THE · TRUE · STORY · OF · THE CHEVALIER · D'EON

HIS · EXPERIENCES · AND · HIS METAMORPHOSES · IN · FRANCE RUSSIA · GERMANY · AND · ENGLAND · TOLD · WITH · THE · AID OF · STATE · & · SECRET · PAPERS

BY · ERNEST · ALFRED · VIZETELLY

ILLUSTRATED · WITH · PORTRAITS FACSIMILES · ETC·

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The Chevalier D'Eon.

TO

THE MEMORY OF MY FATHER,

HENRY VIZETELLY,

WHO, FOLLOWING IN THE TRACK OF CARLYLE,

FINALLY UNRAVELLED

THE STORY OF THE DIAMOND NECKLACE,

AND DECISIVELY CLEARED MARIE ANTOINETTE

OF THE FOUL IMPUTATIONS HEAPED UPON HER,

I DEDICATE

THIS ATTEMPT TO DISENTANGLE

THE FACTS AND FALSEHOODS OF AN

EXTRAORDINARY CAREER.

"A nice problem for history."

VOLTAIRE.

PREFACE.

APART from any interest which this account of the remarkable and puzzling career of the Chevalier d'Eon may have for the general reader and the historical student, it may claim to be the first in which an attempt has been made to deal with that eighteenth century enigma in an impartial spirit. Approaching my subject without bias, I have endeavoured to disentangle the truth from amidst a mass of conflicting statements, careless whether the result of my researches should prove to the advantage or the disadvantage of my hero, who, in the words of one that knew him well, was, like most men, compounded of good and evil, "but with qualities and faults which he habitually carried to extremes." [1]

All previous writers upon the Chevalier

[1] Count Charles François de Broglie to Louis XVI.

d'Eon have been partisans—some eager to exculpate other personages at his expense, others again far too much inclined to believe his every word, and disposed to laud and justify him in every circumstance. The Duke de Broglie, who sketches the Chevalier's life in his important historical work, "Le Secret du Roi," treats him with great severity—expatiating at length upon everything that is against him, and barely mentioning anything that is in his favour. A similar disposition was evinced by M. de Loménie in his exhaustive account of "Beaumarchais et son Temps," though in blackening D'Eon he scarcely contrived to whiten the author of "Le Barbier de Seville." On the other hand, M. Gaillardet, in his well-known "Mémoires sur la Chevalière d'Eon" (Paris, 1866)—a work still considered in France to be the chief authority on D'Eon, though it is full of glaring historical inaccuracies—displays an excessive partiality for his hero, which leads him to interpret every doubtful point to his advantage.

However, it is in an English biography, "The Strange Career of the Chevalier d'Eon de Beaumont," published some years ago, that D'Eon worship attains its apogee. The author of this volume, Captain J. Buchan Telfer, R.N.,

will not allow the Chevalier to have a failing, and though he professes not to judge his hero, his book, from first to last, is but an elaborate piece of special pleading in D'Eon's favour. Captain Telfer, who in preparing his work had the advantage of consulting the D'Eon MSS. in the possession of Mr. J. H. B. Christie, certainly gathered together a large number of interesting facts and cited many curious documents relating to the Chevalier, but he not unfrequently jumbled these together, seemingly with the object of supporting his own theories, instead of presenting them in their proper sequence. It may readily be granted that in studying D'Eon's life we often find ourselves in presence of conflicting statements, which cannot be left to speak for themselves, but require impartial interpretation. Captain Telfer, however, whilst duly recording any testimony that may exist against D'Eon, invariably seeks to explain it away. In his opinion, as in that of M. Gaillardet, everything the Chevalier may say about his career is certain to be correct, whilst everything of a contradictory nature said by other people is certain to be wrong. Surely this is not the spirit in which the historical biographer should approach vexatious points. At times, moreover,

following M. Gaillardet's example, Captain Telfer blunders strangely concerning well-known personages and events, and in spite of his lavish display of *pièces justificatives* omits all mention of certain important papers given in works from which, when it has suited his convenience, he has freely gleaned. To some of his errors of omission and commission I have called attention in my narrative.

In Captain Telfer's book and also in Gaillardet's work a large number of memoirs, letters, and other documents bearing upon D'Eon's career are given *in extenso*. I have not thought it necessary to reprint these documents word for word for the second or third time, but I have made free use of them in telling my story, indicating the purport of all those which seem to me of value, and quoting important or characteristic passages from them.

It will be found that, unlike Captain Telfer, I have related the story of D'Eon's career in Russia in considerable detail. I have myself had access to the Archives of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs—which French writers alone, as a rule, are privileged to consult—and many of the particulars which I have derived from this and other sources are entirely new. However, M. Albert Vandal, in

his engaging and valuable work, "Elisabeth de Russie et Louis XV.," had already, by reference to the sesame archives, brought to light various curious particulars concerning D'Eon's Russian experiences, and I have borrowed some highly interesting passages from his book. With reference to Louis XV.'s secret diplomacy generally I have availed myself of the information contained in M. Boutaric's copious volumes on the subject, and in the Duke de Broglie's "Secret du Roi;" at times verifying the statements of these writers by reference to the original documents in the French Archives.

Those who are acquainted with the earlier scandalous accounts of D'Eon's career will be aware that I might have studded my pages with anecdotes of more or less romantic and degrading *amours;* but to have done so would have been contrary to my purpose, for the aim of this book is to tell the truth about D'Eon, and the anecdotes in question are one and all false. True, he dressed as a man during his earlier years, and as a woman during the latter part of his career; but his metamorphosis was in no wise occasioned by a scandalous motive. He had his faults, as will be seen; but it is certain that his life was exceptionally chaste.

In conclusion, I think I may fairly claim to

have elucidated several of the controversial points in D'Eon's life; notably the origin of his connection with the Chevalier Douglas, his alleged appointment as "lady reader" to the Czarina Elizabeth, his presence at St. Petersburg in female garments, his supposed intrigue with the Princess Dashkoff, his improbable flirtation with the Countess de Rochefort, his spurious midnight meetings with Queen Charlotte, his charges of attempted murder against the Count de Guerchy, and his real motives in asserting himself to be a woman. All these points, scabrous though some of them may seem, have, I think, been here dealt with in such a manner as to give no offence. Moreover, by paying strict attention to dates, I have frequently been able to rectify more or less important errors in the pages of D'Eon's earlier biographers.

Finally, on my own behalf and that of the publishers, I desire to thank Mr. Joseph Grego for the valuable assistance he has rendered in suggesting and supplying most of the illustrations with which this volume is provided.

E. A. V.

Merton, Surrey, 1895.

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THE TRUE STORY

OF

THE CHEVALIER D'EON.

I.

INTRODUCTORY.

Some Incidents in the Life of Louis François, Prince de Conti—Ambition of the Prince—The Secret Diplomacy of Louis XV.—Rupture between France and Russia—The Marquis de la Chétardie and his Reverses of Fortune—French Agents and Emissaries at St. Petersburg—Mission entrusted to the Chevalier Douglas—His Antecedents—Charles Geneviève Déon.

IN one of the galleries of the Palace of Versailles, which, after it had ceased to be a royal residence, Louis Philippe dedicated to "all the glories of France," there are four paintings by Michel Barthélemy Olivier, illustrative of incidents in the life of Louis François de Bourbon, Prince de Conti, in the days of Louis XV. One of these paintings represents the

Prince presiding at a picnic given to the famous Ferdinand of Brunswick; another shows him on the balcony of his château de l'Isle Adam, watching a stag which has taken to the water followed by a pack of hounds; and in a third he is seen with his familiars at a supper party in one of the *salons* of the old Parisian Commandery of the Knights Templars, known, like the London Commandery of the same order, by the briefer name of "the Temple," and famous in history as the prison, for a time, of Louis XVI. and Marie Antoinette. After the order of the Templars had been suppressed in France, the Parisian Temple became the Commandery of the Knights of Malta, of whom, in the days of Louis the Well-Beloved, the Prince de Conti was Grand Prior.

When in Paris, it was at the Temple that the Prince resided, gathering around him there, like his predecessor, the famous Philippe de Vendôme, a number of military, literary, and artistic notabilities whom he was wont to entertain with the lavish hospitality of a prince and a Bourbon. In the painting referred to he has many such notabilities with him. Seventeen guests are shown, seated at a couple of tables spread with dainty edibles, choice flowers, and gold and silver plate; and to the accompaniment of a harp and a spinet, a couple of vocalists are exerting their powers for the entertainment of the party; whilst the Prince de Conti, with a smile on his face, removes a

bottle of champagne from an icepail of *repoussé* silver.

In the fourth of Olivier's paintings at Versailles, another *salon* of the Temple is depicted, with a gallant company of noble cavaliers and graceful dames, partaking of tea and cakes whilst listening to Jeliotte, a famous vocalist of the time, whom a little boy, apparently some ten years old, is accompanying on a harpsichord. This child is none other than Mozart, whose presence here invests the picture with real interest and value. Olivier certainly never dreamt that his painting would become famous because he had introduced into it, as a mere "accessory," this little lad with the dreamy face. He was undoubtedly more concerned in portraying his patron, the Prince de Conti, and the dukes, counts, maréchales, and marchionesses who sit or stand around, enjoying the cup "that cheers but not inebriates." Conti, Beauvau, Hénin, and Luxemburg have all passed away, however, and are nowadays wellnigh forgotten, but Mozart lives—as he will ever live —in his works, and in every civilized country his name has remained a household word.

Looking at Olivier's paintings one might be inclined to surmise that the Prince de Conti led the usual life of a grandee of epicurean tastes with all possible leisure at his command. It should be mentioned, however, that these four pictures were painted in 1766, when the Prince had renounced, not all ambition certainly,

but, at any rate, the fondest desire of his aspiring heart. That desire was to be a king, During the course of half a century or so he built himself many castles in the air. He dreamt in turn of marrying an empress, of ruling Poland, of becoming Duke of Courland, and generalissimo of the Russian armies, of obtaining the principality of Neufchâtel, and of persuading the Pope to create him a cardinal. He was anxious also to cut a figure as a poet, but complained that he could not find rhymes for his verses. Indeed, in almost everything he attempted he was doomed to failure and disappointment.

Yet his life had opened under the most favourable auspices. His military talents were of a high order, and when at the age of twenty-seven he routed the King of Sardinia at the bloody battle of Coni in Piedmont, it was prophesied that he would furnish as glorious a career as that of his grand-uncle, the great Condé. That prophecy was never fulfilled; the Prince might have continued serving in the French armies, but after resolutely refusing to act as aide-de-camp to Marshal Saxe, a post which he deemed altogether beneath his dignity, he retired in high dudgeon into private life. Married in 1732 to Mademoiselle de Chartres, daughter of the Regent d'Orléans, he had become a widower in 1736, and afterwards contracted a *liaison* with the celebrated Countess de Boufflers-Rouverel, whose first appearance at the Court of Versailles, according

to a madrigal of the time, provoked the supposition that Cupid's mother had descended in person from Olympus.[1]

A woman of fascinating beauty, endowed with a lively and original wit, Madame de Boufflers was separated from her husband, and resided at the Hôtel de St. Simon in the Rue Notre Dame de Nazareth, whence she every day repaired to the Temple to preside at the receptions which the Prince de Conti held there. In Olivier's picture of the tea party she is shown serving the assembled guests. Prior to forming this connection, however, the Prince had wished to marry again, and in 1741 had conceived the idea of espousing the Grand-Duchess Elizabeth Petrovna, daughter of Peter the Great, by whom, some years previously, her hand had been offered first to the Regent d'Orléans for his eldest son, and subsequently to the Duke de Bourbon. Whatever her moral defects may have been—and they were, as is well known, numerous—Elizabeth was certainly a woman of striking beauty, with large liquid blue eyes, a mass of light brown hair, and a

[1] We catch a glimpse of Madame de Boufflers in Fanny Burney's diary. At the time when she visited England in 1763, she was especially angry with Queen Charlotte for never granting Fanny any holidays. Walpole also alludes to the Countess, whom he entertained at Strawberry Hill; and about the same time Topham Beauclerk presented her to Dr. Johnson. During the Revolution Madame de Boufflers was thrown into prison, and would have been guillotined but for the downfall of Robespierre.

graceful and well-developed figure. Conti, in his anxiety to marry her, despatched a private emissary—the Sieur d'Avesnes—to Russia, and also sought to obtain the assistance of Cardinal de Fleury, then all-powerful at Versailles. Although his endeavours came to nothing—the Grand-Duchess intimating that "she desired to retain her independence,"[1] the Prince did not lose heart, and in 1745—four years after she had forcibly made her way to the throne—he is found writing to M. d'Usson d'Allion, the French Minister at St. Petersburg, asking him for various particulars concerning the Empress. D'Allion in reply gave the Prince detailed information respecting Elizabeth's numerous amours,[2] and Conti then reluctantly realized that he must renounce his hopes.

During the War of the Austrian Succession, a short time previous to the Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle, his ambition took another turn. Several Polish noblemen came to Paris on a private mission. They were opposed to Frederic Augustus II.—the son of Augustus the Strong of Saxony—who governed their country under the joint influence of Austria and Russia, and were desirous of restoring the old French party in Poland, the same which, sixty years previously, had offered the Polish crown to the Prince de Conti's grandfather. Frederic Augustus more-

[1] Archives des Affaires Etrangères. Correspondance de Russie, 1741.

[2] *Ibid.*, D'Allion, Jan. 4, 1746.

over was in bad health—he was of an apoplectic nature—and these disaffected nobles, taking time by the forelock, wished to make every preparation in view of providing him with a French successor. Repairing to the Temple they interviewed Louis de Conti, and offered to support him if he would come forward as their candidate.

The Prince eagerly entered into their views, and broached the subject to his royal relative, Louis XV., with whom at the time he was on very cordial terms. There were, however, numerous difficulties in the way. On the one hand, no doubt, Louis XV. was mortified at the decline of French influence at Warsaw; but, on the other, he was unwilling to intrigue openly for the removal of the House of Saxony from the Polish throne; for his son the Dauphin had but recently espoused a Saxon princess, and, moreover, Marshal Saxe was in command of the French armies. All he could contrive, therefore, was to assist Conti secretly, and this he promised to do, agreeing to finance the intrigue out of his privy purse, and to secure the private co-operation of M. Castéra, then French resident at Warsaw. Castéra received secret instructions signed by the King, authorizing him to correspond with the Prince de Conti, and to establish relations with those Polish nobles who might desire to elect a French prince in succession to Frederic Augustus.[1]

[1] The Duke de Broglie's "Le Secret du Roi," Paris, 1879, vol. i. p. 17.

