-and-seek together. People played blind-man's buff at the Grande Mademoiselle's home, the Hôtel de Rambouillet.¹⁴ An engraving by Lepautre shows that adult peasants also played this game.¹⁵

One can accordingly understand the comment which his study of the iconography of games and pastimes drew from the contemporary historian Van Marle: 'As for the games played by grown-ups, one cannot honestly say that they were any less childish than those played by children.'¹⁶ Of course not: they were the same!

* * *

Children also took part, in their allotted place among the other age groups, in seasonal festivities which regularly brought together the whole community. To realize the importance of games and festivities in the society of old is hard for us today, when for countryman and city-dweller alike there is only a very narrow margin between a laborious, hypertrophied professional activity and a demanding, exclusive family vocation. The whole of political and social literature, faithfully mirroring contemporary opinion, deals with living and working conditions; trade unionism which safeguards real earnings, and insurance which reduces the risk of sickness and unemployment -- such are the principal achievements of the lower classes, or at least the achievements most apparent in public opinion, literature and political debate.

In the society of old, work did not take up so much time during the day and did not have so much importance in the public mind: it did not have the existential value which we have given it for something like a

hundred years. One can scarcely say that it had the same meaning. On the other hand, games and amusements extended far beyond the furtive moments we allow them: they formed one of the principal means employed by a society to draw its collective bonds closer, to feel united. This was true of nearly all games and pastimes, but the social role was more obvious in the great seasonal and traditional festivals. They took place on fixed dates of the calendar, and their programmes, broadly speaking, followed traditional patterns. They have been studied only by experts on folklore or popular traditions, who give the impression that they were almost exclusively rural. In fact they concerned the whole of society, of whose vitality they were a manifestation. Children -- children and adolescents -- took part in them on an equal footing with all the other members of society, and more often than not played a part in them which was reserved for them by tradition. I do not of course propose to write here a history of these festivals -- a huge subject and certainly one of great importance in social history -- but a few examples will suffice to give an idea of the place occupied in them by children. The relevant documentation is extremely rich, even if little recourse is had to the predominantly rural descriptions of folklore literature. An abundant iconography and countless urban, middle-class paintings are sufficient in themselves to show the importance of these festivals; people took pains to depict them and preserve the recollection of them beyond the brief moment of their duration.

One of the favourite scenes with the artists and their clients was Twelfth Night, probably the greatest festival of the year. In Spain it has preserved this primacy which in France it has lost to Christmas. When Mme de Sévigné, who was then staying in her château at Les Rochers, learnt that a grandson had been born to her, she wanted her servants to share her joy, and in order to show Mme de Grignan that she had done things fittingly, she wrote to her: 'I gave my servants as much food and drink as on Twelfth Night.'¹⁷ A miniature of Adélaïde de Savoie's book of hours depicts the first episode of the festival.¹⁸ This was at the end of the fifteenth century, but the rites remained unaltered for a long time. Some men and women, friends and relations, are gathered together round the table. One of the guests is holding the Twelfth-cake, is in fact holding it on end. A child, between five and seven years old, is hiding under the table. The artist has placed in his hand a sort of scroll bearing an inscription which begins with the letters Ph. He has thus recorded the moment when, in accordance with tradition, it was a child who shared out the Twelfth-cake. The whole operation was carried out in accordance with a set

formula. The child hid under the table. Then one of the guests cut a piece of the cake and called out to the child, 'Phaebe, Domine...' (whence the letters Ph in the miniature), and the child replied by giving the name of the guest to be served. And so it went on. One of the pieces was reserved for the poor, and the guest who ate it had to give them alms. When the festival lost its religious character, this alms-offering became an obligation for the king to pay a forfeit or give another cake, not to the poor, but to the other guests; but that is of little importance here. Let us simply note the role which tradition allotted to the child in the Twelfth Night ritual. The procedure adopted in the official lotteries of the seventeenth century was in all probability based on this custom; the frontispiece of a book entitled *Critique sur la loterie* shows the lots being drawn by a child,¹⁹ a tradition which has been maintained down to the present day. The lottery draw is carried out in the same way as the Twelfth Night draw. The playing of this part by the child implies his presence in the midst of the adults during the long hours of the Twelfth Night vigil.

The second and supreme episode of the festival is the toast drunk to the guest who has found the traditional bean in his portion of the cake and has thus become the 'bean king': 'The king drinks.' The Flemish and Dutch painters were particularly fond of this theme; the famous Jordaens picture in the Louvre is well known, but the subject is also treated by a great many other Northern painters. For example, the picture by Metsu, of a less burlesque and more truthful realism,²⁰ gives us a very good idea of this evening gathering around the king, of people of all ages and probably all conditions, the servants mingling with their masters. They are all assembled round the table. The king, an old man, is drinking. A child is taking his hat off to him - probably the child who a little earlier had shared out the pieces of the Twelfth-cake, according to tradition. Another child, too young as yet to play this role, is perched in one of those enclosed high-chairs which were still very widely used. He cannot stand on his two feet yet, but he has to be allowed to join in the festivities with everybody else. One of the guests is dressed as a jester; the seventeenth century loved fancy dress and the most grotesque of costumes were appropriate on this occasion, but the jester's costume is to be found in other pictures of this familiar scene, and it is clear that it formed part of the ritual: the king's jester.

It was of course perfectly possible for one of the children to find the bean. Thus Heroard noted in his entry for January 5th, 1607 (the festivities were held on the eve of Epiphany), that the future Louis XIII, then aged six, 'was the king for the first time'. A picture by Steen of 1668

commemorates the coronation of the painter's youngest son.²¹ The latter is wearing a paper crown, he has been perched on a bench as on a throne, and an old woman is tenderly giving him a glass of wine to drink.

Then began the third episode, which lasted until morning. Some of the guests can be seen to be wearing fancy dress; sometimes they have a label attached to their headgear which fixes their part in the play. The 'fool' takes command of a little expedition composed of a few mummers, a musician (usually a fiddler), and once again a child. Tradition allotted this child a well-defined role: he carried the candle of the kings. In Holland it seems that it was black. In France it was in a variety of colours: Mme de Sévigné once said of a woman that she 'was dressed in as many colours as the candle of the kings'. Led by the jester, the 'singers of the star' - that was what they were called in France - went round the neighbourhood begging for food and fuel. An engraving by Mazot of 1641 shows the procession of the singers of the star: two men, a woman playing a guitar, and a child holding the candle of the kings.²²

Thanks to a painted fan of the early eighteenth century,²³ we can follow this procession as it makes its way to a neighbouring house. The hall of the house has been cut open vertically as in the scenery in mystery plays and fifteenth-century paintings, so as to show both the interior of the hall and the street behind the door. In the hall, the toast to the king is being drunk and the queen is being crowned. In the street, a band of mummers is knocking at the door, which will soon be opened to them.