Such was the origin of Louis XV.'s secret diplomacy, which in course of time necessitated the employment of emissaries in every country of Europe, and the motive and scope of which —subject to incessant change—so completely puzzled historians, until the archives of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs had yielded up their documentary treasures. At the period referred to, Poland was a subject of interest to all Europe, and in order that his pretensions might obtain support in foreign courts Conti secured, notably, the nomination of the Marquis d'Havrincourt, the Count des Alleurs, and the Chevalier de la Touche as French ambassadors at Stockholm, Constantinople, and Berlin respectively; it being arranged that whilst these diplomatists corresponded officially with Versailles, they should also forward private despatches to the Temple.

Conti had always enjoyed free access to the King, and each time a despatch came to hand he carried it to Versailles. At first the correspondence treated only of Polish affairs, but the different envoys were soon instructed to give a private account of what occurred in the countries where they resided; and the information which they thus imparted—at times political news of high importance, at others mere Court scandal and boudoir tittle-tattle—was all placed before Louis XV., who was delighted to find that nothing took place in Europe without his knowledge, and that, un-

beknown to his ministers and his mistresses, he was able to control their policy.

It must not be supposed, however, that Conti's frequent interviews with the King escaped the notice of jealous rivals and prying courtiers. "The Prince de Conti," wrote the Duke de Luynes in his journal, under date February 14, 1748, "was at work with the King last Sunday. Everyone is asking what work they can have in common. Some people pretend that the Prince has obtained information on various subjects, which he comes here to lay before the King." The ministers were naturally very puzzled and passably indignant at these goings-on, and the Marquis d'Argenson, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, is found writing: "Everyone is greatly astonished at the Prince de Conti mixing himself up in affairs of state. The Prince often repairs to the King's apartments, carrying bulky portfolios with him, and works with the King for a long time." As for Madame de Pompadour, then all-powerful and in the habit of meddling in everything, she could not disguise her amazement. She questioned both the King and Conti, and was extremely mortified when they refused to admit her into their secret. Eventually this secret was in some measure surprised by the Marquis d'Argenson, through the infidelity of a Polish emissary named Blandowski, who brought him some of Conti's despatches; but the Marquis's brother,

the celebrated Lieutenant-general of Police, counselled him not to meddle in the matter if he wished to keep clear of the Bastille, and D'Argenson followed this advice.

Conti's intrigues for the Polish crown, assisted by the secret diplomatic service, had gone on for some years, with various fluctuations of hope and despondency on the Prince's part, when in 1754 war broke out between France and Great Britain. Early in the following year Sir Charles Hanbury Williams, one of the Walpolean circle of wits, who had long served as British minister at Dresden, was despatched to St. Petersburg to negotiate for the assistance of a Russian army which should undertake the defence of Hanover. To frustrate this negotiation France resorted to a variety of tactics. She endeavoured to provoke a diversion on the part of Turkey;[1] despatched Baron von Tott to the Khan of the Crimea to induce him to let loose his Tartar hordes; and, by means of other emissaries, sought to stir the Zaporozhtsui Cossacks into revolt.[2] At the same time the King and Conti considered it expedient to send a secret envoy to St. Petersburg, where there had been no French ambassador, minister, or even consul, resident for nearly ten years.

[1] Archives des Affaires Etrangères. Instructions for M. de Vergennes, May, 1755.

[2] Vandal's "Louis XV. et Elizabeth de Russie." Paris, 1882, p. 248.

It has already been mentioned that, when the Czarina Elizabeth was in her youth, her hand had been offered by her father, first to the Regent d'Orléans, for his son, the Duke de Chartres, and subsequently to the Duke de Bourbon. Moreover, her mother, Catherine I., had at one moment endeavoured to wed her to Louis XV. himself.[1] On her side Elizabeth entertained great personal regard for the Well-Beloved. A depraved woman herself, a fellow-feeling, possibly, drew her towards the profligate ruler of France. In politics, however, she was completely swayed by her chancellor, Bestucheff, whose sympathies were wholly English and German, and since 1746 diplomatic relations had entirely ceased between Versailles and St. Petersburg.

Not only are the circumstances which led to the rupture extremely curious and little known, but they have so much bearing on what will be related hereafter, that it is necessary to give some account of them.

On the evening of June 12th, 1744, as the brilliant and unscrupulous Marquis de la Chétardie, at that time French envoy to the Russian Court, was about to retire for the night, after supping gaily with Graf von Mardefeld, the Prussian ambassador, he received a visit which caused him no little surprise. Three Russian officers of high rank

[1] Vandal, pp. 82 *et seq.*

presented themselves at his residence at Moscow, where the Court was sojourning at the time, and demanded to speak with him in the name of the Czarina. They were admitted to his presence, and one of them, after remarking that he had a painful mission to fulfil, proceeded to read aloud a document, couched in bad French, which enjoined "Monsieur le Marquis de la Chétardie, brigadier in the French armies, to quit Moscow within four-and-twenty hours, without seeing anyone, and to be gone with all possible despatch beyond the frontiers of the Russian empire." The motives assigned for this order of expulsion were that the Marquis, instead of being grateful to the Empress for her many acts of kindness towards him, had endeavoured to corrupt numerous of the Czarina's subjects, including even members of the clergy, and had not only tried to create a party of his own at Court, and sought to overthrow her Majesty's ministry, but had presumed with audacious temerity to describe and calumniate her Majesty's sacred person in his despatches.[1]

At first La Chétardie put a bold face on the matter, protesting that he had never slandered the Czarina, but his visitors began to read to him various extracts from his own despatches, describing Elizabeth as a frivolous creature of most dissolute morals, depicting the Russian

[1] Archives des Affaires Etrangères, 1744.

Court as a hotbed of depravity, enumerating all the high personages whose influence could be purchased with French gold, and explaining in minute detail the complicated intrigue he had engaged in, with the view of overthrowing Chancellor Bestucheff, and of drawing Russia into an alliance with France, Prussia, and Sweden, against the House of Austria. On hearing his own words read out to him, La Chétardie realized that protests were out of place. "That will do, gentlemen," said he; and dismissing his visitors, he forthwith began his preparations for departure.

He could not offer any resistance to the Czarina's order, for he was unable to claim any definite *status*, though he had letters of credit and to spare among his papers. The Court of Versailles had repeatedly instructed him to present these letters, but he had refrained from doing so, opining, no doubt, that he was the more likely to bring his underhand intriguing to a successful issue if he pursued it in an unofficial capacity. Now, however, his disobedience to orders had placed him in a position in which he might deem himself fortunate at escaping so lightly, for he had rendered himself liable to detention in a fortress, or possibly exile to Siberia.

On the morrow, the scheming Marquis quitted Moscow, where he had been treated with such manifest favour by Elizabeth, and whence he was now expelled in such an ignominious

fashion. Five years previously he had journeyed to Russia in great state, with twelve secretaries, eight chaplains, six cooks, and fifty pages and valets in his train; and when he had passed through Dresden on his route, Manteuffel, the Prussian envoy in Saxony, had been so struck by his magnificence that in hot haste he had penned a despatch to Frederick the Great, in which he particularly vaunted the Marquis's wonderful clothes, declaring that they would "prove the most magnificent and tasteful that the Russians had ever seen." At Riga, the first Russian town which the Marquis had reached, the governor, a Bismarck holding the rank of a general in the Muscovite army, had received him with most extravagant honours, surpassing even those accorded to sovereign princes; and, once at St. Petersburg, La Chétardie had certainly accomplished wonders, instigating, planning, and subsidizing the revolution by which little Ivan of Brunswick, the baby Czar, was deposed, and Elizabeth placed on her father's throne. But, afterwards, the Marquis had blundered grievously, making enemies of Chancellor Bestucheff and his brother, and as a result of this enmity he had been compelled to return to France towards the end of 1742.

In November, 1743, however,—contrary to the advice of M. d'Allion, who had replaced him as French envoy at St. Petersburg,—he was again despatched to Russia with the view

of drawing the Czarina into the alliance against Austria, which has been referred to. To accomplish this object, it was necessary that the Marquis should overthrow Chancellor Bestucheff, the friend alike of Austria and England, but Bestucheff was on the alert, and having intercepted and deciphered seven of La Chétardie's secret despatches, he placed them before the Empress, with the result that the Marquis was summarily expelled from the empire. Very different to his triumphal progress in 1739 was the journey which he now accomplished. There were now no pompous entries into each town that he reached along his line of route, no bareheaded municipal officers waiting with addresses and the customary bread and salt at the gates, no city butlers inviting him to moisten his lips in the loving cup, no reviews, balls, and banquets given in his honour. He journeyed as a prisoner; dragoons with drawn sabres galloped beside his carriage; at one stage he was overtaken by an officer who demanded the return of the Empress's portrait and the star of St. Andrew studded with diamonds, which had been presented to him as a special mark of the imperial favour; whilst the commander of his escort fixed what route he should follow, prevented him from having any intercourse with the inhabitants, and only ceased his surveillance when the frontier was at last reached.

The Marquis's royal master, Louis XV.,

prudently refrained from asking the Russian Court for any explanation with regard to his envoy's expulsion. The Well-Beloved had privately connived at and approved of the intrigues started by La Chétardie. Had the latter succeeded in his endeavours he might or might not have obtained some reward from the King; but, having failed, he was naturally deemed deserving of punishment. So, upon his return to France he was forbidden to appear at Court; and, whilst he was sorrowfully wending his way to his renaissance château near Chabanais, where, at the time of the *Grand Monarque*, his mother had often entertained Madame de Sévigné,[1] M. d'Allion, who had previously replaced him as French envoy in Russia, once more set out for St. Petersburg. The Marquis, however, had dealt what seemed to be a death-blow to French influence in Russia, and M. d'Allion, though received very graciously by Elizabeth, was unable to repair

[1] M. Gaillardet, in his "Mémoires sur la Chevalière d'Eon" (Paris, 1866), asserts that La Chétardie was imprisoned in the citadel of Montpellier on his return to France, but this statement is inaccurate. One of his secretaries was suspected of having betrayed him, and sent to the Bastille, but was shortly afterwards released. The Marquis's own disgrace was likewise of brief duration. Eight months after his expulsion from Russia we find him serving in the French army in Piedmont, and a little later he was appointed ambassador at Turin, where he again got into trouble, this time owing to his amorous disposition. His whole career was most romantic, and well worthy of being related in detail.

the effects of La Chétardie's intrigues. In May, 1745, the Czarina, yielding to the solicitations of Bestucheff, signed a treaty of alliance with Maria Theresa against France, and on this treaty being ratified during the ensuing year, and coming to the knowledge of the Court of Versailles, M. d'Allion was abruptly recalled from his post.

At this juncture Turkey offered to keep the Muscovites in check, but the Maréchal de Noailles represented to Louis XV. that an alliance between the eldest son of the Church and the traditional enemy of Christianity would excite universal indignation throughout Europe, and most certainly deter Providence from according its blessing to the French arms. Now, if Louis XV. was dissolute he was also devout, and the Marshal's intimation had such an effect upon him that he declined the Sultan's offers. Later on, when 30,000 Russian troops were massed on the shores of the Baltic, awaiting English vessels to carry them to Flanders, when another Russian corps was marching across Europe, and had almost reached the frontiers of Alsace, the Court of Versailles would have been only too glad to obtain help from the Sultan, with whom indeed the famous adventurer Bonneval was endeavouring to negotiate an alliance at the time of his death. Fortunately for France, at the moment when the Russians were about to enter Alsace, the European plenipotentiaries,

who for some time had been assembled in congress, came to an understanding as to terms of peace, and on April 30, 1748, the preliminary treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle put an end to the war of the Austrian Succession.

During the next seven or eight years, although France and Russia did not at any time actually meet on the battlefield, they treated one another as enemies in every diplomatic contest that arose in Europe. The rupture was complete. The French Court knew but little of what went on at St. Petersburg, though there were a few French subjects there, tutors and secretaries to Russian personages, and also a small number of merchants who continued to ply their trades unprotected by any ambassador. Among the Czarina's attendants, moreover, there was a certain Madame Caravaque, of French origin, who, at the time when Conti despatched the Sieur d'Avesnes to Russia in view of asking Elizabeth in marriage, had undertaken to inform her mistress of the Prince's suit. It was through her that Elizabeth had returned the answer that she wished to retain her independence. This Madame Caravaque, as will presently be shown, was acquainted with a certain Michel, a French banker and merchant established at St. Petersburg, who had important interests also at Rouen, and was constantly journeying between France and Russia. During one of his journeys in 1753, Michel

proceeded to Versailles, obtained an audience of the Foreign Secretary and informed him that he had a secret message to deliver: Elizabeth was of opinion that bygones should be bygones and was desirous of renewing diplomatic intercourse.[1] This message had probably been conveyed to Michel by Madame Caravaque. Louis XV., however, did not think fit to respond to the Czarina's advances, for at that time he was both officially and secretly combating Russian influence in Poland. So Michel was simply thanked for his communication and went his way.

A year later, the St. Petersburg police signalled the arrival in that city of a Frenchman calling himself the Chevalier de Valcroissant. Bestucheff scented that this stranger must be a spy, and immediately ordered his arrest, with the result that Valcroissant, who could not or would not produce any documents explaining the object of his journey, was consigned to the fortress of Schlusselburg on Lake Ladoga. It is virtually certain that he had been entrusted with some mission either by the French government or by Conti, but what that mission was, and whether Louis XV. had already repented of not entertaining the overtures made through Michel, cannot now be ascertained, there being no documents on the subject in any of the French archives.[2] It is possible, however,

[1] Archives des Affaires Etrangères. Retrospective letter of Cardinal de Bernis, 1757. [2] Vandal, p. 259.

that papers bearing on the matter may exist in Russia.

Elizabeth would appear to have renewed her overtures to France even at the moment when by her chancellor's advice she was about to sign the treaty of subsidies with Great Britain, which Sir Charles Hanbury Williams had been charged to negotiate. This treaty might entail disastrous consequences for France, and Louis XV. could no longer afford to remain indifferent; still, he was not at all anxious to contract a formal alliance with Russia, such as would have necessitated a thorough change in French policy with reference to Poland and the East. He imagined, however, that by flattering the Czarina and appealing to her old sentiments of regard for himself, he might detach her, unconditionally, from the English alliance.[1] If not, the Turks, the Crimean Tartars, and the Cossacks of the Don were, as previously stated, to effect a diversion.

To the Prince de Conti fell the task of selecting emissaries who might succeed in eluding the vigilance of Chancellor Bestucheff and in penetrating to Elizabeth in person. The Prince had long been accustomed to choose both the official and secret envoys of France from among his friends and hangers-on.

[1] Affaires Etrangères. Secret instructions to Baron de Bréteuil, April 1, 1760. In this document, which is given at length by Vandal, Louis XV. recapitulates his previous policy towards Russia.