Throughout this festival we can see children taking an active part in the traditional ceremonies. The same is true of Christmas Eve. Heroard tells us that Louis XIII, at the age of three, 'watched the Yule log being lit, and danced and sang at the coming of Christmas'. Perhaps it was he on this occasion who threw salt or wine on the Yule log, in accordance with the ritual described for us in the late sixteenth century by the German-Swiss Thomas Platter when he was studying medicine at Montpellier.²⁴ He was spending Christmas at Uzès. A big log is laid across the fire-dogs. When it has caught, the household gathers together. The youngest child takes a glass of wine in his right hand, together with some breadcrumbs and a pinch of salt, while in his left hand he holds a lighted taper. All heads are bared and the child begins to intone the sign of the cross. In the name of the Father... he drops a pinch of salt at one end of the hearth. In the name of the Son... at the other end of the hearth... and so on. The embers, which are supposed to have a beneficial quality, are preserved after the ceremony. Here again the child plays one of the essential roles laid down by tradition. He played a like role on occasions which were less exceptional

but which at the time possessed the same social character: family meals. It was traditional for grace to be said by one of the youngest children and for the meal to be served by all the children present: they poured out the drinks, changed the dishes, carved the meat... We shall have occasion to study the significance of these customs more closely when we come to examine the structure of the family.²⁵ Let us just note here how common was the custom, from the fourteenth to the sixteenth century, of entrusting children with a special role in the ritual accompanying family and social gatherings, both ordinary and extraordinary.

Other festivals, though still concerning the entire community, gave youth the monopoly of the active roles, and the other age groups looked on as spectators. These festivals already had the appearance of festivals of childhood or youth: we have already seen that the frontier was vague and ill-defined between these two groups, which today are so clearly separated.

In the Middle Ages, on the feast of the Holy Innocents, the children occupied the church; one of them was elected bishop by his companions and presided over the ceremony, which ended with a procession, a collection and a banquet.²⁶ Still observed in the sixteenth century was a custom that on the morning of that day adolescents should surprise their friends in bed in order to give them a whipping, or as the expression went, 'in order to give them the innocents'.

Shrove Tuesday was apparently the feast day of schoolchildren and youth. Fitz Stephen has described it in twelfth-century London in connection with his hero Thomas Becket, who was then a pupil at the cathedral school of St Paul's: 'All the schoolchildren brought their fighting-cocks to their master.'²⁷ Cockfighting – still popular where it survives, but intended for adults – was connected with youth and even with school in the Middle Ages. This is borne out by a fifteenth-century text from Dieppe which lists the payments due to the ferryman at a certain crossing: 'The master who keeps the school at Dieppe, one cock, when the games are being held at the school or elsewhere in the town, and all the other schoolboys of Dieppe shall be carried for this fee.'²⁸ In London, according to Fitz Stephen, Shrove Tuesday began with cockfighting, which went on all through the morning. 'In the afternoon, the young people of the town went into the outskirts for the famous ball game... The adults, relatives and notables came on horseback to watch the young people's games and to become young again with them.' The ball game brought together several communities in a collective action, setting either two parishes or two age groups against one another: 'The ball game is a game which is played on Christmas Day by the members of

the guilds of Cairac in Auvergne [and elsewhere of course]; this game is diversified and divided in such a way that the married men are on one side and the unmarried on the other side; and the aforementioned ball is carried from one place to another and taken from one man by another in order to win the prize, and he who carries it best has the prize for that day.'²⁹

At Avignon, in the sixteenth century, the carnival was organized and led by the abbot of attorneydom, the president of the guild of notaries' and attorneys' clerks;³⁰ these youth leaders were usually, at least in the south of France, 'pleasure leaders', to use the expression coined by a modern scholar, and bore the title of prince of love, king of attorneydom, abbot or captain of youth, or abbot of the guildsmen or children of the town. At Avignon on carnival day the students had the privilege of thrashing Jews and whores unless a ransom was paid.³¹ The history of the University of Avignon tells us that on January 20th, 1660, the Vice-Legate fixed the amount of this ransom at a crown a whore.

The great festivals of youth were those of May and November. We know from Heroard that Louis XIII as a child went on to the Queen's balcony to watch the maypole being set up. May Day came next to Twelfth Night in popularity with the artists, who were fond of depicting it as one of the most popular festivals. It inspired countless paintings, engravings and tapestries. Varagnac has recognized the theme in the Botticelli 'Primavera' in the Uffizi Gallery.³² Elsewhere the traditional ceremonies are depicted with greater realism. A tapestry of 1642 enables us to see what a village or small market town looked like on May Day in the seventeenth century.³³ We are in the street. A middle-aged couple and an old man have come out of one of the houses and are standing on their doorstep waiting to greet a group of girls coming towards them. The first of the girls is carrying a basket of fruit and cakes. These young people go from door to door, and everyone gives them something to eat in return for their good wishes: the house-to-house collection was one of the essential elements of the festivals of youth. In the foreground some little boys, who are still dressed in tunics, like girls, are putting on wreaths of flowers and leaves which their mothers have made for them. In other pictures the procession of young collectors has formed up behind a boy who is carrying the may-tree: this is the case in a Dutch painting of 1700.³⁴ The group of children is running through the village behind the may-tree; the little children are wearing wreaths of flowers. The grown-ups have come out on their doorsteps to greet the procession of children. The may-tree is sometimes represented symbolically by a pole wreathed

in leaves and flowers.³⁵ But the may-tree or maypole does not concern us here. Let us simply note the collections taken by the young people from the adults, and the crowning of the children with flowers, which one must associate with the idea of rebirth implicit in vegetation, an idea symbolized too by the tree which is carried through the streets and then planted.³⁶ These wreaths of flowers became, perhaps a pastime for the children, certainly the sign of their age group in pictorial representations. In the portraits of the time, both of individuals and families, children are shown wearing garlands of flowers or foliage. Thus in the Nicolas Maes picture of two little girls, in Toulouse Museum,³⁷ the first girl is putting on a wreath of flowers with one hand, and with the other hand is taking flowers from a basket which her sister is holding out to her. Another group of festivals of childhood and youth was held at the beginning of November. 'On the 4th and 8th [of November],' writes the student Platter at the end of the sixteenth century, 'there was a masquerade called the masquerade of the cherubim. I too put on a mask and went to Dr Sapota's house, where there was a ball.'³⁸ This was a masquerade for young people, and not simply children. It has completely disappeared from our calendar, ousted by the proximity of All Souls' Day. Public opinion refused to allow a joyful children's masquerade to follow so closely on such a solemn day - but this festival has survived in North America under the name of Hallowe'en. A little later on, Martinmas was the occasion of demonstrations confined to the young and more particularly perhaps to schoolchildren. 'Tomorrow is Martinmas', we read in a scholastic dialogue of the early sixteenth century describing life in the schools of Leipzig.³⁹ 'We schoolboys reap a rich harvest on that day ... it is customary for the poor [schoolboys] to go from door to door collecting money.' Here, as with May Day, we find the house-to-house collections: a practice which was sometimes a token of greeting and sometimes genuine mendicity. One has the impression of coming into contact with the last traces of a very old structure in which society was divided into age groups; nothing remained of this but the custom of reserving for youth an essential part in certain great collective celebrations. Moreover the ritual of these celebrations tended to make little or no distinction between children and adolescents; this relic of a time when the two age groups were treated as one no longer entirely corresponded with actual manners, as may be seen from the seventeenth-century habit of decorating only the little children, the little boys still in tunics, with the flowers and leaves which in the calendars of the Middle Ages adorned adolescents who had reached the age of love.

Whatever the role allocated to childhood and youth, primordial on May Day, incidental on Twelfth Night, it always followed a traditional pattern and corresponded to the roles of a collective game which mobilized the whole of society and brought all age groups together.

* * *

Other circumstances brought about the same participation of people of various ages in a single communal celebration. Thus from the fifteenth to the eighteenth century, and in Germany up to the beginning of the nineteenth century, countless subject pictures - painted, engraved and woven - represented the family gathering in which parents and children formed a little chamber orchestra and accompanied a singer. This was often on the occasion of a meal. Sometimes the table had been cleared. Sometimes the musical interlude occurred in the course of the meal, as in the Dutch picture by Lamén painted about 1640: the company are at table but the meal has been interrupted: the boy who has been waiting at table has stopped; one of the guests, standing with his back to the fire-place with a glass in one hand, is singing, no doubt a drinking song, and another guest has taken up his lute to accompany him.⁴⁰

We no longer have any idea of the place which music, singing and dancing used to occupy in everyday life. The author of an *Introduction to Practical Music*, published in 1597, tells how circumstances made a musician of him. He was dining in company: 'But supper being ended, and music books, according to custom, being brought to the table, the mistress of the house presented me with a part, earnestly requesting me to sing: but when, after many excuses, I protested unfeignedly that I could not, everyone began to wonder; yes, some whispered to others, demanding how I was brought up.'⁴¹ If the ability to sing a part or play an instrument was perhaps rather more common in Elizabethan England than on the Continent, it was also widespread in France, Italy, Spain and Germany, in accordance with an old medieval tradition which, in spite of changes in taste and technical improvements, lasted into the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, dying out sooner or later according to the region. It no longer exists today except in Germany, Central Europe and Russia. It was very strong in those days in aristocratic and middle-class circles where groups of people liked to have themselves portrayed taking part in a concert of chamber music. It was strong too in lower-class circles, among peasants and even beggars, whose instruments were the bagpipe or the hurdy-gurdy, or else the fiddle, which had not yet been raised to the

dignity of the present-day violin. Children made music from an early age. Louis XIII when he was very young sang popular or satirical songs which bore no resemblance to the children's songs of the past two centuries; he also knew the names of the strings of the lute. Children took part in all the concerts of chamber music depicted in the iconography of old. They also played among themselves, and it became a commonplace of painting to depict them holding some musical instrument; witness the two boys portrayed by Franz Hals,⁴² one of whom is accompanying on the lute his brother or friend who is singing; witness the countless children depicted playing the flute by Franz Hals or Le Nain.⁴³ In a picture by Brouwer, some rather ragged urchins in the street are shown eagerly listening to a hurdy-gurdy being played by a blind man straight out of a court of miracles: a very common theme in the seventeenth century.⁴⁴ A Dutch painting by Vinckelbaons deserves special mention on account of a significant detail illustrating the new attitude to childhood.⁴⁵ As in other paintings of its kind, a hurdy-gurdy grinder is playing for an audience of children, and the scene has been captured just as the children are running up at the sound of the music. One of them is too small and has been left behind by the rest, so his father has picked him up and is running after the others so that the child shall not miss anything: the delighted child is holding his hands out towards the hurdy-gurdy.

The same precocity is to be seen in dancing. We have already observed that Louis XIII at the age of three danced the galliard, the saraband and the old bourrée. Let us compare a painting by Le Nain⁴⁶ and an engraving by Guérard.⁴⁷ In Le Nain's painting we are shown a round-dance of little girls and boys; one of the latter is still wearing a tunic with a collar. Two little girls have joined hands and are holding them up high to form a bridge, and the round is passing underneath. The Guérard engraving also depicts a round-dance, but the dancers are adults, and one of the young women is jumping in the air like a little girl with a skipping-rope. There is scarcely any difference between the children's dance and that of the adults. Later, however, the adults' dance would change in character and finally, with the waltz, be limited to the individual couple. Abandoned by town and court, by middle-class and aristocracy alike, the old collective dances would survive in the country districts, where the modern folklorists would discover them, and in the children's round-dances of the nineteenth century: in both these forms they are dying out today.

It is impossible to separate dance and drama. Dancing in those days was more of a collective activity and less clearly distinguished from ballet than our modern ballroom dancing in couples. We have seen in Heroard's

diary how much Louis XIII's contemporaries liked dancing, ballet-dancing and play-acting, genres which were still fairly closely linked: a man would play a part in a ballet as naturally as he would dance at a ball (the link between the two words is significant: the same word later split into two, the ball for amateurs and the ballet for professionals). There were ballets in plays, even in the scholastic theatre of the Jesuit colleges. At Louis XIII's court, authors and actors were recruited on the spot from the nobles but also from the valets and soldiers; children both acted in the plays and attended the performances.

Was this true only of the court? No, it was common practice. A passage from Sorel shows that in the country villages people had never given up performing plays more or less comparable to the old mystery plays or to the present-day Passion plays of Central Europe. 'I think that he [Ariste, who found professional actors boring] would have been delighted if he could have seen as I have *all the boys* in a village performing the tragedy of Dives on a stage higher than the roof-tops, on which all the characters walked round seven or eight times in pairs to show themselves off before the play began, like the little figures above a clock... I was fortunate enough on another occasion to see the Story of the Prodigal Son and that of Nebuchadnezzar, and later the Loves of Médor and Angélique, and the Descent of Radamont into the Underworld, performed by actors of such quality.'⁴⁸ Sorel's speaker is being sarcastic; he did not really appreciate these popular entertainments. In most cases the text and the setting were governed by oral tradition. In the Basque country this tradition was established before the plays disappeared. Towards the end of the eighteenth century some 'Basque pastorals' were written and published, the subjects of which came from the romances of chivalry and the Renaissance pastorals.⁴⁹

Like music and dancing, these plays united the whole community and brought together the various age groups in both actors and audience.

* * *

We are now going to see what was the traditional moral attitude towards these popular games and pastimes. The vast majority accepted games indiscriminately and without any reservations. At the same time, a powerful and educated minority of rigid moralists condemned nearly all of them out of hand and roundly denounced them as immoral, allowing scarcely any exceptions. The moral indifference of the majority and the intolerance of a prudish elite existed side by side for a long time. A compromise was arrived at in the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth

centuries which foreshadowed the modern attitude to games, an attitude fundamentally different from the old. It concerns us here because it also bears witness to a new attitude to childhood: a desire to safeguard its morality and also to educate it, by forbidding it to play games henceforth classified as evil and by encouraging it to play games henceforth recognized as good.

The high regard in which games of chance were still held in the seventeenth century enables us to gauge the extent of the old attitude of moral indifference. Nowadays we regard games of chance as suspect and dangerous, and the proceeds of gambling as the least moral and least respectable of revenues. We still play games of chance, but with an uneasy conscience. This was not yet the case in the seventeenth century: the uneasy conscience is the result of a thoroughgoing process of moralization which made the nineteenth century a society of 'right-minded people'.

La Fortune des gens de qualité et des gentilhommes particuliers is a book of advice to young noblemen on how to carve out a career for themselves.⁵⁰ The author, the Maréchal de Caillièrre, certainly has nothing of the trickster or adventurer about him: he has written an edifying bibliography of the works of Père Ange de Joyeuse, the Holy Leaguer monk; he is a pious man if not a bigot; and he has no originality or talent whatever. His observations accordingly represent current opinion among respectable opinion in 1661, the date when his book was published. He is for ever putting young people on their guard against loose living; if the latter is the enemy of virtue, it is also the enemy of wealth, for one cannot possess the one without the other: 'The young rake sees the occasions of pleasing his Master escape him through the windows of the brothel and the tavern.' The twentieth-century reader, glancing through these commonplace places with a somewhat weary eye, is all the more surprised to find this punctilious moralist discussing the social utility of games of chance. One chapter is entitled: 'If a Particulier [an abbreviation of *gentilhomme particulier*, as compared with the *gens de qualité*, in other words a minor nobleman in more or less impoverished circumstances] should play games of chance and how?' It is not just a matter of course: the Maréchal admits that the professional moralists, the clergy, expressly condemn all forms of gambling. This might be expected to cause our author some embarrassment, and in fact it obliges him to explain himself at some length. He remains faithful to the old attitude of the laity, which he endeavours to justify on moral grounds: 'It is not impossible to prove that it can be more useful than harmful if it is accompanied by the necessary circumstances... I maintain that gambling is as dangerous for a man of quality [i.e. a rich

nobleman] as it is useful for a Particulier [i.e. an impoverished nobleman]. The one risks a great deal because he is extremely rich, and the other risks nothing because he is not, yet a Particulier can hope for as much from the luck of the game as a great lord.' The one has everything to lose, the other everything to gain - a curious moral distinction!