The higher posts were reserved to the noblemen who supped and hunted with him, the lower ones to the persons whom he treated less familiarly, the parasites, flatterers, and *protégés*, who from time to time were privileged to enjoy his hospitality at the Temple, and possibly to attend the concerts which, according to Bachaumont, he was accustomed to give every Monday afternoon — concerts which formed an attractive feature of the Parisian "high life" of the period. It was among his acquaintances of the latter class that the Prince now sought some dexterous and courageous individuals to whom he might confide the Russian mission. The treatment inflicted on the Chevalier de Valcroissant showed that such a mission was not without its dangers. Indeed, it seemed likely that any stranger of French nationality who might enter the Czarina's dominions would be pounced upon by the agents of the wary Bestucheff and consigned to durance. It was preferable, therefore, to employ a foreigner for the task.

Now Conti was necessarily well acquainted with such an important civic functionary as the Intendant de la Généralité de Paris, who about this time happened to be a certain M. Berthier de Sauvigny. This official employed as tutor to his sons a Scotsman named Mackenzie, who called himself the Chevalier Douglas,[1] and gave out that he had followed

[1] In selecting this pseudonym, Mackenzie very likely

the fortunes of the Pretender, and had been obliged to fly his native heath and seek refuge in France, bringing with him nothing but his plaid and his claymore (*la cape et l'épée*). In reality, however, Douglas—as he will be called in this narrative for convenience' sake—was simply an ex-Jesuit. He had lived at Liége during the late war, acting as a spy in the pay of Holland, and afterwards entering the service of the Prince of Waldeck.[1] Subsequently he had turned up in Paris, where he had become tutor in M. Berthier de Sauvigny's family. In those days the French were greatly interested in the Scottish exiles, and moreover, as Douglas assumed a high-sounding name, claimed to be of noble birth, and was certainly a man of considerable parts, with no little talent for intrigue, it is not surprising that he should have wormed his way into good society. It may be noted also that, although he was no longer a Jesuit, he kept up some sort of connection with the Order he had belonged to, and had become acquainted

remembered that it had been borne on various occasions by the Young Pretender, notably during his stay at Gravelines in 1744, when Marshal Saxe vainly essayed a descent on the English coast.

[1] "Russia Correspondence," Public Record office, quoted by Captain Telfer, R.N., in his "Strange Career of the Chevalier d'Eon de Beaumont." London, 1885, p. 6. This Prince of Waldeck was the Dutch general who so persistently thwarted the Duke of Cumberland in his attempts to relieve Tournai, and, according to the "Culloden Papers," gave unmistakable proofs of cowardice at Fontenoy.

in Paris with one of its most eminent members, Father de La Tour, who, like M. Berthier de Sauvigny, was extremely well known to the Prince de Conti. It is not surprising, therefore, that the loyal Scotch chevalier, constrained by misfortune to become a tutor, should have obtained admission to the *salons* of the Temple.

Conti cast his eyes upon Douglas, extracted from him, possibly, divers particulars as to his previous life, and, finding that he was the person he required, decided to send him to Russia.

Among the visitors to the Temple at that time there was also a young man of seven and twenty, of somewhat diminutive though graceful build, with a pert, effeminate, almost girlish face, but having an iron wrist and excelling in the art of fencing. He also cultivated letters, was already known as an author, and was frequently called upon to license the works of others, inasmuch as he was one of the royal literary censors. This position, apart from the influence of relatives and friends, was alone calculated to ensure him admission into the Prince de Conti's *salons*. He was already well acquainted too, not only with the Jesuit, Father de La Tour,[1] but also with the Chevalier Douglas, for he had been employed as secretary

[1] La Tour, writing to the Marquis de l'Hôpital under date August 17, 1757, says: "I have known him (Déon) for a long time; I have great esteem for him, and am sure that you will have every reason to be satisfied with his wit, intelligence, character, and virtue."

by the same M. Berthier de Sauvigny whose sons Douglas was educating; and it was on this account probably that he was eventually selected to assist the Scotch Chevalier in the task of reconciling France and Russia. This young man—known at the period we are referring to by the name of Déon de Beaumont—subsequently became one of the chief agents of Louis XV.'s secret diplomatic service, and in the course of a strangely chequered career accomplished several remarkable exploits and met with many singular adventures. Some account of his parentage, childhood, and youth must be given, however, before starting him upon his travels.



II.

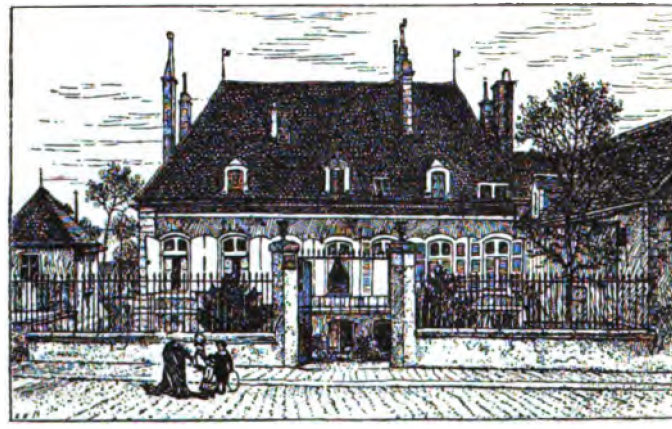
1728—1754.

The Home of the Déons at Tonnerre—The Origin of the Family—The new Messiah—Some celebrated Déons—Parentage, Birth, and Baptism of Charles Geneviève—Boy or Girl?—Young Déon's Schooldays at Tonnerre and in Paris—His favourite Pastime—His three influential Uncles—He loses both his Father and his Fortune—His first literary Efforts and his aristocratic Protectors—He is appointed a Censor Royal.

A HUNDRED and twenty miles south-west of Paris, on the confines of Lower Burgundy, the little town of Tonnerre climbs one of the slopes overlooking the Armançon, a tributary of the Yonne. The hillsides all around are planted with vines yielding a limpid exhilarating wine, which, although it cannot challenge comparison with the famous growths of "the golden slope," is nevertheless possessed of considerable character. Only a few miles away, in the valley of the Serein, lies Chablis, whose *petit vin blanc* is renowned all over the world.

If, on alighting at the station of Tonnerre, the

tourist follows for a short distance the paved road known as the Rue du Pont, running parallel with the railway line to Lyons, he will perceive on his left hand an attractive private residence, dating, as is indicated by its high slate roof, with tiny attic windows, from about the middle of the seventeenth century.



THE BIRTHPLACE OF THE CHEVALIER D'EON AT TONNERRE.

Too small to be styled a château, and yet too pretentious to be simply called a house—at least in France—this building is a fair example of what in the last century our neighbours were still apt to term a *gentilhommière*, that is, the abode of some family of the *petite noblesse*. Fifty years ago the construction of the railway line—which passes through a cutting some twenty or thirty yards in front of the house—swept away a portion of the spacious fore-court, together with sundry outbuildings and servants'

quarters, originally forming part of the property; otherwise the latter remains much the same as it was in the days of Louis XV. A leafy garden extends to the bank of the Armançon in the rear of the house, which, replete with old furniture, family portraits and relics, belongs to-day to the representative of the Déons de Beaumont who once resided here.[1]

The Déons were said to be of Breton origin, and to have come originally from the vicinity of St. Malo. In the middle of the twelfth century a certain Déon or Eon de l'Estoile, afflicted with a mystical derangement of mind, imagined that he was the Son of God, and, various chance occurrences with which he was connected having been interpreted as miracles, he gathered around him a vast concourse of superstitious Bretons, many of whom he dubbed angels and apostles, giving them such names as Judgment, Wisdom, Science, and Domination. Followed by his adherents, who comprised

[1] M. Henri Rendu is the present owner. The connection between the Rendus and the Déons is traced through the Lwit family, from whom the Chevalier d'Eon descended on the female side. A lady of that family was grandmother of M. Henri Rendu, who, we may add, was Director-general of customs in Mexico under Maximilian, and is related to the distinguished *savant* and politician of the same name, for many years Minister of Public Instruction and Grand Master of the University of France. The old Déon residence at Tonnerre has been admirably preserved by M. Rendu, who has gathered around him here many interesting relics and souvenirs of the Chevalier, to some of which we shall have occasion to refer.

many of his own relatives, the new Messiah marched through various provinces of France, announcing to all men that he had come to judge the quick and the dead, and so fascinating the ignorant, brutish peasantry with his senseless ravings that he recruited many partisans on his way.

Whilst traversing Champagne in the early part of 1148 the new Messiah was pounced upon and thrust into prison by the men-at-arms of the Archbishop-duke of Reims, and as it chanced that Pope Eugenius III. had summoned an œcumenical council, over which he was to preside in person, to meet at Reims that same year, Eon de l'Estoile was arraigned before it. He was charitably judged to be insane rather than of perverse mind, so that he escaped the fate of heretics, and was condemned to imprisonment for life. Some of his less fortunate adherents, however, were forthwith burnt at the stake. He himself died in prison after a brief captivity, his demise being hastened, it is asserted, by the bad treatment he received.

From Champagne some of his relatives are said to have fled to Burgundy—which at that time did not form part of France—establishing themselves near Lindry and Ligny in the forest lands around Tonnerre; and hereabouts in the last century there were hamlets yet known as "Les Bretons" and "La Chaire du Diable" (the Devil's Pulpit), names recalling the immigration of Eon's Celtic followers and the hellish

practices in which they were supposed to have indulged.

Owing to a great fire, which consumed nearly the whole of Tonnerre in 1556, and destroyed the town archives, the Déons of the eighteenth century were not able to trace their descent in direct filiation from Eon de l'Estoile, but the facts set forth above were admitted as proved by two judgments rendered in 1779 and 1780 by the Court of the Châtelet in Paris. Though the family must have reached Burgundy virtually penniless, it soon contrived to make its way in the world. Among the fighting Déons was a certain Guillaume, who followed Margaret of France to England when she came to marry our Edward I., and who won his spurs as a knight banneret on this side of the channel, probably in the Welsh wars, and was afterwards despatched in 1302 as English envoy to Pope Boniface VIII. At subsequent periods we find a Déon fighting under Philip of Valois in Flanders, another serving with the Grandes Compagnies, and a third who fell into the hands of the English whilst in command of some troops for Charles V.

There was also a Déon who acted as secretary to Duke Philip the Good of Burgundy, another who, having some of the religious enthusiasm of Eon de l'Estoile, journeyed barefooted on many pilgrimages, and ultimately founded an order of hermits on the mount of Ravières, overlooking the Armançon, at no great distance

from Tonnerre. Other Déons or Eons were advocates and counsellors in Parliament; one held the office of provost to the Marshals of France; several contracted advantageous marriages, becoming allied with such aristocratic houses as the Chaulnes, the Montbéliards, and the Regniers de Guerchy. In one way or another, indeed, the family was well able to claim that it belonged both to the nobility of the gown and to that of the sword.

Early in the seventeenth century its principal representative appears to have been a certain Louis Déon de Ramelu, an esquire and captain of infantry, serving in the armies of the great Condé as aide-de-camp to François de Lorraine. He seems to have been but poorly circumstanced, for Colbert, in recommending him to Mazarin, particularly urged that he had six children to provide for. Selfish and avaricious though Mazarin was, he may have done something for him, as his son André Déon subsequently figures as an advocate in Parliament, Mayor of Tonnerre, and sub-delegate of the Généralité de Paris for Tonnerre, Ricey, Jussey, Appoigny, and Auxerre—a post which must have yielded a fair income, since it embraced the levying of taxes and imposts for the royal treasury. This André Déon had twelve children, one of whom, called Louis Déon de Beaumont—because he held the fief of Beaumont between Joigny and Auxerre—became an advocate at the bar of the Paris Parliament, a King's

counsellor and steward of the royal demesnes in the county of Tonnerre, besides succeeding his father as mayor and as sub-delegate of the Généralité de Paris.[1] This Louis Déon appears to have been a very worthy man, extremely charitable, and greatly loved by the poor. By his wife, Françoise de Charenton, he had three children—first, a girl christened Marguerite Françoise Victoire, who was born in October, 1724; and next, a son called Théodore André Thimothée, who was born in February, 1727, and died six months afterwards. Finally, on October 5, 1728, Dame Françoise gave birth to her third child, the subject of the present memoir.

This occurred at Tonnerre, in the house which has already in some measure been described; and French ladies, then as now, not being in the habit of suckling their own offspring, the infant was at once committed to the charge of a wet nurse familiarly known as the Mère Benoît. Two days later this worthy woman carried the child along the old Rue de l'Hôpital—past the chapel where that high and powerful seigneur, Michel Le Tellier, Marquis de Louvois and Count de Tonnerre, slept the eternal sleep in a marble mausoleum guarded by statues of History, Vigilance, and Wisdom—and ascended

[1] Most of the above historical and genealogical details have been taken from De la Chesnaye des Bois' "Dictionnaire de la Noblesse," which contains an exhaustive article on the Déon family.

the dizzy flight of two hundred steps leading to the church of Notre Dame, where the Abbé Bordes, Dean of Tonnerre, was waiting to administer the sacrament of baptism. A cousin of the Déons, Monsieur Charles Regnard, an advocate in Parliament and bailli or judge of the marquisate of Cruzy near Tonnerre, and Dame Geneviève Déon, wife of a Monsieur Mouton, who lived in Paris, where he traded in the wines of Burgundy, acted as sponsors to the infant, who received the names of Charles - Geneviève - Louis - Auguste - André-Timothée,[1] and was described in the baptismal register as the *son* of noble Louis Déon de Beaumont and of Dame Françoise his wife.

Nevertheless, we are asked to believe—on the faith of sundry statements penned many years subsequently by Charles Geneviève[2]—that when her child was four years old, Dame Françoise, not content with causing the little one to be publicly consecrated to the Virgin in front of the high altar, at a solemn service held for the occasion, also had it dressed "in the robe of the sisterhood of the Virgin" until it reached its seventh year; so that in the meantime it passed as being a girl. In Catholic countries, boys as well as girls are often con-

[1] In English these names would be Charles Genevieve Lewis Augustus Andrew Timothy. The only feminine name (Geneviève) was also that of the godmother; for which reason, undoubtedly, it was given to the child.

[2] Mr. Christy's "D'Eon MSS.," quoted by Telfer.

secrated to the Virgin Mary, but though it is usual for them to wear white garments with blue favours, their attire is never the same as that prescribed for the sisterhood of the Virgin. Moreover, it seems incredible that Charles Geneviève should have been formally recognized as a *Fille de la Vierge*, when he had been christened as a boy by the Dean of Tonnerre himself.