But gambling, according to Caillièrre, offers other advantages besides financial profit: 'I have always held that the love of gambling was a gift of Nature whose utility I have recognized.' 'I take as the basis of my argument the fact that we have a natural love of gambling.' 'Games of skill [which we should be more inclined to recommend today] are pleasant to watch but unsuitable for making money.' 'I have heard a wise gambler who had made a considerable fortune out of gambling say that he had found no better way of turning gambling into an art than that of mastering his passion and regarding this skill as a money-making profession.' The gambler should have no anxiety, for bad luck will not leave him at a loss - a gambler always finds it easier to borrow money 'than a good tradesman'. 'What is more, this skill gives the Particulier admission to the best society, and a clever man can turn this to good account if he knows how to use his opportunities... I know men who have no revenue but a pack of cards and three dice, but who live in greater luxury and magnificence than provincial lords with their great estates [but no ready money].'

And the worthy Maréchal concludes with this advice: 'I advise the man who knows and loves games of chance to risk his money on them: as he has little to lose, he is not risking much and can gain a great deal.' For the biographer of Père Ange, the game of chance is not simply a pastime but a profession, a means of making one's fortune and extending one's acquaintances - a perfectly honourable means.

Caillièrre is not the only one of this opinion. The Chevalier de Méré, regarded in his time as a typical man of the world or man of breeding, expounds the same idea in his *Suite du Commerce du Monde*.⁵¹ 'I would point out too that gambling has a good effect when a man indulges in it skilfully and with good grace: it is the means by which a man can obtain admission to any company where gambling is practised, and princes would often be extremely bored if they were unable to indulge in it.' He cites some august examples: Louis XIII (who as a child won a turquoise in a lottery), Richelieu 'who found relaxation in gambling', Mazarin, Louis XIV, and 'the Queen his mother [who] no longer did anything but gamble and say her prayers'. 'Whatever merits one may have, it is difficult to win a great reputation without entering high society and gambling is an easy way of obtaining admission. It is even a sure means of

enjoying good company without saying a word, especially if one plays like a man of honour' – that is to say, avoiding 'eccentricity', 'caprice' and superstition. 'One must play like a man of honour, ready to win or lose without showing whether one has won or lost in one's expression or behaviour.' But one should beware of ruining one's friends: try as we may to talk ourselves out of it, 'we cannot help harbouring a grudge against those who have ruined us'.

If games of chance aroused no moral condemnation, there was no reason to forbid children to play them: hence the countless scenes, which art has handed down to us, of children playing cards, dice, backgammon, etc. The scholastic dialogues which schoolboys used as both manuals of etiquette and Latin glossaries sometimes gave recognition to games of chance as a practice too common to be condemned if not condoned. The Spaniard Vivès confines himself to giving a few rules in the interests of moderation: thus he says when one should gamble, with whom (one should avoid unruly persons), at what games, for what stake ('the stake should not be a trifle, since this is ridiculous and not worth playing for, nor should it be so high that it troubles the mind before the game begins'), 'in what manner', as a good gambler, that is to say, and for how long.⁵²

Even in the colleges, which afforded the best opportunities for raising moral standards, playing for money continued for a long time, in spite of the repugnance which the pedagogues felt for it. At the beginning of the eighteenth century the regulations of the Oratorian College at Troyes stated: 'There shall be no playing for money, unless it is for very small sums and by permission.' The modern university teacher who quoted this text in 1880, somewhat shocked by customs so far removed from the educational principles of his time, added: 'This was practically tantamount to permitting playing for money.'⁵³

As late as 1830 or so, there was undisguised gambling and heavy betting in the English public schools. The author of *Tom Brown's Schooldays* describes the betting fever which the Derby aroused at that time among the boys at Rugby;⁵⁴ Dr Arnold's reforms would later rid the English schools of practices several centuries old. From the seventeenth century to the present day a somewhat complex moral attitude towards games of chance has evolved: as the opinion gained ground that gambling was a dangerous passion, a serious vice, then custom tended to change some of the gambling games in order to reduce the element of chance – which still remained – in favour of the mental skill and intellectual efforts of the gambler, so that certain card or chess games became less liable to the censure applied to the principle of the game of chance.

Another pastime underwent a different evolution: dancing. We have seen that dancing occupied an important place in the everyday life of both children and adults. Our present-day morality ought to find this less shocking than the general practice of gambling. We know that monks and nuns themselves danced on occasion without scandalizing public opinion, at least before the seventeenth-century movement to reform the religious communities. We know what life was like at Maubuisson Abbey when Mère Angélique Arnauld arrived there at the beginning of the seventeenth century to reform it. It was not particularly edifying but not necessarily scandalous – too worldly, if anything. 'On summer days', M. Cognet tells us, quoting Mère Angélique de Saint-Jean, her sister's biographer, 'when the weather was fine, after vespers had been finished with, the Prioress used to take the community for a walk a good way from the Abbey, beside the ponds by the Paris road, when often the monks of Saint-Martin de Pontoise, who live near by, would come and dance with these nuns, and this as naturally as one would do something nobody would dream of criticizing.'⁵⁵ These round-dances of monks and nuns aroused the indignation of Mère Angélique de Saint-Jean, and it cannot be denied that they did not correspond with the spirit of monastic life; but they did not have the same shocking effect on public opinion that would be produced today by monks and nuns dancing together clasped in each other's arms as the modern style of dancing demands. Certainly these religious persons had easy consciences. There were traditional observances too which allowed for dances of clerics on certain occasions. At Auxerre every new canon marked his elevation by presenting the parishioners with a ball which was then used for a great community game.⁵⁶ This game was always played between two sides, either bachelors against married men or parish against parish. The festivities at Auxerre began with the singing of the *Victimae laudes Paschae*: and ended with a round danced by all the canons together. The historians tell us that this custom, which went back to the fourteenth century, was still alive in the eighteenth. In all probability the advocates of the Trent reforms looked on this round-dance as disapprovingly as Mère Angélique de Saint-Jean had looked on the dances of the nuns of Maubuisson and the monks of Pontoise: different times have different ideas about what is profane. Dances in the seventeenth century did not have the sexual character they would acquire much later, in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. There were even some professional and trade dances: in Biscay there were special dances for wet-nurses in which the latter carried their charges in their arms.⁵⁷ In the society of the ancien regime, games in all their various

forms - the sport, the parlour game, the game of chance - had an importance which they have lost in our technological society but which they still have today in certain primitive or archaic societies.⁵⁸ Yet to this passion which affected all ages and conditions, the Church opposed an absolute disapproval, and with the Church, laymen enamoured of order and discipline who were also eager to tame what was still a wild population, to civilize what was still a primitive way of life.

The medieval Church also condemned games in all their forms, especially in the communities of scholarship clerks which were to become the colleges and universities of the ancien regime. We can obtain some idea of this intransigence from the statutes of these communities. Reading them, the English historian of the medieval universities, J. Rashdall, was struck by the general proscription of all pastimes, the refusal to admit that there might be any innocent pastimes, in schools whose pupils for the most part were none the less aged from ten to fifteen.⁵⁹ They condemned the immorality of games of chance, the indecency of parlour games, the theatre and dancing, and the brutality of physical sports, which in point of fact often did degenerate into brawls. The statutes of the colleges were drawn up in such a way as to limit the opportunities for recreation as much as the risks of delinquency. *A fortiori*, the ban was strict and binding on the religious, who were forbidden by an edict of the Council of Sens of 1485 to play tennis, especially in their shirts (it is true that in the fifteenth century a man without a doublet or robe, and with his breeches undone, was practically naked). One has the impression that the Church, incapable as yet of controlling a laity given up to riotous amusements, set out to safeguard its clerics by forbidding them to play any games whatever, thus establishing a fantastic contrast in ways of life - if the ban had really been observed. Here, for example, is what the regulations of Narbonne College had to say about its scholars' pastimes in 1379: 'Nobody in the house is to play tennis or hockey or other dangerous games [*insultuosos*], under pain of a fine of six deniers; nobody is to play dice, or any other games played for money, or indulge in table amusements [*comessationes*: blow-outs], under pain of a fine of ten sous.' Games and guzzling are put on the same level. Is there never to be any relaxation then? 'Scholars may only join occasionally and at rare intervals [what precautions, but how quickly they must have been swept aside, for the words opened the door to all the forbidden excesses!] in respectable or recreational games [but which, seeing that even tennis was forbidden? Perhaps parlour games?], staking a pint of wine or else some fruit, and on condition that such games are played quietly and not habitually [*sine mora*].'⁶⁰

At Seez College in 1477: 'We decree that nobody shall play dice, or other evil or forbidden games, or even recognized games such as tennis, especially in the common places [i.e. the cloister and the common-room used as a refectory], and that if such games are played elsewhere it shall be infrequently [*non nimis continue*].'⁶¹ In the Bull of Cardinal d'Amboise that founded Montaigu College in 1501 one chapter is entitled: *De exercitio corporali*.⁶² What is understood by that? The text begins with a somewhat ambiguous statement: 'Physical exercise seems to be of little use when it is combined with spiritual studies and religious exercises; on the other hand, it greatly develops the health when it is indulged in alternately with theoretical and scientific studies.' But by 'physical exercises' the author means not so much games as manual work (as opposed to intellectual work), and he gives pride of place to domestic tasks, thus recognizing their value as a form of relaxation: work in the kitchen, cleaning, serving at table. 'In all the above exercises [i.e. these domestic tasks] it must never be forgotten that one should work as hard and as speedily as possible.' Games come along only after the tasks have been completed, and with considerable reservations! 'When the Father [the head of the community] considers that the minds wearied by work and study need the relaxation afforded by recreations, he will tolerate these [*indulgebit*].' Certain games are allowed in the common places, decent games which are neither tiring nor dangerous. At Montaigu, there were two groups of students: scholarship boys who, as in other foundations, were called the *pauperes*, and boarders who paid for board and lodging. The two groups lived apart from one another. The regulations stipulate that the scholars must not play so often or for so long as the boarders, no doubt because they were under an obligation to be better pupils and therefore had to work harder. The decrees reforming the University of Paris in 1452, decrees inspired by what was already a modern desire for discipline, maintain all the traditional severity: 'The masters [of the colleges] will not allow their students, at trade festivals or elsewhere, to dance immoral and immodest dances, or to wear indecent lay coats [short coats, without a robe]. But they will allow them to play decently and enjoyably, as a relaxation and just recreation after work.' 'They will not allow them, in the course of these festivals, to drink in the town or to go from house to house.'⁶³ This ban is aimed at the door-to-door greetings, accompanied by collections, which tradition conceded to young people during the seasonal festivals. In one of his scholastic dialogues, Vivès sums up the situation in Paris in the sixteenth century in the following terms: 'Among the students, no other game than tennis can be played with the masters' permission, but

sometimes the students secretly play cards and chess, the little children play garignons, and the naughtiest boys play dice.⁶⁴ In fact the students, like other boys, made no bones about visiting taverns and brothels, playing dice and going dancing. Yet the strictness of the regulations was never modified in the light of their inefficacy, the authorities showing a stubbornness quite astonishing to the modern mind, which is more concerned about efficacy than principle.

Magistrates, police officers and jurists, all enamoured of order and good administration, discipline and authority, gave their support to the schoolmasters and churchmen. For centuries on end, an uninterrupted succession of decrees was published forbidding the admission of students to gaming-rooms. Decrees of this kind were still appearing in the eighteenth century; witness this edict issued by the Lieutenant-General of Police of Moulins on March 27th, 1752, of which a copy intended for public display is kept in the Musée des Arts et Traditions Populaires: 'It is forbidden for the masters of tennis-courts and billiard-rooms to allow students and servants to play during school hours, and for the masters of bowling and skittle alleys to allow students and servants to play at any time.' The reader will have noted the linking of servants with students: they were often of the same age and gave similar grounds for fearing their high spirits and lack of self-control. Bowls and skittles, nowadays quiet pastimes, used to inspire so many brawls that in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the police magistrates sometimes banned them completely, trying to extend to the whole of society the restrictions which the churchmen wanted to impose on clerics and students. Thus these champions of social discipline to all intents and purposes classified games among quasi criminal activities such as drunkenness and prostitution, which could be tolerated at a pinch, but which had to be forbidden at the slightest sign of excess.

This attitude of outright condemnation was modified in the course of the seventeenth century, however, largely owing to the influence of the Jesuits. The humanists of the Renaissance, in their anti-scholastic reaction, had already noted the educational possibilities of games. But it was the Jesuit colleges which gradually induced the authorities to assume a more tolerant attitude towards games. The Fathers realized from the start that it was neither possible nor even desirable to suppress them or to make them dependent on occasional, precarious and shameful permission. They proposed to assimilate them, to introduce them officially into their curricula and regulations, on condition that they chose and controlled them. Brought under discipline in this way, those pastimes which were

deemed to be wholesome were accepted and recommended, and were henceforth regarded as means of education no less respectable than study. Not only was there no more talk of the immorality of dancing, but dancing was taught in school, because by harmonizing the movements of the body it eliminated awkwardness and gave a boy a good bearing, 'a fine air'. Similarly play-acting, which the seventeenth-century moralists condemned out of hand, found its way into school. The Jesuits began with Latin dialogues on sacred subjects, then went on to French plays on profane subjects. Even ballet-dancing was allowed, despite the opposition of the authorities of the Company: 'The taste for dancing', writes Père de Dainville, 'so pronounced among the contemporaries of the Roi Soleil, who in 1669 was to found the Académie de la Danse, prevailed over the edicts of the Fathers General. After 1650 there was scarcely a single tragedy which did not have a ballet in the interval.'⁶⁵

An album of engravings by Crispin de Pas, dated 1602, depicts scenes of school life 'in a Batavian college'. The class-rooms and the library are shown to us, but so is a dancing lesson, a game of tennis and a ball game.⁶⁶ A new attitude had thus made its appearance: education had adopted games which it had hitherto forbidden or else tolerated as a lesser evil. The Jesuits published Latin treatises on gymnastics giving the rules of the recommended games. The need for physical exercise was admitted to an ever greater extent. Fénelon wrote: 'The games which children like best are those in which the body is in motion; they are happy provided they can change position.' The doctors of the eighteenth century, taking as their inspiration the old 'exercise games' in the Jesuits' Latin treatises, elaborated a new technique of bodily hygiene: physical culture.⁶⁷ In the *Traité de l'éducation des enfants* of 1722, by de Crousaz, a professor of philosophy and mathematics at Lausanne, we read: 'While it is growing, it is essential for the human body to be greatly agitated... I consider games affording exercise to be preferable to all others.' Tissot's *Gymnastique médicale et chirurgicale* recommends physical games as the best exercises: 'They exercise all the parts of the body at the same time... quite apart from the fact that the action of the lungs is constantly stimulated by the shouts and calls of the players.'