Tonnerre, which even nowadays numbers less than 6,000 souls, was then but a very small place, where everybody, and especially the clergy, knew everything about everybody else. It is difficult, therefore, to believe in these successive metamorphoses of young Charles Geneviève, the more so, indeed, as the story rests solely upon his own unsupported testimony; and it may be pointed out at once that his assertions often require to be taken with many grains of salt.

To put the case briefly, it is probable that Charles Geneviève's parents kept him in frocks somewhat longer than is usual, and did not promote him to his first pair of breeches until he was seven years of age. His education was then entrusted to the Abbé Marcenay, curé of the Church of St. Peter at Tonnerre, who, when questioned some years subsequently as to his whilom pupil, knew nothing, apparently, of young Déon having ever belonged to the sisterhood of the Virgin, and could only remember him as a somewhat mischievous urchin

whom he had occasionally been obliged to whip for misbehaviour.[1]

We may picture Charles Geneviève in his boyhood as slender and delicate, and with a pert, girlish face, as he ascends the tortuous streets of Tonnerre on his way to the parsonage of St. Peter's. A manservant in livery, carrying a long cane, probably accompanies his young master, in accordance with the usage of the time, and wards off all urchins of low degree who may presumptuously seek to accost the aristocratic scion of the Déons. At the parsonage the Abbé Marcenay is waiting, likewise provided with a cane, which will cause Charles Geneviève's noble flesh to tingle should he have failed to learn his lessons. During playtime, possibly, young Déon is permitted to walk upon the terrace around St. Peter's, which towers aloft upon a rocky crag, and thence he may scan the town of Tonnerre and the course of the Armançon, winding like a silvery ribbon "between the banks that bear the vine." Oftentimes, no doubt, his childish fancy is exercised in thinking of what there may be beyond those hills, and though at this early stage he can hardly have proposed to lead the romantic life which eventually became his lot, yet the vista of distant heights and old Burgundian abbeys and castles may well have prompted his mind to dreams of travel and adventure.

[1] Gaillardet's "Mémoires sur la Chevalière d'Eon," "Pièces Justificatives," No. 15, p. 398.

His first journey is to Paris, whither his father must have often repaired by reason of his office as sub-delegate of the Intendant de la Généralité. Once in the capital, Charles Geneviève is sent to a school kept by a certain M. Tarnier in the Rue de Nevers, near the famous Hôtel de Nesles, and many a time, we are told, he is conducted with the other pupils to bathe, no doubt in the Seine, which flows only a few yards away. Finally, in 1740, our hero goes to the Collége Mazarin to complete his education, and four years later—he is now sixteen—he is confirmed at the church of St. Sulpice. According to his own statements, the name of Marie is given him on this occasion—in addition to the six Christian names which he already possesses—on account of his mother having consecrated him to the Virgin.

Young Déon, having completed his studies in a highly creditable manner, after obtaining the degrees of Doctor of Civil and Canon Law, is called to the bar of the Paris Parliament. This may seem rather a prosaic beginning to a romantic life; still his assiduity to his studies and the thirst for knowledge which he displayed at the outset of his career redound greatly to his credit. At that period young men of good birth and means seldom cared for hard work. A smattering of knowledge, coupled with such natural wit as they might possess, usually sufficed them, eager as they were to leave their books and indulge in all the pleasures

which the life of Paris and Versailles then offered—

> "For those were yet the days of halcyon weather,
> A Martin's summer, when the nation swam,
> Aimless and easy as a wayward feather,
> Down the full tide of jest and epigram;
> A careless time, when France's bluest blood
> Beat to the tune of 'After us the Flood.'"

That Déon indulged in some of the pleasures of youth may be taken for granted, but he evinced a singularly dispassionate disposition and eschewed affairs of gallantry. He would laugh and jest willingly enough, and empty his glass like a true Burgundian, but he steered clear of the *filles de l'Opéra* and of *petite-maison* society. His favourite pastime was fencing, and, girlish though he was in face, and short of stature, and to all appearance of a delicate constitution, he acquired such proficiency with the foil and the rapier as to be elected *grand prevôt* of the *salle d'armes* which he attended.

His set purpose, however, was to make his way in the world, and in this design he was served both by his talents and his family connections. He had three uncles who had risen to responsible and influential positions. One of these, called Jacques Déon de Pommard, after the village of that name so famous for its wines, had become first secretary to Count d'Argenson, Minister of War. He died in 1747, when Charles Geneviève was but nineteen; still his connections may have been of use

to his nephew. Another uncle, Michel Déon de Germigny, was a knight of St. Louis and one of the five-and-twenty gentlemen of the King's Scottish guard. He had fought at Dettingen, where he had been badly wounded, and had served the Republic of Genoa for a time with considerable distinction. He was, moreover, known to the King, who had bestowed several pensions upon him, and he enjoyed the particular favour of the powerful house of Noailles. However, it is not likely that he did much for his nephew, for during his later years he resided chiefly in the south of France, where he died in 1752.[1]

It was in a third uncle, André Déon de Tissey, that Charles Geneviève found a willing and influential protector. This relative was for thirty years chief Secretary of Police under the famous D'Argenson and his successors, and it is to his administrative abilities that contemporary historians of Paris mainly ascribe the efficiency of the city police in the earlier part of the eighteenth century. When the Regent d'Orléans died, Déon de Tissey was entrusted with the delicate and important task of making a full inventory of his estate, and the new Duke of Orléans, the Regent's son, was so satisfied with his services that he appointed him his principal secretary.

Déon de Tissey was a bachelor, and it was

[1] De la Chesnaye.

but natural that he should advance the interests of his nephew, the more especially as he could do so without having to loosen his own purse-strings. It was sufficient that he should introduce the young man into the society in which he himself moved. Charles Geneviève's father also was able to give him a fair start in life. A sub-delegate of the Généralité de Paris himself, he secured for his son the post of secretary to the Intendant de la Généralité, M. Berthier de Sauvigny—father, it may be noted, of the Berthier who subsequently held the same functions, and in consequence of his speculations to raise the price of corn was massacred in 1789 at the same time as his father-in-law, Foulon. As secretary to the Intendant de Paris, young Déon was certain to acquire extensive knowledge concerning public business, for the intendants not only had charge of commercial and agricultural affairs in their respective généralités, but were concerned in the levying of all sorts of imposts. They also exercised a surveillance over the Protestant communities, were entrusted with the control of many of the public colleges and libraries, and of all property sequestrated by the state, and indeed with many other matters too numerous to mention.

In 1749, whilst Déon in his secretarial capacity was laying in a fund of knowledge which he turned to account in after years, he lost his father, and it is related that when Louis Déon was on his deathbed he addressed Charles

Geneviève as his "daughter," saying tenderly, "Do not be uneasy, my daughter; it is as natural to die as it is to live. I am quitting a bad for a better land. I have been at much pains to teach you how to live, and I must likewise teach you how to die."[1]

We are told that Déon lost his father, his uncle De Tissey, and an income of 15,000 livres in the brief space of five days. Writing, however, in 1763, to the Duke de Praslin, he distinctly says that he lost his fortune a year after inheriting it. These various misfortunes proved no doubt a severe blow, but he was not cast down. The information he acquired whilst serving under the Intendant de Paris, enabled him to write a little book on the "Financial Situation of France under Louis XIV. and the Regency." This, his first literary effort, was issued in 1753. Déon about this time became acquainted with the notorious Fréron, a base-minded man, who vilified Voltaire in a shameful fashion. Still, Fréron was regarded in those days as a leading journalist and reviewer, and aspiring authors courted him readily enough. Writing in his "Lettres sur quelques Ecrivains de ce Temps" (vol. xiii.), in April, 1754, he says that M. Déon de

[1] This story, quoted by Telfer, does not rest on any substantial foundation. It is given by La Chesnaye (from whom it was no doubt originally derived), but La Chesnaye's assertions were certainly inspired by D'Eon at the time when the latter was passing himself off as a woman.

Beaumont, "the author of an excellent little book on French finances," has sent him an epitaph on the Count d'Ons-en-Bray, Dean of the Academy of Sciences, who had died a couple of months previously; and this epitaph he prints with various eulogistic comments, although it is the merest trifle. Written in Latin verse and extending to four-and-twenty lines, it is signed Ludovicus Déon de Beaumont —which shows that our hero, with seven Christian names to choose from, had elected to use that of Louis, by which his father had been known. The Count d'Ons-en-Bray, now but little remembered, was, at the time referred to, the foremost authority on mechanical science in Europe, and had been particularly admired by Peter the Great. Fréron calls him, "not only M. Déon's protector, but also his friend," and we may presume that Déon was also intimate with the Count's son, for he says in one of his letters that in 1756—two years after the old Count's death—he was living at the Hôtel d'Ons-en-Bray in the Rue de Bourbon, Faubourg St. Germain, and that he was "the friend of the master of the house, against whose advice it was that he went to Russia."

Early in life Déon likewise became acquainted, doubtless through his family connections, with the Marshal de Belle Isle, son of the financier Fouquet, and with the celebrated Abbé, afterwards Cardinal de Bernis. He moreover appears to have been received by the Penthièvres, and

when the beautiful Marie d'Este, Duchess de Penthièvre, passed away in April, 1754, in all the bloom of her eight-and-twenty summers, he penned a few Latin verses commemorating her virtues, which were inserted by Fréron in the "Année Littéraire."[1] In the following year he wrote a memoir on the life and works of the Abbé Lenglet Du Fresnoy, and this, after appearing in Fréron's publication, was prefixed to various editions of Du Fresnoy's writings.

It is known that Déon became one of the royal literary censors for history and *belles lettres*, but at what period he obtained this post is uncertain. He may have secured it as the result of his own work as an author, but it is not unlikely that he was appointed on the death of his uncle Déon de Tissey, who also had been a royal censor, and the reversion of whose office may have been granted to Charles Geneviève in accordance with the usage of the time. Déon's degrees as Doctor of Civil and Canon Law fully qualified him for the post—one rather of honour than of emoluments—the duties of which consisted in perusing the manuscripts of authors, and granting or refusing the necessary licences to publish them. And now the young man was launched in the world. He was of fairly good birth and possessed of considerable talents, and was greatly assisted on his entry into life by the numerous connections of his family.

[1] "Année Littéraire," vol. vii., Dec., 1754.

He was therefore neither a nonentity, nor an adventurer, as some writers have contended. His early acquaintance with the Chevalier Douglas, tutor to young Berthier de Sauvigny, has been now for the first time fully accounted for, and although it is impossible to ascertain the exact circumstances of his introduction to the Prince de Conti, it has been shown that there is nothing improbable in the contention that he was personally known to the Prince, for not only was he secretary to a most important public functionary, with whom Conti was necessarily acquainted, but he was also a censor royal, and Conti was of literary tastes, and in the habit of receiving literary men; finally, he was protected by an uncle who by reason of his functions could at any time obtain access to the highest in the land.



III.

1755—1756.

The Chevalier Douglas's Secret Mission to Russia—His Curious Instructions—Sir Charles Hanbury Williams as a "black fox" and Russian Troops as "squirrel skins"—Was Douglas accompanied by Déon?—The Legend of Lia de Beaumont and the Maids of Honour—The Truth about the Princess Dashkoff—How Douglas checkmated Sir Charles Hanbury Williams—His return to Russia with Déon—Louis XV.'s mysterious views with regard to the latter—"Lecteur" or "Lectrice" to the Czarina?—The Portrait of Déon by La Tour.



N the Prince de Conti deciding to entrust the *soi-disant* Chevalier Douglas with the projected secret mission to Russia, he communicated with the King through Tercier, chief clerk at the Foreign Office, who possessed considerable influence, if not power. Tercier had been taken into the confidence of Conti and Louis XV., and served them as a "go-between." The Prince no longer excited remark by his frequent private interviews with his royal relative. When he had anything to communicate, he either

instructed his confidential secretary, Monin, to see Tercier, or saw Tercier in person, and Tercier, in his turn, saw the King's valet-de-chambre, Lebel, who communicated direct with his majesty. Thus the secret diplomacy was carried on in such a way as not to revive the suspicions of Madame de Pompadour or excite the jealousy of ministers.

With regard to the mission to Russia, the King, for reasons which cannot now be penetrated, decided to take M. Rouillé, then Minister of Foreign Affairs, in some measure into his confidence. Conti's name was probably not mentioned in the matter; however, M. Rouillé approved of the projected mission, and also of the selection of Douglas. The latter, before starting on his journey, received a tortoiseshell snuff-box with a false bottom, beneath which he found his instructions in microscopic handwriting. He was not required to open any negotiations with the Russian Court, but was to ascertain the condition of the empire from a financial, commercial, and military point of view; to obtain precise information with regard to Sir Charles Hanbury Williams's intrigues, the credit enjoyed by Chancellor Bestucheff and Vice-Chancellor Woronzoff, and the Czarina's views respecting Austria, England, Poland, Sweden, and Turkey. Further, he was to ascertain the sentiments of the Empress with regard to France, and those which she was "probably inspired with by her ministry

to prevent her from renewing correspondence with his Majesty." To explain this last phrase it should be mentioned that at the time of La Chétardie's sojourn in Russia, Elizabeth had, on certain occasions, corresponded privately with Louis XV.

Douglas was moreover instructed to take notes on all of the subjects indicated, and to embody these in a memoir which he was to send to France, but only after he had left Russia, unless, indeed, the Swedish minister at St. Petersburg (who was in the French interest) should be forwarding despatches to Stockholm by courier, in which case Douglas might avail himself of the opportunity to communicate with Versailles by a safe, although circuitous route. However, he was never to send anything through the ordinary post, except a notice of his arrival, and an occasional brief report, in figurative language, of the progress which he was making in obtaining the required information. Moreover, his letters were to be sent to private addresses with which he was furnished.

The figurative language which it was decided to employ was sufficiently curious. Douglas was to write as if he were engaged in the fur trade. The words "black fox" were to signify Sir Charles Hanbury Williams, and if the latter's negotiations for the hire of a Russian army for Hanover should succeed, the Chevalier was to write that "black fox was dear." The words "ermine is in demand" were to mean

that the Russian party dominated at Court; whilst "lynx is in demand" would signify that Austrian counsels were in the ascendant. "The price of sables is falling" would mean that Chancellor Bestucheff no longer exercised his old influence. "They stand at the same price" would imply that he still retained it. Such Russian troops as England might hire were to be called "squirrel skins." Ten squirrel skins would mean 30,000, and twenty squirrel skins 60,000 men. If Douglas should find that he could do nothing at St. Petersburg, he was simply to report that the Russian climate did not agree with his health, and that he needed a remittance for his return journey. If, on the other hand, it was thought fit to recall him, he would receive a letter telling him that a muff had been obtained in France, and that he was not to purchase one in Russia.[1]

Douglas was to travel as a British tourist, and as he was well acquainted with mineralogy he was to visit *en route* various mines in Bohemia, Saxony, etc. By adopting this course, his journey, it was considered, would seem perfectly natural. Nobody would pay any attention to him, or, if they did, they would simply take him for one of those eccentric Englishmen, who then, as now, were always to be found roaming about the Continent.