At the close of the eighteenth century, games found another justification, this time patriotic: they prepared a man for war. This was the time when the training of a soldier became what was virtually a scientific technique, the time too which saw the birth of modern nationalism. A link was established between the educational games of the Jesuits, the gymnastics of the doctors, the training of the soldier and the demands of patriotism.

Under the Consulate there appeared a *Gymnastique de la Jeunesse, ou Traité élémentaire des jeux d'exercices considérés sous le rapport de leur utilité physique et morale*. The authors, Duvivier and Jauffret, stated bluntly that military drill is 'the drill which has been the basis of gymnastics from the beginning of time and which is particularly suitable for the period [the year XI] and the country in which we are writing'. 'Dedicated in advance to the common defence by the nature and spirit of our constitution, our children are soldiers before they are born.' 'Everything military breathes something great and noble which raises a man above himself.'

Thus, under the successive influence of the humanist pedagogues, the doctors of the Enlightenment and the first nationalists, we have come from the violent and suspect games of the Middle Ages to gymnastics and military training, from popular tussles to gymnastic societies.

* * *

This evolution was dictated by considerations of morality, health and the common weal. A parallel evolution divided up according to age and rank games which were originally common to the whole of society.

In his history of classical literature Daniel Mornet wrote of parlour games: 'When the young people of the middle classes of my generation [Mornet was born in 1878] played "parlour games" at the *matinées dansantes* of their families, they rarely suspected that these games, more numerous and complex than in their time, had been the delight of high society two hundred and fifty years before.'⁶⁸ Much earlier than that in fact. In the fifteenth-century book of hours of the Duchesse de Bourgogne we have an example of a 'paper game': a lady is sitting with a basket in her lap in which some young people are putting slips of paper.⁶⁹ At the end of the Middle Ages 'selling games' were very fashionable. 'A lady would give a gentleman or a gentleman would give a lady the name of some flower or object, and the other had to respond immediately and without a moment's hesitation with a compliment or a rhymed epigram.' It is the modern editor of Christine de Pisan's poetry whom we have to thank for this description of the rules of the game - Christine de Pisan wrote seventy epigrams for 'selling games'.⁷⁰ This procedure doubtless originated in courtly manners. It then passed into popular song and also into children's games: the game of *crambo* which, as we have seen, amused Louis XIII at the age of three. But it was kept up too by adults or youths who had left childhood far behind. A nineteenth-century sheet of

faire
des
poésies

'tuppence-coloured' pictures still shows the same games, but it bears the title 'Games of old', which suggests that fashion was dropping them, and that they were becoming either provincial or childish - hot cockles, the whistle game, the knife in the water-jug, hide-and-seek, forfeits, sweet knight, blind-man's buff, the little man who doesn't laugh, the love-pot, the sulker, the stool of repentance, the kiss under the chandelier, the cradle of love. Some would become children's games, while others would retain the ambiguous and far from innocent character which had previously earned them the condemnation of the moralists, even the more tolerant moralists such as Erasmus.⁷¹

Sorel's *Maison des Jeux* enables us to study this evolution at an interesting stage, in the first half of the seventeenth century.⁷² Sorel makes a distinction between parlour games, 'games of exercise' and 'games of chance'. The last two, he observes, are 'common to every sort of person, being played by valets as much as by masters... as easy for the vulgar and the ignorant as for the clever and the learned'. Parlour games on the other hand are 'games of wit and conversation'. In principle 'they can appeal only to persons of quality, bred on civility and gallantry, quick at repartee and speeches, and full of knowledge and judgment, and cannot be played by others.' This at least is Sorel's opinion: this is what he would like parlour games to be. In fact, at this time parlour games were also popular with children and people of humble birth, 'the vulgar and the ignorant'. Sorel has to admit this. 'To begin with, we shall consider the children's games... There are some which are exercises - hockey, spinning the top, ladders, ball, battledore and shuttlecock, and 'trying to catch one another with one's eyes open or blindfolded'. But 'there are others which depend rather more on the mind', and he cites as an example the 'rhymed dialogues', Christine de Pisan's 'selling games', which still amused grown-ups and children alike. Sorel guesses at the origins of these games: 'These children's games in which there are a few rhymed words (*crambo*, for instance) are usually couched in very old and very simple words, and these are taken from some history or romance of olden days, which shows how people amused themselves in the past by means of a naive imitation of what had happened to knights or to ladies of high degree.'

Sorel finally observes that in the lower classes these children's games are also played by adults, an observation of great interest and importance for us: 'As these are children's games, they also serve for rustic persons whose minds are not more advanced than children's in this respect.' Yet at the beginning of the seventeenth century Sorel has to admit that 'sometimes

persons of quite high rank could play these games for recreation', and public opinion sees nothing wrong in this: these 'mixed' games, those common to all ages and conditions, 'are deemed respectable on account of the good use to which they have always been put'. 'There are certain kinds of games in which the mind is not very active, so that the very young can play them, although it is true that aged and very serious persons also engage in them on occasion.' But some people – Ariste in Sorel's *Maison des Jeux*, for instance – consider these pastimes of children and villeins unworthy of a respectable man. Sorel's speaker is reluctant to ban them so completely: 'Even those which seem lowly can be elevated by giving them a different application from the first, which I have described so that it can be used as a model.' And he then tries to raise the intellectual level of the parlour games played indoors. Truth to tell, the modern reader, after studying Sorel's description of the game of mora – in which the leader raises one, two or three fingers, and the company have to repeat the same gesture immediately – finds it hard to see in what respect mora is more elevated and intelligent than crambo, which Sorel dismisses as fit only for children. But he finds it even more surprising that a novelist and historian such as Sorel should devote a monumental work to the description and revision of these pastimes; here in fact we have further proof of the importance which games occupied in the preoccupations of the society of old.

Thus in the seventeenth century a distinction was made between the games of adults and noblemen and the games of children and yokels. The distinction was an old one, dating back to the Middle Ages. But in the Middle Ages, from the twelfth century to be precise, it applied only to certain games, few in number and distinctive in character: the courtly games. Before that, before the final constitution of the idea of nobility, games were common to all people, whatever their rank. Certain games retained their universality for a long time: François I and Henri II did not regard wrestling as beneath them, and Henri II used to join in ball games – something which would no longer have been accepted in the next century. Richelieu vaulted in his gallery like Tristan at the court of King Mark, while Louis XIV played tennis. But these traditional games were to be dropped in their turn in the eighteenth century by people of quality.

As far back as the twelfth century, certain games had been reserved for nobility and specifically for adults.⁷³ Thus while wrestling was a common sport, the tournament and the ring were knightly games. Villeins were denied admission to tournaments, and no children, even of noble birth, were allowed to take part in them: for what was perhaps the first time,

tradition forbade children, and at the same time villeins, to participate in collective games. The result was that the children amused themselves by imitating the forbidden tournaments: the calendar of the Grimani breviary shows us some grotesque children's tournaments, in which one participant is thought to be the future Charles V, with the children sitting astride barrels instead of horses.