Douglas started from Paris in the summer of

[1] Boutaric, "Correspondance Secrète de Louis XV."

1755, and, reaching Anhalt, is said to have waited there for his young friend Déon to join him. The sole authority for this statement, however, is a certain Count Frottier de la Messelière, who, a few years later, went to Russia as one of the ornamental gentlemen in the train of the Marquis de l'Hôpital when the latter was appointed ambassador. But La Messelière certainly alludes to a second journey made by Douglas to Russia; he was not in the King's secret, and it may be taken for granted that he knew nothing of this first and most secret mission. Even his account of the second mission is a medley of fact and fable.

The question whether Douglas was or was not accompanied by Déon when he went to St. Petersburg in 1755 may at first sight seem a trivial one, but, as will presently be shown, it has an important bearing on the story of Déon's career. Those who contend that Déon was already at this time in the confidence of Louis XV. and the Prince de Conti, and was appointed to co-operate with the Scotch chevalier in his endeavours at the Muscovite Court—though, for the matter of that, his name is not once mentioned in any official or secret despatch of the time now extant—further assert that he had a private mission specially confided to him by his sovereign, a mission quite distinct from that entrusted to his companion. For instance, he was to convey an autograph letter from Louis XV. to the Czarina, and make all arrangements

for their private correspondence. Further, he was to endeavour to obtain for Conti the principality of Courland and the chief command of the Russian army. From the letters of Louis XV. and Tercier in the French archives, it appears certain, however, that Déon was only entrusted with negotiating the private correspondence at a subsequent period,[1] and was then, and then only, provided with the needful ciphers, letters, etc. Moreover, the Courland business was originally confided to Douglas, whose instructions contained notably this phrase: "He will make a stay in Courland under pretext of needing rest, but for the purpose of learning the state of that duchy, what the nobles think of the exile and deposition of the Prince of Courland, and the views of the Russian ministry for the government of that principality." Again, although the Prince de Conti was already, in 1755, vaguely desirous of obtaining

[1] Boutaric's "Correspondance Secrète de Louis XV." (The King to Tercier, February 24, August 7, 24, September 15, 1757); Archives des Affaires Étrangères: "Mémoire de Tercier" (1758), entitled "Account of the Secret Correspondence in Russia from 1756 to 1758." This last shows that when the King first desired to renew his private correspondence with the Czarina he formally selected Douglas and Woronzoff as intermediaries. As already mentioned (p. 44), Douglas on starting for Russia in 1755 was instructed to make inquiries respecting the Czarina's sentiments with regard to this correspondence. The matter was only entrusted to Déon when, after a first sojourn at St. Petersburg in 1756, he returned thither late in 1757. His own statements on the subject, written long afterwards, are very loosely worded and even conflicting.

the dignity of Prince of Courland, it was not at that period, when, although peace as yet prevailed on the Continent, the Czarina was on the point of placing her troops at the service of Great Britain against Louis XV., that he aspired to the command of the Muscovite army. It was *after* the outbreak of the Seven Years' War, when France and Russia were allied together, that he dreamt of pitting his own military talents against those of the great Frederick, and of marching in triumph upon Berlin.[1]

Now if Déon went to Russia with Douglas in 1755, for what purpose can he have gone there? He himself, in letters written long afterwards, when he was constantly complaining of the way in which he had been treated by Louis XV.'s ministers, says first one thing and then another. When he mentions, however, that towards the end of 1755 "his destiny dragged him into diplomacy," he is undoubtedly correct. Douglas, who had left Paris in the summer, was back again towards the close of the year, and it was then planned that Déon should accompany him on his second mission. Déon's statement, quoted above, was made by him in 1764; in the previous year, in a letter to the Duke de Praslin, recapitulating his whole career, he had formally declared that he went to Russia in 1756; and it was only

[1] Vandal, pp. 297-308.

later on, when, as Horace Walpole put it, he was off his head, that he began to talk of 1755. In the archives of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs there are letters of his dated 1756, in which, while deploring his total ignorance of the Muscovite language, he describes the Czarina's Court in a manner clearly implying that he had never been in Russia before. No letters written by Douglas with regard to the mission of 1755 are in existence, but there are numerous despatches of his of the following year in which he alludes to his previous experiences, and in none of these does he on any one occasion mention that he was on his first journey accompanied by Déon.

These particulars are not unimportant, for, if we are to credit romance rather than history, when Douglas arrived at St. Petersburg in the autumn of 1755 he was accompanied by Déon —not in masculine attire and with a sword dangling by his side, but in petticoats and possibly with a fan in his hand—not the Ludovicus Déon who wrote Latin epitaphs, but Mademoiselle Déon, or rather, Mademoiselle Lia de Beaumont. For the story runs that Douglas being forced to quit Russia owing to the hostility of the British Ambassador, his niece Mademoiselle Lia (in other words Déon in feminine garb) remained behind, and through Vice-Chancellor Woronzoff obtained access to the Czarina, who was so charmed with the

amiable and witty Parisienne that she admitted her among her maids of honour. Mademoiselle Lia, it is alleged, became lady-reader to her Majesty, and was installed in the palace, where she shared the apartment of the young Countess Catherine Woronzoff, niece of the Vice-Chancellor, and famous subsequently as the Princess Dashkoff. These assertions have given rise to a multitude of scandalous anecdotes, recalling certain episodes in Byron's "Don Juan."

That the entire story is mere fiction can, however, easily be shown. Catherine Woronzoff was born in 1744, at least so she herself states in her memoirs; consequently in 1755 she was only eleven years of age. She was not then, or ever, a maid of honour. She was educated away from the Court with Vice-Chancellor Woronzoff's daughter. It should be particularly noted that it is with her, as Princess Dashkoff, that Déon's name is associated; he is never mentioned in connection with her elder sisters, who were, however, maids of honour. One of them, Maria, became the Princess Boutourlin, while the other, Elizabeth, who married a M. Paliansky, and who, according to Baron de Bréteuil, resembled a chambermaid, was mistress to the Grand-Duke Peter.

As for Catherine Woronzoff, she married Prince Dashkoff in 1759, when she was fifteen, and it was only then that she began to figure at Court, her husband being a captain in the Preobrajensky Guards. It was at this period

that she became acquainted with Déon—not Déon, however, as Mademoiselle Lia de Beaumont, but as Monsieur Déon de Beaumont, Lieutenant of dragoons and Secretary of Legation to the Ambassador of his most Christian Majesty, a gentleman of literary tastes which she fully shared, and with whom she may have chatted about Helvetius and Voltaire.

The Marquis de l'Hôpital, in a letter to Déon written in 1762, long after the Russian business, chaffs him with having discovered the Princess's hidden virtues and encouraged her romantic temperament. "It is true," he says, "that you knew her and cultivated her friendship from her earliest youth." The Marquis's remark tallies exactly with our contention—the Princess being but fifteen in 1759.

It is well known that shortly after her marriage she was taken into the confidence of the Grand-Duchess Catherine, subsequently helped her to seize the throne, and was then appointed "lady of the portrait." She came to England twice, in 1770 and 1779, and on the former occasion, if we are to believe Déon's assertions, she stated in society that she had known him very well at St. Petersburg, where he had passed as being a woman—a phrase which might be interpreted in a variety of ways. Indeed, we have only the veriest tittle-tattle as to what the Princess did or did not say; her own memoirs do not contain the slightest allusion to Déon. In these, speaking

of her visit to England in 1770, the Princess says, "I did not go to Court, and made but very few acquaintances, among whom were the Duke and Duchess of Northumberland. . . . In London I remained in the society of Mrs. Morgan and Countess Pouschkin (wife of the Russian Ambassador)." This account scarcely agrees with the familiar stories of the Princess gadding about town and relating equivocal tales of Déon.

But to return to the legend. Having been installed at the palace Mademoiselle Lia de Beaumont, it is alleged, enjoyed for a time the society of the maids of honour, presented the Czarina with an autograph letter from Louis XV., and finally informed her Majesty that she was not the young damsel that she was supposed to be, but a young man, and had only donned feminine attire in order to obtain access to her Majesty's sacred person. How far the Czarina believed this story we are left in doubt; Mademoiselle Lia with her girlish face and figure certainly looks as if she were a young lady; but of course if she says she is a young man it is difficult not to believe her. At all events, the Czarina is said to have been delighted with the letter sent to her by Louis XV., and to have penned a gracious reply, which was confided to the King's messenger and by him—or shall we say her?—conveyed to Versailles, with the result that the two countries speedily became allies.

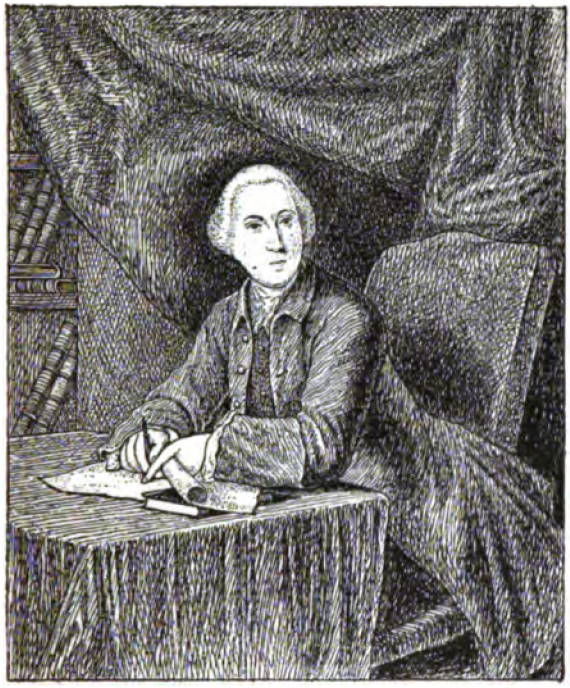
Such is the legend—romantic enough, but utterly false. As already remarked, there is not a grain of reliable evidence to show that Déon even went to St. Petersburg in 1755 with the Chevalier Douglas.

We may now accompany the latter on his way. It appears that he travelled under the name of Michel, a name which, according to Count Frottier de la Messelière, he had already assumed when employed as tutor to M. de Sauvigny's son. One alias more or less was nothing to this Jesuit, by turns Mackenzie, Douglas, and Michel. The last name, it may be pointed out, was calculated to meet with the approval of the French authorities, as it would enable Douglas, if necessary, to pass himself off on his way as a relative of Michel, the French banker and merchant established at St. Petersburg, who had previously carried political messages from one to the other Court.[1]

According to English documents, when Douglas reached the Muscovite capital he at once called at the British Embassy, declaring himself to be an English subject, related to the Earl of Morton, and asking Sir Charles Hanbury Williams to introduce him at Court. Williams, suspicious as to Douglas's identity, refused to do so; whereupon Douglas sought the assistance of the Swedish minister—known to be favourable to France—and the Swede inquired of his English colleague whether he

[1] See *ante*, pp. 18-19.

objected to his presenting the Scotch Chevalier. Williams naturally resented the intervention of a foreigner in a matter concerning a subject of the British crown, and in the result Douglas,



SIR CHARLES HANBURY WILLIAMS, FROM THE PORTRAIT BY REYNOLDS.

finding himself unable to obtain access to the Court, hastily left St. Petersburg and returned to France, bitterly complaining, we are told, of Sir Charles Hanbury Williams's treatment, in every town through which he passed.[1] Such

[1] Telfer, p. 13.

in brief is the story as told in the Russian correspondence at our Record Office, but the French archives have a very different tale to relate.

According to divers French memoirs and despatches,[1] after Douglas had been repulsed by Sir Charles Hanbury Williams and others, he decided to apply to the banker Michel, with whose devotion to the joint interests of Louis XV. and the Czarina he had been made acquainted before leaving France. Michel—there was no need of any Lia de Beaumont to go to the imperial palace—placed Douglas in communication with Vice-Chancellor Woronzoff, who, unlike Bestucheff, was known to be favourable to France. Woronzoff thereupon consulted Elizabeth, and Douglas soon ascertained that Louis XV. had not been mistaken with regard to the Czarina's sentiments. She really desired to renew diplomatic intercourse with France; personally, she preferred to contract an alliance with the Court of Versailles rather than with that of St. James; and she declared herself ready to receive and to obtain (on her Chancellor's part, no doubt) "respectful treatment for any envoy of the King of France who would bring with him sufficient powers to sign a treaty." Woronzoff handed to Douglas a written statement to the above effect; and provided with this precious document the secret envoy at once returned to

[1] Affaires Etrangères—"Lettres et Documents, XXX."

France.[1] He was not a Jesuit for nothing, however. If on his way back to Versailles he complained so bitterly of Sir Charles Hanbury Williams's treatment, it was undoubtedly because he wished to avert suspicion of his true purpose in journeying to St. Petersburg, or if that purpose were suspected to let it be supposed that he had been unable to accomplish his task. He may be credited with having successfully checkmated the astute British ambassador.

On the other hand, it is true, Sir Charles Hanbury Williams could congratulate himself on the success of his negotiations with Bestucheff for the hire of a Russian army. By a treaty signed on September 30th, 1755, Russia had agreed to place at the disposal of Great Britain an army of 70,000 men, for whose services the Czarina was to receive £100,000 a year. Had Sir Charles Hanbury Williams been cognizant, however, of the intrigues going on between St. Petersburg and Versailles, he might well have doubted whether this arrangement would ever be carried into effect. As a matter of fact, it came to nothing, owing to the course taken by Frederick the Great. Alarmed by the prospect of a Russian army entering Germany, Frederick decided to break with France, whose ally he had been for many years, and hastily came to an understanding with Great Britain — he himself undertaking to defend Hanover against all aggressors. A treaty

[1] Affaires Etrangères—"Lettres et Documents, XXX."

to this effect was signed at Westminster on January 16, 1756, and was shortly afterwards ratified by Frederick at Berlin, despite the entreaties of the Duke de Nivernais, whom Louis XV. hastily despatched from Versailles in the hope of retaining the alliance of the Prussian monarch.

A perfect revolution in European politics was now impending, and it was more than ever necessary that France should have a reliable agent at St. Petersburg. Michel the merchant had been in correspondence with Douglas ever since the latter's return to France, keeping him well posted with regard to the views of the Czarina and Woronzoff, and urging that France should depart from her policy of reserve.[1] As soon as the defection of Frederick the Great became known at Versailles, it was decided by the King and M. Rouillé, the Foreign Minister, that Douglas should return to Russia. Conti, on this occasion, was not at once taken into the royal confidence, as appears from a letter written on January 14, 1756, by Louis XV. to Tercier, in which the King says: "Should the Prince de Conti speak to you of the Sieur Michel's second journey to Russia, or try to make you speak, you may tell him what you know of the matter, but with the greatest secrecy."[2] Louis XV. is here evidently alluding to his own envoy Douglas-Michel, and not to Michel the merchant

[1] Affaires Etrangères—"Mémoires et Documents, XXX."
[2] Boutaric, vol. i. p. 211.

and banker, who had been established at St. Petersburg for many years, and had travelled at least a score of times between France and Russia. There can have been no question of his making a "second" journey to Muscovy. Moreover, he was not in France at this time.

Under date February 5, 1756, the "Livre Rouge" specifies that 6,000 livres were handed to the Sieur Michel (Douglas) for his travelling expenses, and thus provided, and bearing a private letter from M. Rouillé to Woronzoff, the Scotch Chevalier once more set out from Paris.[1] Douglas, it is said, now assumed the name of Leonard, which is not impossible. Crafty as he was, he may have appeared in one town as the Sieur Leonard and in another as the Sieur Michel, with the view of throwing German and English spies off the scent. In the French state papers, however, he is invariably referred to by the name of Michel. It is now, and not on the previous occasion, that he stops at Anhalt, whence, according to Count Frottier de la Messelière, he writes asking that Déon may be sent to him. La Messelière adds that by the intervention of a certain Madame de Binnting, Douglas obtained at Anhalt an introduction to the Duchess of Anhalt-Zerbst (mother of the Grand-Duchess Catherine), who gave him letters

[1] On the authority apparently of various papers at the Public Record Office, Captain Telfer tells us that Douglas had "a great deal of money to dispose of," but from the French state papers the contrary would appear to have been the case.

of recommendation to the Russian Court and also to Michel the merchant. He cannot really have needed any letters to the latter, since he was already well acquainted with him; still, adhering to his jesuitical practices, he may have purposely concealed this acquaintance, not wishing the true nature of his mission or his previous journey to Russia to be known.

Déon, according to his own account, raises with great difficulty a loan of 10,000 livres for his expenses, sets out, and having apparently joined Douglas at Anhalt, the pair proceed together to St. Petersburg, where they arrive on April 22nd (N.S.), betaking themselves at once to the house of Michel the merchant, with whom for a time they reside. Douglas complains to Michel that he is short of funds,[1] and Michel places 10,000 livres at his disposal, and for the second time repairs to Vice-Chancellor Woronzoff to inform him of the French envoy's arrival.[2] Woronzoff receives Douglas that same evening, and Douglas hands him the private letter from M. Rouillé with which he has been entrusted. Woronzoff replies to this letter under date April 20th (O.S.), and Douglas forwards the reply to France. About this time he also writes to M. Rouillé, thanking him for having sent him Déon. Alluding evidently to the days when he and Déon were together

[1] This is in formal contradiction with Captain Telfer's statement that he had "a great deal of money to dispose of."

[2] Affaires Etrangères—"Mémoires et Documents, XXX."

in the service of the Intendant de Paris, he says, "I have long been acquainted with his (Déon's) intelligence, zeal, and attachment to his work. He will be very useful to me, and also of good service to the King. He is steady and prudent." Then comes this remarkable passage: "Yesterday evening I presented him (Déon) to Vice-Chancellor Count Woronzoff, who received him with kindness and politeness. His disposition seems to please the Vice-Chancellor very much, but after considerable reflection the latter was not of opinion as previously that he (Déon) should follow the first plan formed as to his destination ('qu'il suivît le premier plan de sa destination'), for particular reasons known to the Empress, with which I shall have the honour to acquaint you in detail later on, and of which I hope you will approve."[1]

Now it should be noted, first, that Déon publishes this letter himself;[2] secondly, that it shows him to have been introduced in 1756 to Woronzoff, with whom the partisans of the Lia de Beaumont legend would have us to believe that he was acquainted since 1755; thirdly, that some first plan had been formed with regard to him, but was abandoned for reasons of the Empress's.

[1] Captain Telfer, who quotes the earlier part of Douglas's letter, makes no reference to the latter portion, apparently because it does not tally with his own theories.

[2] "Lettres, Mémoires et Négociations du Chev. d'Eon." London, 1764. The letter is simply dated 1756; no month being indicated.

Neglected by Déon's previous biographers, this letter, in the present writer's opinion, throws a vivid light on this part of the Chevalier's career. What was the "first plan" concerning him which was abandoned? Was it that he should enter the Czarina's service as "reader," so that France might have an efficient spy at the Russian Court? Douglas, it may be observed, was referred to as a librarian in M. Rouillé's private letter to Woronzoff—this course being adopted by way of precaution, as the letter might possibly miscarry.[1] Now there is some analogy between the functions of librarian and reader, and the story of Déon having acted as reader to the Empress may have had its origin in the circumstance that he arrived at St. Petersburg with Douglas, who gave himself out to be a librarian; or it may even have been the original intention of his patrons that he should become the Czarina's reader. For reasons of the Empress's, however, the plan fell through.

This view of the matter is supported by a statement made by Déon himself. In recapitulating his services, in his letter to the Duke de Praslin, dated June 5, 1763, he says that when he was sent to Russia in 1756 reasons of policy required that certain views entertained with regard to himself, "and for which he felt some repugnance," should be abandoned. Now,

[1] Telfer.

one can well understand that he should not care for the suggested post of reader to the Empress. Indeed, if he entered the Russian Court in that capacity, it would not be so much with the object of winning Elizabeth's confidence and ascertaining her views—these she could readily communicate through her confidant Woronzoff, or her French attendant, Madame Caravaque, who was in constant communication with Michel the merchant—as for the purpose of secretly spying upon Bestucheff, the Grand-Duke Peter, and the Grand-Duchess Catherine; in a word, on all who were opposed to French influence in Russia. Now, secret emissary though he may have been, Déon, still young and uncorrupted, with high ambitions and ideals, can hardly have cared to play the part of a household spy.

Another point here arises. Supposing that he was intended for the post of reader, was he to be a *lecteur* (male reader) or a *lectrice* (female reader)? If indeed it was proposed that he should appear at the Russian Court as a woman, one can the more readily understand his repugnance for the task assigned him; for whatever he may have done or may have become at a later stage in his career, it is on record that at this early period of his life he disliked and resented all allusion to his effeminate appearance. None the less, those who believe in the legend assert that Déon did serve the Empress

as lady reader,[1] and in support of their contention, and to prove that about this time he was wont to dress as a woman, they point triumphantly to a portrait in which he is shown at the age of five-and-twenty or so, in female guise, wearing a low-necked dress, and displaying an ample bosom, together with the cross of St. Louis—which he did not obtain, however, till he was ten years older. The portrait is attributed to La Tour, and if correctly so, it must have been executed at the cost of someone else than Déon, for he certainly could not have afforded to pay the high price which the Court pastellist was obtaining at the time.[2] If Conti,

[1] Madame Campan, whose father, Genest, became one of the chief clerks of the Foreign Office, says that Déon was *lecteur*, not *lectrice*. We shall have something to say later on with reference to Madame Campan's assertions on this and other points.

[2] The portrait in question is given as a frontispiece to the present work, having been copied from a mezzotint engraving by Francis Haward, R.A., by whom it was published in January, 1788. Haward engraved the portrait from a painting by Angelica Kauffmann, and she copied it, we are told, from a pastel by La Tour, and is also supposed to have introduced into it the cross of St. Louis, which can scarcely have figured in the original design. At the time when it was engraved, Angelica Kauffmann's painting was in the possession of a certain Mr. George Keate, and it may still exist nowadays in some private collection. Of the pastel by La Tour, however, we can find no trace whatever. We only have the engraver's authority that it served Angelica Kauffmann for her painting, and the question arises whether any such pastel ever existed, and if it existed, whether it was really the work of La Tour. Many of the latter's sketches and studies exist at St. Quentin; indeed,

as has been suggested, struck by the effeminate appearance of Déon, conceived the idea of sending him to Russia as a woman so that he might the more readily obtain admission to the Court, it is not unlikely that Déon before his departure rehearsed the part he was to play, and that Conti, delighted with his appearance, engaged La Tour to execute the pastel in question. Déon having started off after Douglas, the pair proceeded to St. Petersburg, where, however, the "first plans" with regard to Charles Geneviève were abandoned, both on account of the objections raised by the Empress and of Déon's own repugnance for the part assigned him. It is in this way only that one can reconcile the assertions of the legend with the facts of history. Otherwise, the portrait of Déon as a young woman is but a fancy portrait executed many years subsequently to

he preserved the first *esquisses* of almost every pastel he executed, but among these there is no portrait of Déon.

Captain Telfer has pointed out appropriately enough that Déon was scarcely in a position to employ so renowned an artist as La Tour, whose terms were extremely high. In 1755—about the very time, when, judging by appearances, this portrait would have been executed—La Tour was engaged on his famous pastel of Madame de Pompadour, for which, as we learn from M. Champfleury's "Les Peintres Célèbres," he asked the royal favourite no less than 48,000 livres, and bitterly complained when she declined to pay him more than half that amount. Four years previously the lowest sum he would accept for a small portrait was 5,000 livres, and 5,000 livres meant more than a year's income to Déon, who, as the reader will remember, had lost his fortune.

support his own solemn asseverations that the whole world had been mistaken with regard to him, and that he was indeed a woman and not a man!

IV.

April, 1756—June, 1757.

Reception of Douglas by the Czarina—The Mysterious Madame Caravaque—A Plot to murder Douglas, Déon, and Michel—Douglas and Déon become Diplomatic Personages—A Glance at the Russian Court—Negotiations for a Franco-Russian Alliance—Douglas is extricated from his Difficulties by Déon—Déon popular with the Russian Nobles but an Enigma to the Women—A mark of favour from the Czarina—Déon leaves for France with important Commissions—His Adventures on the Road—He conveys the News of the Disaster of Prague to Versailles—A broken leg—Louis XV.'s presents to Déon, including a Commission in a regiment of Dragoons.

DOUGLAS and Déon had scarcely reached the Russian capital before Sir Charles Hanbury Williams penetrated their true character. Woronzoff admitted that the Scotch Chevalier was entrusted with a private commission from Louis XV.; as for Bestucheff, how greatly his power had diminished may be gathered from his declaration that he had been kept quite out of the secret, and had known nothing of Douglas's

journey until his arrival at Riga. Whilst there, Douglas had boastfully represented himself to be a French envoy extraordinary, and had consequently been received by the governor with all customary honours. The Czarina was somewhat disappointed on finding that Louis XV. had simply sent her the same unofficial agent as previously, instead of the plenipotentiary she had asked for; however, Douglas, shortly after his arrival, was presented to her as a Scotch gentleman in the French service, and Woronzoff handed him a fresh memoir expressing the Empress's desire for a fuller understanding with Versailles and asking that the Chevalier might be accredited as Chargé d'affaires; whilst promising that, in the meantime, he should be "treated with distinction and listened to with consideration as being a person sent on the part of his most Christian Majesty."

Douglas prudently refrained from sending this memoir to Versailles through the ordinary post, in which case it might have fallen into the hands of Bestucheff. He confided it with despatches announcing his reception by the Czarina to Michel the merchant, who travelling in hot haste accomplished the journey to Versailles in eighteen days.[1] Michel was accompanied on this occasion, curiously enough, by Madame Caravaque, the Empress's French attendant, who may possibly have been entrusted with some special mission by her mistress. Madame Caravaque

[1] Affaires Etrangères—"Mémoires et Documents, XXX."

was at this period apparently an elderly woman —for a certain Sieur Mathy writing to Douglas from Dantzig calls her a *bonne dame*—still, whatever may have been her age, it is not improbable that her connection with the Czarina and Michel, and her journeys between France and Russia, contributed to confirm and swell the Lia de Beaumont legend. Her departure from St. Petersburg with Michel took place apparently about the middle of June, for Sir Charles Hanbury Williams wrote to the Earl of Holderness on June 12th announcing that "a creature of the Vice-Chancellor" would soon set out for Paris. Telfer conceives that the "creature" referred to was Déon, but there is no record of Déon having come to France at this period. On the contrary, documents in the French archives show him to have been busy at St. Petersburg helping Douglas to contend against the intrigues of Chancellor Bestucheff.

Bestucheff, like many politicians of the time, appears to have been a very unscrupulous personage. Some time afterwards, when he had fallen from power, documents were found among his papers showing that he had plotted the murder of Douglas, Michel, and Déon. According to La Messelière, one night, at the period we are dealing with, Michel's house was attacked by armed men, and shots were fired through the windows of the room in which Douglas slept. Fortunately the bullets simply lodged in the wall. Life at St. Petersburg was

certainly not *couleur de rose* for the envoys of Louis XV. at that time. However, Michel's journey to Versailles bore fruit. In July Douglas was accredited as Chargé d'affaires and Déon was appointed Secretary of Legation. It is hinted that before they were officially received there were some stormy scenes between the Empress and her Chancellor, for the latter was still bitterly opposed to France. However, as he saw power fast slipping from him, rather than lose all authority he consented to do the Czarina's bidding.

Douglas and Déon now took up their abode at the Apraxin palace, and were received in solemn audience by Elizabeth. The young Secretary of Legation seems to have been greatly struck by the magnificence of the Imperial Court, and we find him writing to Tercier that he had seen the Czarina "surrounded by a brilliant company of maids of honour, a veritable troop of nymphs well worthy of the curiosity of foreigners."[1]

In the Court to which Déon now obtained an *entrée* he found two parties in presence —the friends and the foes of France. Whilst Bestucheff's authority was waning, that of Woronzoff increased day by day. Woronzoff

[1] Archives des Affaires Etrangères. Had Déon been in the intimacy of the Empress and her maids for a year previously, as the supporters of the legend assert, he would certainly not have written this in the summer of 1756 to Tercier, who was well acquainted with all the phases and details of the Russian mission.