This marked the beginning of the idea that noblemen should avoid mixing with villeins and taking their sport among them: an idea which did not succeed in imposing itself everywhere, at least until the eighteenth century, when the nobility disappeared as a class with a social function and was replaced by the bourgeoisie. In the sixteenth and at the beginning of the seventeenth century, a great many iconographic documents bear witness to the mixing of the classes at the seasonal festivals. In one of the dialogues in *The Courtier* by Balthazar Castiglione,⁷⁴ a sixteenth-century classic translated into every language, the subject arouses various opinions: 'In our land of Lombardy, says Pallavicino, we do not hold this opinion [that the courtier should play only with other noblemen]. Thus there are several noblemen who at festival-time dance all day in the sun with the peasants, and play with them at throwing the bar, wrestling, running and vaulting, and I see no harm in this.' A few of those present protest; they concede that at a pinch a nobleman may play with peasants, but only if he can 'win the day' with no obvious effort: he must be 'practically sure of winning'. 'If there is anything which is too ugly and shameful for words, it is the sight of a nobleman being defeated by a peasant, especially in wrestling.' The sporting spirit did not exist at that time, except in knightly games, and then in a different form inspired by the feudal concept of honour.

At the end of the sixteenth century the tournament died out. Other games took its place in the gatherings of young noblemen at court, and in the classes in military training at the academies where, during the first half of the seventeenth century, noblemen were given instruction in riding and the use of arms. There was the quintain: the player, on horseback, tilted at a wooden target, which took the place of the living target of the old tournaments, a Turk's head. And there was the ring: the player had to unhook a ring as he rode past. In the book by Pluvinel, the principal of one of these academies, an engraving by Crispin de Pas shows Louis XIII as a child tilting at the quintain.⁷⁵ The author writes of the quintain that it was something between 'the ferocious pleasure of breaking a lance with an adversary [the tournament] and the gentle pastime of tilting the ring'. At Montpellier in the 1550s, so the medical student Félix Platter

tells us, 'On June 7th the nobility played at tilting the ring; the horses were richly caparisoned, covered with cloths and decked with plumes of all colours.'⁷⁰ Heroard, in his diary of Louis XIII's childhood, makes frequent mention of ring-tilting contests at the Louvre and Saint-Germain. 'The practice of tilting at the ring is engaged in every day', observes the specialist Pluvinel. The quintain and the ring, as games reserved for the nobility, took the place of the tournaments and knightly games of the Middle Ages. But then what happened to them? They did not disappear completely as one might imagine; but nowadays you will not find them on the sports grounds of upper-class districts but at the fair, where you can still shoot at Turks' heads and where the children, on the wooden horses of the roundabouts, can still tilt at the ring. This is what remains of the knightly tournaments of the Middle Ages: children's games and popular amusements.

There is no lack of other examples of this evolution which gradually transfers the games of old into the repository of childish and popular games. Take the hoop for instance. In the late Middle Ages the hoop was not a children's monopoly. In a sixteenth-century tapestry we can see adolescents playing with hoops; one of them is just about to start his rolling with a stick.⁷⁷ In a woodcut by Jean Leclerc dating from the late sixteenth century there are some quite big children who, not content with bowling their hoops along, are jumping through them as if they were playing with a skipping-rope.⁷⁸ The hoop was used for acrobatics, difficult figures on occasion. It was familiar enough to young people, and old enough too, to be used in traditional dances such as that at Avignon in 1596 described for us by the Swiss student Félix Platter: on Shrove Tuesday, groups of young men gathered together, wearing masks and dressed as pilgrims, peasants, seamen, Italians, Spaniards, Alsatians, or women, and escorted by musicians. 'In the evening they danced in the street the dance of the hoops, in which many youths and girls of the nobility took part, dressed in white and covered with jewels. Each person held a white-and-gold hoop in the air as he danced. They went into the inn where I followed them to see them from close to. It was wonderful to see them passing backwards and forwards under those rings, bending and straightening up and passing one another in time, to the sound of the instruments.' Dances of this kind are still to be found in the repertory of villages in the Basque country.

By the end of the seventeenth century it seems that in the towns the hoop had been left to the children: an engraving by Mérian shows us a little child bowling his hoop as little children would during the whole of

the nineteenth century and part of the twentieth.⁷⁹ From being the plaything of all ages, and an accessory used in dancing and acrobatics, the hoop would gradually be confined to smaller and smaller children until it was finally abandoned altogether, illustrating once again the truth that, in order to retain the favour of children, a toy must have some connection with the world of adults.

We saw at the beginning of this chapter that Louis XIII as a child was told stories, the stories of Mélusine, fairy-stories. But these stories were also intended for grown-ups. 'Mme de Sévigné', observes M. E. Storer, the historian of the fashion for fairy-stories at the end of the seventeenth century, 'was brought up on fairy-tales.'⁸⁰ Though amused by M. de Coulanges's witticisms about a certain Cuverdon, she did not respond to them 'for fear that a toad might jump up at her face to punish her for her ingratitude'. Here she was referring to a fable by the troubadour Gauthier de Coincy which had been handed down by tradition.

On August 6th, 1677, we find Mme de Sévigné writing: 'Mme de Coulanges... was kind enough to tell us the stories with which the ladies of Versailles are amused: this is known as coddling them. So she coddled us and told us about a green island on which a princess was brought up who was lovelier than the day. It was the fairies who breathed on her all the time... This story went on for a good hour.' We know too that Colbert 'in his leisure moments had servants specially employed to tell him stories very similar to fairy-tales'.⁸¹

However, in the second half of the century, people began to consider these stories too simple, while at the same time a new sort of interest was taken in them which tended to make a fashionable literary genre out of oral recitations of a naive, traditional character. This taste found expression both in publications intended for children, at least in principle, such as Perrault's tales, and in more serious works meant for grown-ups, from which children and the lower orders were excluded. The evolution of the fairy-story recalls that of the parlour game described above. This is Mme de Murat speaking to the modern fairies: 'The old fairies, your predecessors, now seem very frivolous creatures compared to you. Their occupations were menial and childish, and could amuse only servant-girls and nannies. Their only interest was in sweeping out the house, putting on the stew, doing the washing, rocking the children and sending them to sleep, milking the cows, churning the butter, and a thousand other trivialities of that kind... That is why nothing remains to us today of their activities but fairy-tales... They were nothing but beggar-girls... But you, my ladies [the modern fairies], have taken a new road. You busy

yourselves only with great things, of which the least important are to give wit to those who have none, beauty to the ugly, eloquence to the ignorant, and wealth to the poor.'

But some authors continued to appreciate the flavour of the old stories, which they had listened to in the past, and sought rather to preserve it. Mlle Lhéritier introduces her stories in the following way: 'A hundred times my nanny or my love told me this story at night beside the fire; all I am doing is adding a little embroidery. You may well think it surprising ... that these tales, incredible though they are, should have been handed down to us from century to century without anyone taking the trouble to write them down. They are not easy to believe, but as long as there are children in this world, mothers and grandmothers, they will be remembered.'

People began to consolidate a tradition which had hitherto been oral: certain tales 'which had been told me when I was a child ... have been put on paper by ingenious pens within the last few years'. Mlle Lhéritier thought that the sources were very old: 'Tradition tells me that the troubadours or story-tellers of Provence invented Finette a long time before Abelard or the famous Comte Thibaud de Champagne produced their romances.' Thus the story became a literary genre approximating to the philosophical tale, or else affecting an old-fashioned style, like Mlle Lhéritier's work: 'You must admit that the best stories we have are those which imitate most closely the style and simplicity of our nannies.'