ELIZABETH PETROWNA
Empress of Russia

[illegible] de rose for the envoys of [illegible]. However, Michel's [illegible] be a fruit. In July [illegible] as Chargé d'Affaires and [illegible] secretary of Legation. It [illegible] ces between [illegible] for the latter [illegible] ce. However, [illegible] him rather [illegible] ed to do [illegible]

[illegible] their Lord[illegible] [illegible] ed in [illegible] the young [illegible] be a beau[illegible] [illegible] he be[illegible]



ELIZABETH PETROWNA
Empress of Russia.

was a partisan of the French alliance, as far as it might prove useful to Russia, and so was Count Ivan Schouvaloff, the Czarina's lover, whose French tastes were so pronounced that all his clothes and furniture were sent from Paris, whilst he also kept himself well supplied with new French books, and protected various French artists who had settled at St. Petersburg. On the other hand, the Czarina's nephew, the Grand-Duke Peter, heir-presumptive to the Russian throne, was strongly swayed by German sympathies, whilst his wife, Catherine of Anhalt-Zerbst (afterwards Catherine II.), was particularly desirous of a good understanding with Great Britain. She had the greatest aversion from her husband, who was deformed and badly marked by the small-pox; and almost ever since their marriage she had led an extremely dissolute life. He, on his side, had his mistress, Elizabeth Woronzoff, and such time as he did not spend with her, or in drilling his Holsteiner guards, or in strutting about in a uniform carefully copied from that of his *beau idéal,* Frederick the Great, he devoted to smoking and drinking. The Czarina herself having become extremely indolent, it resulted that Catherine had acquired great influence at St. Petersburg—the more easily, indeed, as, although of German birth, she had ever endeavoured to identify herself with her adoptive country.

As soon as the intrigues for the despatch of

a French envoy to Russia had come to the knowledge of Sir Charles Hanbury Williams, the latter had endeavoured to thwart them by appealing to Catherine's influence; and Catherine had willingly enough entered into his views, but had explained that she was unable to do anything through lack of money. She had asked Williams for £10,000,[1] which may or may not have been sent to her; at all events, the effort to prevent the reconciliation of France and Russia had failed.

Catherine continued supporting English interests after Douglas had been received as Chargé d'affaires, and in this course she was not only encouraged by Williams and Bestucheff, but also by her lover, the handsome young Count Stanislas Poniatowski, Polish minister at St. Petersburg, who, although he prided himself on the friendship of Voltaire, Madame Geoffrin, and other French notabilities, was opposed to any exercise of French influence in Russia. He was, moreover, extremely intimate with Williams, by whom it is not unlikely he was subsidized.

"The young Court"—as Peter, Catherine, and their *entourage* were styled—was thus entirely opposed to France, and although Douglas and Déon had the support of the Czarina, Woronzoff, and Schouvaloff, their task was by no means an easy one. That

[1] Sir C. H. Williams to the Earl of Holderness (most secret), July 9, N.S., 1756.

task was to prepare the way for the co-operation of Russia with France and Austria against Prussia and England, for the result of Frederick the Great's understanding with Great Britain for the defence of Hanover had been that France and Austria, enemies for many years, had now become reconciled, and on May 1, 1756, had contracted an offensive and defensive alliance against all their enemies. Whilst desiring that Russia should join the compact, France wished, however, to except Turkey from the provisions of the treaty, being unwilling to support the Czarina in any aggressive war against the Sultan.

Douglas and Déon were actively engaged in their negotiations when war broke out. In August, 1756, Frederick the Great—expecting to be attacked by Austria—resorted to the favourite Prussian system of anticipating the enemy, marched into Saxony, compelled the Saxon troops to capitulate, and then drafted them *nolens volens* into his own army, whilst the Austrian forces were yet encamped in the mountains of Bohemia. The situation was now critical. In their endeavours to bring about the projected alliance, Douglas and Déon acted in concert with, or rather, under the leadership of Prince Esterhazy, Austrian ambassador at St. Petersburg, who, in his anxiety to secure the co-operation of the Czarina against Prussia, advised the Scotch Chevalier not to insist upon the stipulation with regard to

Turkey; and in the result Douglas added to the draft of the treaty which had been sent to him, a "most secret" clause, by which it was specified that in the event of a war between Russia and Turkey, France would render the former power some pecuniary assistance.

As soon as the treaty was signed, late in 1756, Déon was anxious to take it to France. But Douglas preferred to entrust it to Michel, who had returned to St. Petersburg with Madame Caravaque in the previous September, bringing with him the tidings that France was disposed to maintain permanently, not a mere chargé d'affaires like Douglas, but a duly accredited ambassador in Russia. The despatches added that this ambassador (the Marquis de l'Hôpital) was already chosen, and would soon set out for his post.

The treaty negotiated by Douglas having been confided to Michel, the latter once more started for Versailles, and on January 1, 1757 (O.S.), Déon is found writing to Tercier: "I desired to be the bearer of this monument of your own and M. Douglas's triumph; but this is a justice due to M. Michel by reason of the truly patriotic zeal which he has so far displayed on every occasion."[1] Déon was, however, sadly mistaken when he likened the treaty to a triumph. The secret clause with regard to Turkey excited the ire of Louis XV. and his ministers, the King denounced Douglas's "stupidity," and finally wrote a letter to the

[1] Archives des Affaires Etrangères.

Czarina, asking that the secret clause might be annulled. At the same time he proposed to her that they should engage together in a private correspondence. He knew that she would be flattered by this suggestion, which he hoped would in some measure atone for his refusal to ratify the secret clause. Through Tercier, moreover, he sent Douglas private instructions with reference to this correspondence, which was to pass through his (Douglas's) hands and those of Woronzoff,—Déon not being mentioned.[1]

Upon being reprimanded for having introduced the "most secret clause" into the treaty, the Scotch Chevalier was sadly cast down. If we are to believe Déon, it was he who extricated his superior from his painful position. He saw Bestucheff in the presence of the Czarina and her lover, Schouvaloff, and after a stormy scene—for the Chancellor was opposed to any treaty with France if the most secret clause were not adhered to—the obnoxious stipulation was cancelled, and the rest of the treaty ratified.

This was a great success for Déon, but it was not his only one. The reconciliation and

[1] This is clearly set forth by Tercier himself, in his historical MS. memoir on the secret correspondence from which we have frequently quoted, and which thoroughly disposes of the reckless assertions of Déon's biographers, that Déon had had private charge of this correspondence since the year 1755.

alliance of France and Russia, and the invasion of Saxony by Frederick the Great, had caused Conti to enlarge the scope of his personal ambition. He no longer aspired merely to the principality of Courland, but desired the chief command of the Russian army, that he might lead it to victory and distinguish himself in the eyes of Europe. This intrigue he confided to Douglas and Déon. The former, on being privately instructed by Tercier in the King's name (Tercier himself tells us this), that he was to act with great circumspection in anything concerning Conti personally, placed the matter entirely in Déon's hands, no doubt because he wished to relieve himself of an irksome responsibility; and Déon, all zeal and impulsiveness, soon brought the affair to a successful issue, at least so far as Russia was concerned.

The young Secretary of Legation had now been a twelvemonth at St. Petersburg, and we may well believe that he had become a general favourite there. Whilst discharging his official duties in an able manner, he had collected a variety of information, which he proposed to embody in a lengthy memoir on the political situation of Russia and the mysteries of its government; and yet he had by no means neglected to take part in the festivities and amusements of aristocratic society. Naturally gay, of engaging manners and considerable wit, fond alike of a glass and a joke, a skilful

horseman and swordsman, he was sought after and entertained by many great personages. With the men, all of them hard drinkers and superb fencers, he was a hail-well-met companion, whilst to the women he proved somewhat of an enigma. The Court of St. Petersburg in those days was even more dissolute than that of Versailles, where appearances were in some measure kept up; whereas the Muscovite grandees, their spouses and their daughters, indulged in open debauchery. No wonder, then, that Déon should have occasioned general surprise by his abstention from all amorous intrigues. He was polite and *empressé* towards the women, but matters never went any further; and the circumstance of his chaste life, coupled with his effeminate face, not unlikely gave rise to the rumour: "The young French secretary is a girl."

Those in authority, however, judged him at his worth. Bestucheff distrusted him, and with good cause, while Woronzoff favoured and patronized him. The treaty between France and Russia having been ratified, minus the secret clause, it was arranged that Déon should convey the ratifications to France. At the same time, Woronzoff informed him that the Czarina was willing to offer Conti both Courland and the command of her armies, provided that Louis XV. should approve of such a course; and Déon was requested to see Conti in Paris and inform him of this decision.

The young man was busy with his preparations for departure when he received a note from M. Wolkoff, principal secretary of the Supreme Council—the same who subsequently betrayed his country by communicating the Russian plan of campaign to Frederick the Great—asking him to call on Bestucheff. The Chancellor proved extremely polite—he hoped, no doubt, that he should never look on Déon's face again—and not only wished him a *bon voyage*, but handed him, on behalf of the Empress, a sum of three hundred ducats as a mark of the imperial favour. This present was virtually a godsend to Déon, who, at this period, was only rich in hopes.

Besides conveying the ratifications of the treaty and the message for Conti to France, Déon is said to have been entrusted with letters from the Czarina to Maria Theresa and Louis XV.; he was also, we are told, "the bearer to the Courts of Vienna and Versailles of Elizabeth's friendly assurances that the treaty of subsidies with Great Britain was no longer of effect, and that the eighty thousand men whom she had assembled in Livonia and Courland should henceforth act in concert with the forces of Austria and France.[1] Déon was further charged

[1] Until March, 1757, Sir C. H. Williams seems to have been under the delusion that he was "well rather than ill in the Czarina's good opinion." In a letter to the Earl of Holderness (March 22, N.S.), he plumes himself on the friendly messages which he has received from the favourite, Schouvaloff, though at the same time deploring that people

to deliver the Russian plan of campaign, and was commissioned by Count Schouvaloff to take with him 50,000 livres in gold, being a gift from the Empress to Voltaire, who had received her commands to write the life of Peter the Great."[1] In this connection it would seem, from papers in the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs and at the Tonnerre Library, that Déon, while collecting information about Russia, its history and institutions, had been allowed to transcribe documents at the palace of Peterhof; these, in all probability, being intended for the use of Voltaire in the preparation of the historical memoir ordered of him. It is, however, certain that some of the papers found their way to Versailles, and were laid before Louis XV. or his ministers; and, according to a strange but not impossible theory, among them was that famous "will" of Peter the Great which Napoleon I. was accused of having forged in 1811. Those who adopt this view contend that the copy of the "will" sent or handed by Déon to his superiors was disregarded by them

should have accused him to the Empress of being in the King of Prussia's interest. "Some," he plaintively adds, "have added that her Majesty ought to look upon me more as a Prussian spy than as an English ambassador."

[1] Telfer, p. 23. The livre was almost equivalent to the modern franc, so that Voltaire received about £2,000 for his life of Peter, exclusive of profits derived from the sale of the book. Prof. Alexandrenko of Warsaw has lately discovered that the writing of the work was originally instigated by Fedor Veselovski, previously Peter the Great's minister in England.

and their successors in office, and was possibly at last destroyed, but that another copy was found among Déon's papers after his death.

Whatever truth there may be in this story, which is referred to elsewhere,[1] it is certain that Déon, at the time of his departure from Russia in 1757, had already rendered considerable services to his country. Entrusted with important commissions, and greatly elated as to his future prospects, he travelled with all diligence. It was about the middle of April when he left St. Petersburg; on the 21st he reached Riga, whence he wrote a glowing letter to Douglas, blessing the lucky star which had procured him the Chevalier's acquaintance and attachment, and recording the fact that he had hitherto lived solely at his own expense, without ever having received any money whatever either from ministers or *seigneurs*. Referring to the Czarina's present, he remarked that in the course of his literary career he would find a thousand opportunities to praise the virtues, grandeur, and generosity of her imperial majesty: and he wound up by saying to Douglas, "My pen writes what my heart thinks, but if it wrote down all the gratitude I owe to you, I should never get to Paris."[2]

The war prevented Déon from taking the shortest route to France by way of Berlin; so from Riga he speeds onward towards Vienna.

[1] See Appendix to this volume.
[2] Archives des Affaires Etrangères.

At Bieloyëstok in Poland he encounters the Marquis de l'Hôpital, who is to supersede Douglas as French representative in Russia, and who, although appointed in June, 1756, is now, at the end of April, 1757, yet on his way to St. Petersburg. We are told that it was the attempt made by Damiens on the life of Louis XV. that had retarded his journey, but the truth is that the Marquis, an elderly epicure, who for many years had led an easy and luxurious life as French ambassador at Naples, was by no means anxious to brave a Russian winter, and had therefore travelled through Bavaria, Austria, Hungary, and Poland as leisurely as he could.

With L'Hôpital we find Count Frottier de la Messelière, the Marquis de Bermond, the Marquis de Fougères, the Baron de Wittenghoff, and divers other noble and gallant gentlemen whose manners and whose attire are destined to imbue the Muscovites with awe and admiration; while in the train of this wondrous embassy appear eighty secretaries, equerries, and valets. A brave company, no doubt, beside which Déon, with his modest equipage, must have appeared quite insignificant. Nevertheless the Marquis is delighted to see him, and obtains from him much important and practical information respecting Russia, with which, so far, he himself is totally unacquainted.

After a somewhat hurried interview, Déon travels on to Vienna. There the Customs'

officers refuse to allow him to enter the city without first searching his effects, and it is in vain that he produces his papers showing his diplomatic status. As he will not submit to what he considers a gross indignity, he has to pass the night in a guard-room, to which he is admitted by the kindness of a sergeant of hussars. Early on the morrow, however, he sends an account of his night's adventure to Baron de Toussaint, a favourite of the Emperor, with the result that the offending Customs' officers are dismissed, whilst the sergeant is promoted to the rank of lieutenant. Déon finds Vienna all gloom and consternation. Descending upon Austrian territory from Dresden, Frederick the Great in the space of a fortnight has covered Bohemia with Prussian troops. Before Prague his forces have encountered Marshal Brown, and, after a battle of eleven hours' duration (May 6), have flung the Austrian army back upon the city in all the disorder of a rout. Brown is mortally wounded; and Frederick now moves to, and bombards Prague, which for lack of provisions seems on the point of surrendering.

There is no French ambassador to Austria at this time in Vienna, but the French minister to Poland happens to be there, Count Charles François de Broglie, son of the first and brother of the second Marshal of that name; himself a man of great energy and talent, witty, vivacious, short of stature, but "bearing his herd erect like

a young cock," says D'Argenson, and "with sparkling eyes," adds the Abbé Georgel, "which made him look like a flaming volcano." The Count is not only French minister to Poland; he is in the King's secret, he is one of the chief agents of the secret diplomacy, and he and Déon are destined in after years to exchange scores of letters and despatches. But we must not anticipate. Broglie and Déon meet at Vienna, and Broglie commissions the young secretary to carry the direful and all-important tidings of Prague to Versailles.[1]

"The campaign is lost for the Austrians," wrote Frederick in a letter to his mother from the field of battle. "I have my hands free with 150,000 men. We are masters of a kingdom which will supply us with both men and money." Unfortunately for him, however, his success

[1] Telfer, in his "Strange Career of the Chevalier D'Eon," says that Déon was entrusted with "good tidings and gratifying intelligence," but how Louis XV. could have been gratified by the defeat of his ally Maria Theresa we leave the reader to judge; the more especially as Austria now seemed at the very mercy of Prussia, for her only other army was far away. When the tide turned in favour of Austria six weeks later, Déon had already communicated the bad news of which he was the bearer to the French government. All the writers upon Déon have blundered with regard to this episode in his career. Gaillardet formally declares the battle before Prague on May 6th to have been an Austrian victory; Telfer implies the same; and Vandal, less ignorant, imagines that it was the news of the battle of Kolin that Déon took with him to Versailles. However, Marshal de Belle-Isle's letter quoted on the following page shows that Déon was in Paris before the engagement of Kolin was fought.

turned his head for a time, and on June 18 Marshal Daun was able to save Prague and Austria on the heights of Kolin.