At the end of the seventeenth century, while the story was becoming a new form of serious written literature, the oral recitation of stories was being abandoned by the very people for whom the fashion of the written story was intended. Colbert and Mme de Sévigné listened to the stories which were told them and nobody thought of stressing the fact as something out of the ordinary; it was a commonplace recreation like reading a detective story today. In 1771, however, this was no longer the case, and among adults in good society the old, half-forgotten stories of the oral tradition were sometimes the object of a curiosity of an archaeological or ethnological nature foreshadowing the modern interest in folklore and slang. We find the Duchesse de Choiseul writing to Mme du Deffand that Choiseul 'is having fairy-stories read to him all day. We are all reading them now. We find them just as probable as present-day history.' This was as if one of our twentieth-century statesmen, after a political defeat, started reading Tintin or Mickey Mouse in his retirement. The Duchesse de Choiseul was tempted, and wrote two stories; she adopted the tone of the philosophical tale, if we judge by the beginning of *Le*

Prince enchanté: "Sweet Margot, you who in my study sent me to sleep or woke me up with pretty fairy-tales, tell me some sublime story with which I can entertain the company." "No," said Margot, "nothing sublime. All that men need is fairy-stories."

According to another anecdote of the same period, a lady in a moment of boredom experienced the same curiosity as the Choiseuls. She rang for her maid and asked for the story of Pierre de Provence and the fair Maguelonne, which would be completely forgotten today but for Brahms's admirable *Lieder*. 'The astonished maid had to be asked three times over, and heard this strange order with obvious contempt; however, she had to obey; she went down to the kitchen and came back with the pamphlet, blushing scarlet.'

There were in fact certain publishers, especially at Troyes, who in the eighteenth century issued printed editions of fairy-stories for the rural public who had learnt to read and whom they reached by means of hawkers. But these publications (known as the *Bibliothèque Bleue* or the 'blue tales' because they were printed on blue paper) owed nothing to the literary fashion of the late seventeenth century; they transcribed, as faithfully as the inevitable evolution of taste would permit, the old stories of the oral tradition. A 1784 publication of the *Bibliothèque Bleue* contains, as well as the story of Pierre de Provence and the fair Maguelonne, the stories of Robert le Diable and the four Aymon sons, Perrault's tales and those of Mlle de la Force and Mme d'Aulnay.

Apart from the books of the *Bibliothèque Bleue*, there were still occasional story-tellers to while away the long winter evenings, and also professional story-tellers, the heirs of the reciters, singers and jongleurs of old. In the paintings and engravings of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and the picturesque lithographs of the early nineteenth century, the story-teller or charlatan is a popular subject.⁸² The charlatan is shown perched on a platform, telling his story and pointing with a stick to the text written on a big board which a companion is holding up in the air so that the audience can read while they listen. In some provincial towns the lower middle-class had sometimes kept this pastime alive. A memorialist tells us that at Troyes, towards the end of the eighteenth century, the men of the town would gather together, in winter in the taverns, in summer 'in the gardens where, taking off their wigs, they would put on their little caps'.⁸³ This was called a *cotterie*. 'Each cotterie had at least one story-teller on whom each person modelled his talent.' The memorialist recalls one of the story-tellers, an old butcher. 'Two days I spent with him when I was a child were given up to stories whose charm, effect and naivety

could scarcely be, I will not say rendered, but appreciated by the present generation.'

Thus the old stories which everyone listened to in the time of Colbert and Mme de Sévigné were gradually abandoned, first by the nobility and then by the bourgeoisie, to the children and the country-dwellers. The latter in their turn abandoned them when the newspaper took the place of the *Bibliothèque Bleue*; the children then became their last public, but not for long, for children's reading is at present undergoing the same evolution as games and manners.

Tennis used to be one of the most common games; of all the physical games, it was the one which the moralists of the late Middle Ages tolerated with the least repugnance: it was the most popular game, common to all ranks of society, to kings and villeins alike, for several centuries. But towards the end of the seventeenth century there was a swift decline in the popularity of tennis with the nobility. In Paris in 1657 there were one hundred and fourteen tennis-courts; in 1700, in spite of the growth of the population, their number had fallen to ten; in the nineteenth century there were only two left, one in the Rue Mazarine and the other on the terrace of the Tuileries, where it was still to be found in 1900.⁸⁴ In the seventeenth century, according to Jusserand, the historian of games and pastimes, Louis XIV had shown a marked lack of enthusiasm for tennis. Though the well-bred adult abandoned this game, the peasant and the child (even the well-bred child) remained faithful to it in different forms of rounders or pelota or battledore and shuttlecock; in the Basque country it lasted until its revival in the improved forms of grand or little chistera.

An engraving by Mérian dating from the late seventeenth century shows us a ball game that has brought together children and adults: the ball is being blown up in the picture.⁸⁵ But at that time the ball game, rough in nature, was already suspect to experts on etiquette and good manners. Thomas Elyot and Shakespeare warned noblemen against it. James I of England forbade his son to play it. According to du Cange, only peasants played it: 'The chole, a kind of ball which each player kicks hard and which is still used in a game played by the peasants in our provinces.' A game played in Brittany for example, as late as the nineteenth century: 'The lord of the manor would throw into the midst of the crowd a ball full of bran which the men from the different cantons would try to snatch from one another... When I was a child [the author was born in 1749] I saw a man break his leg jumping through a ventilator to get the ball. These games fostered physical strength and courage, but, as I have already said, they were dangerous.'

Many other 'games of exercise' were to pass like this into the province of children and the lower classes. Mall, for instance, of which Mme de Sévigné wrote in a letter of 1685 to her son-in-law: 'I have had two games of mall with the players [at Les Rochers]. Oh, my dear Count, I keep thinking of you and the grace with which you hit the ball. I wish you had such a fine alley at Grignan.'⁸⁶ All these games of bowls, skittles and croquet, abandoned by the nobility and the bourgeoisie, were relegated in the nineteenth century to the country for adults, to the nursery for children.

The survival among children and the lower classes of games hitherto common to the whole community is likewise responsible for the preservation of one of the most widespread types of amusement in former times: fancy dress. From the sixteenth to the eighteenth century, novels were full of stories of disguise — boys disguised as girls, princesses as shepherdesses, and so on. Literature reflected a taste which found expression at every opportunity provided by the seasonal or occasional festivals: Twelfth Night, Shrove Tuesday, the November festivals. For a long time it was customary, especially among women, to wear a mask to go out. The well-born were fond of having their portraits painted in their favourite fancy-dress costumes. After the eighteenth century, fancy-dress festivals became rarer and more discreet in good society; the carnival became a lower-class amusement and even crossed the seas to America. Today, with few exceptions, children are the only ones who put on masks at carnival time and dress up for fun.

* * *

In every case the same evolution takes place with repetitious monotony.

At first the same games were common to all ages and all classes. The phenomenon which needs to be emphasized is the abandonment of these games by the adults of the upper classes and their survival among both the lower classes and the children of the upper classes. It is true that in England the upper classes have not abandoned the old games as they have in France, but they have completely transformed them, and it is in unrecognizable modern forms that the games have been adopted by the middle-class sportsman.

It is important to note that the old community of games was destroyed at one and the same time between children and adults, between lower class and middle class. This coincidence enables us to glimpse already a connection between the idea of childhood and the idea of class.