Déon accomplished the latter part of his journey with the utmost speed. At Strasburg he certainly halted to lodge Voltaire's 50,000 livres with the bankers Hermani and Dietrich; but he was soon on his way again, and his coach having being upset on the road he reached his destination with a broken leg. He sent in his despatches, and on June 16, two days before the Austrian victory at Kolin, Marshal de Belle-Isle, the French Minister of War, wrote to him inquiring after his health and remarking: "You do not forget how fond I was of your father." Whilst lying up under surgical treatment—we are told that the King sent his own surgeon to attend upon him—Déon prepared the memoir on the institutions of Russia for which he had previously collected materials. Both by the King and his ministers, it is said, he was complimented upon it, and, a month or two later, Louis XV. expressed his appreciation of Déon's services by sending him a gratuity from his privy purse, a golden snuff-box adorned with pearls and his portrait, together with a lieutenant's commission in the "Colonel-General Dragoons." As for the ministers, when Déon was able to wait on them they received him with the utmost kindness.

V.

July, 1757—August, 1760.

Conti's Quarrel with the King—The Well-Beloved changes Déon to D'Eon—The young Diplomatist is taken into the Royal Confidence—Conti's Designs fail, and he resigns the "Pocket Viziership"—Recall of Sir C. Hanbury Williams—The Extravagances of the Czarina and the Intrigues of Catherine—The Fall of Bestucheff—Catherine appeals for French Help—The Cipher Correspondence between Elizabeth and the Well-Beloved—A Doctor, a Loan, and a Brace of Actors—Bernis falls and Choiseul rises—Tercier's Change of Position—The Russians to invade Scotland—D'Eon in High Favour—He induces L'Hôpital to disobey his Instructions—The "dear" Marquis—Handsome Breteuil despatched to Russia—His curious secret Instructions—The Truth about Louis XV. and Poland—Rewards for D'Eon—He falls ill and turns his Back on Siberia for ever.



S soon as Déon had recovered from the effects of his accident, he was anxious to call at the Temple to apprize Conti of the Czarina's offer respecting Courland and the command of the Muscovite troops. But before he could do this it was necessary he should have the King's sanction. During the young diplomatist's absence in

Russia, Conti had quarrelled with his royal relative. At the outbreak of the Seven Years' War, he had applied for a command on the Rhine, but this had been refused him and given to the Prince de Soubise at the instigation of Madame de Pompadour, to whom Conti—almost alone among the princes of the blood royal—would never consent to humble himself. On finding Soubise entrusted with the post he coveted he was sorely vexed, and abstained for a time from appearing at Court. Louis XV. was not at first particularly affected by this behaviour: "I thought I had the right to choose whom I liked," he said. "If the Prince sulks, it is his own affair." At the end of January, 1757, however, Conti's ill-humour subsisting, the Well-Beloved wrote to Tercier that it was impossible for the Russian correspondence to continue passing through the Prince's hands. A fortnight afterwards he wrote with increased displeasure: "Do not speak to me any more about the Prince de Conti;" and, as previously shown, he had already instructed Douglas through Tercier to behave with great circumspection with regard to any of the Prince's personal designs.

On calling upon Tercier, Déon was made acquainted with all this for the first time, and realized that, however much he might desire to serve his early patron, it was advisable for him not to be too zealous lest he should offend the King. Still, he asked the royal permission

to deliver Woronzoff's message to Conti, and, on July 20, Louis XV. wrote somewhat pettishly to Tercier: "Since M. d'Eon (*sic*) [1] is commissioned by M. Woronzoff to see M. le Prince de Conti it is necessary he should see him, but he must render you an exact account of the (Prince's) reply." With this authorization, Déon, or D'Eon, as his name may henceforth be written—for, following, it would seem, the royal example, the ministers, Tercier and others, now adopted the latter style—repaired to the Temple, where his communication imbued Conti with renewed hope. His negotiations with the King respecting the Czarina's offers continued for a couple of months, from the end of July to that of September. Tercier acted as the intermediary, and, incessantly journeying between Versailles and the Temple, or the château de l'Isle-Adam, Conti's summer residence, he received from the Prince voluminous memoirs, which he transmitted to Louis XV., from whom in reply he received laconic notes. La Pompadour's passionate rancour was making itself felt.

Meantime, what was to become of D'Eon? He himself, it appears, proud of his commission as a lieutenant of dragoons, was anxious to join the army, but the Marquis de l'Hôpital, now installed at St. Petersburg, wished him to return to Russia, the more especially as, by way of

[1] Boutaric, vol. i. p. 214. Archives Nationales, K. 157. This is apparently the first occasion on which Louis XV. writes D'Eon for Déon.

throwing a sop to Bestucheff, it had been arranged that Douglas, whom the Chancellor detested, should be sent back to France. The indolent Marquis did not care to face the difficulties of the situation without some help, and having been greatly struck with the dashing young secretary, whom he had encountered at Bieloyëstok, and whom he knew to be well informed with regard to Russian affairs, he solicited that he might be sent to him. The Abbé (afterwards Cardinal) de Bernis, Minister for Foreign Affairs, consented, saying that M. D'Eon de Beaumont, who would be of great use both to the Marquis and the King's service, should be sent out as first secretary to the embassy. At the same time, Marshal de Belle-Isle wrote to L'Hôpital: "I was very fond of his (D'Eon's) uncle, and on that account I took an interest in him; but now I take an interest in him for his own sake." Thus D'Eon had evidently won the good opinion of those in power.

We know nothing of D'Eon's relations with his family about this time, but he no doubt acquainted his mother and sister with the favour he now enjoyed. In this year, 1757, his sister, Marguerite Françoise, married Captain Thomas O'Gorman, of Walsh's Irish regiment in the French service, and it is not unlikely that D'Eon was present at the wedding, which took place in Paris. While he was in the capital Louis XV., Tercier, and Jeannel, director of the postal service, were endeavouring by means of

the Cabinet Noir to secure possession of the despatches of Butezeff, the Russian agent in France; for there were rumours of Russian treachery afloat, and these would seem to have originated with D'Eon.

The young man was now about to be taken fully into the royal confidence. L'Hôpital knew nothing of the secret diplomacy, and, as Douglas, who had hitherto had charge of all the confidential communications in Russia, was about to return to France, D'Eon was chosen as his successor. He already had considerable knowledge of the matter, having worked for a long time under Douglas, and was indeed the best man for the post—"The Sieur d'Eon must not communicate to anyone what he knows of the secret," wrote the Well-Beloved to Tercier; "if necessary he will correspond with you;" and subsequently he said: "I approve of your giving the Sieur d'Eon a cipher, if he has not already left."[1]

This cipher was to serve for the private correspondence between Louis XV. and the Czarina, the negotiations for which had originally been confided to Douglas, by whom, however, nothing had been accomplished in the matter. D'Eon now received from Tercier a copy of Montesquieu's "Esprit des Lois," bound in calf with end-papers of the familiar marble pattern. Between the boards, which were double, the cipher was inserted, together

[1] Boutaric, i. 86, 224. Archives Nationales, K. 157.

with a letter from Tercier to Woronzoff, renewing the King's proposals.[1]

D'Eon began his preparations for departure wondering what answer he was to give to the offers which had been made to Conti. The King seemingly could not come to a decision. At last, however, he wrote to Tercier: "When I am morally satisfied that the Empress of Russia really destines the Prince de Conti for the command of her armies and for Courland, I will give all the authority and permissions I may be asked for. Until then I am not at all disposed to do so, for fear of taking a false step which might do us more harm than good." Conti was therefore obliged to let D'Eon start off with a vague reply, the only effect of which could be the rupture of the negotiations. At Strasburg, however, a secret order overtook the young diplomatist, with the result that he re-

[1] Writing to Count de Vergennes in May, 1776, D'Eon says that the book in question had been given him at the time of his "first journeys (*sic*) to Russia," that he might take there secret letters from Louis XV. to the Czarina, so that she and her confidant, Grand Chancellor Woronzoff (Woronzoff did not become Grand Chancellor till 1758), might correspond with his Majesty and M. Tercier without the knowledge of the ministers and ambassadors. Tercier tells us that in February, 1758, he received word from Woronzoff that the Czarina approved of the plan that she should communicate with Louis XV. in cipher, and was ready to adopt it. Prior to that date, a few private autograph letters had passed between the two sovereigns in various important circumstances, notably during La Chétardie's first embassy, but there certainly had been no regular cipher correspondence.

mained in the city for five days, on the last of which he was joined by a courier who had ridden in hot haste direct from the château de l'Isle-Adam. Conti, who had renewed his efforts to win the King's support, was now hopeful of a favourable result, and informed D'Eon that on arriving at St. Petersburg he would find a letter in figurative language awaiting him, which would acquaint him exactly with what he was to do. If the letter should contain this sentence, "You can start in accordance with your instructions," he was to substitute for Conti's letter, which he carried with him, a formal acceptance of Courland and the military command; for the phrase in question would imply that Louis XV. gave his consent. But if the letter said "Do not start," he was to abstain from all further negotiations and let the affair drop.[1]

When D'Eon reached St. Petersburg his first question was whether a letter had come for him, but there was none. Indeed, he never received the decisive communication that had been promised him. As for Conti, unable to overcome Louis XV.'s resistance, or to draw him out of his disdainful silence, he made up his mind to meddle no more with the secret diplomacy, which, originally started to further his own views on Poland, now embraced a variety of matters in which he took no personal interest. Some weeks after D'Eon's departure,

[1] Archives des Affaires Etrangères—Vandal, p. 308.

therefore, when Tercier was with the Court at Fontainebleau, he received a visit from Monin, the Prince's private secretary, who brought him all the secret papers and despatches which had remained in Conti's possession, together with a letter announcing the Prince's resignation of the functions of "pocket vizier." For a time the direction of the secret diplomacy remained in Tercier's hands, but ultimately it passed to the volcanic Count de Broglie, the same whose acquaintance D'Eon had made when passing through Vienna.

On reaching St. Petersburg the young diplomatist was received most cordially by the Marquis de l'Hôpital, to whom some time previously the Abbé de Bernis had written: "I send you, my dear ambassador, our dear little D'Eon, with whom I hope you will be well pleased. . . . His fortune lies in his hands and in yours." The Marquis, who, after a long and honourable career in the army and diplomacy, had grown gouty as well as indolent, was quite disposed to assist his secretary in making his way, and in proof thereof he entrusted him with almost the entire work of the embassy.

During D'Eon's absence one or two events of importance had happened. Sir Charles Hanbury Williams had been recalled at the instance of the Czarina, owing to his intrigues with the Grand-Duchess Catherine, who, for his benefit, it is said, was wont to sit up at

nights translating from Russian into French all such decisions of the Supreme Council as were favourable to France. Early in 1757 Williams had written to the Earl of Holderness lamenting that people at St. Petersburg looked upon him "more as a Prussian spy than as an English ambassador," and after complaining of the ill offices of the French and Austrian representatives, he had added: "Your Lordship may depend upon it from various and good intelligence, that our enemies at this Court will do their utmost with the Empress to draw me into some difficulties which may end in my being sent away from hence."[1] These anticipations had been fulfilled; but Williams had been replaced at St. Petersburg by an equally skilful and a more prudent diplomatist, Mr. Keith, who soon made his influence felt with the young Court.

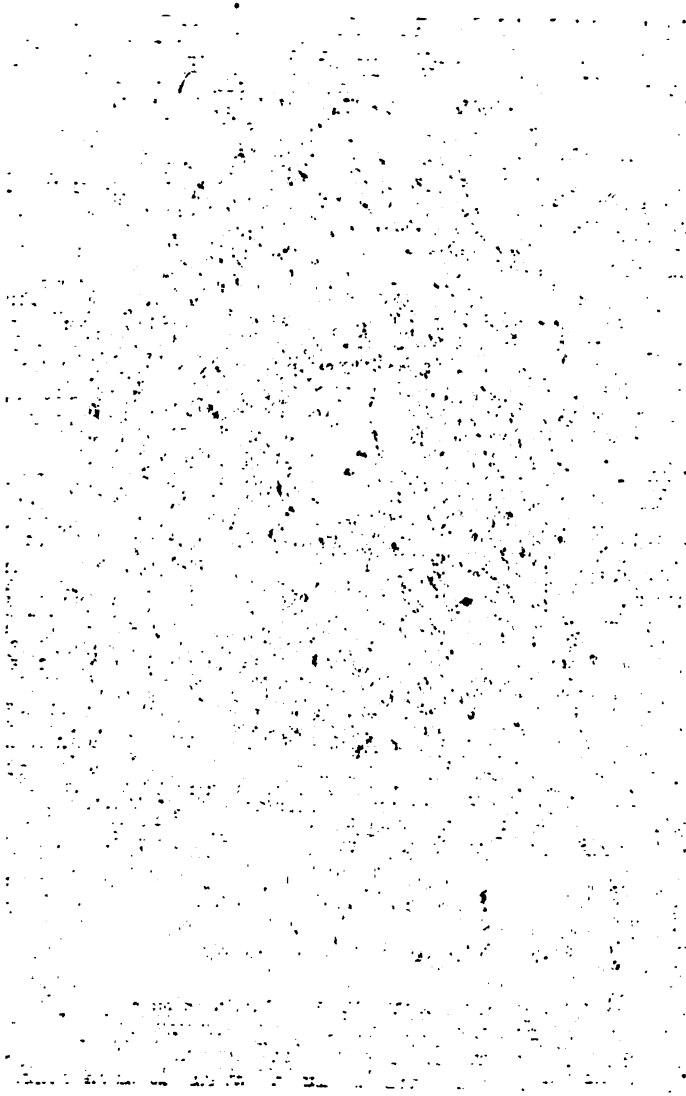
With regard to the war at this juncture, the 80,000 men, who, according to the Czarina's promises, were to act in concert with France and Austria against Frederick the Great, had spread themselves over Poland, which, neutral territory though it was, they were pillaging *en règle*. The commander of this horde of undisciplined Tartars, Cossacks, and moujiks, more or less hastily drafted into the ranks, the lazy, luxurious, and libidinous Marshal Apraxin, evinced no desire to come to close

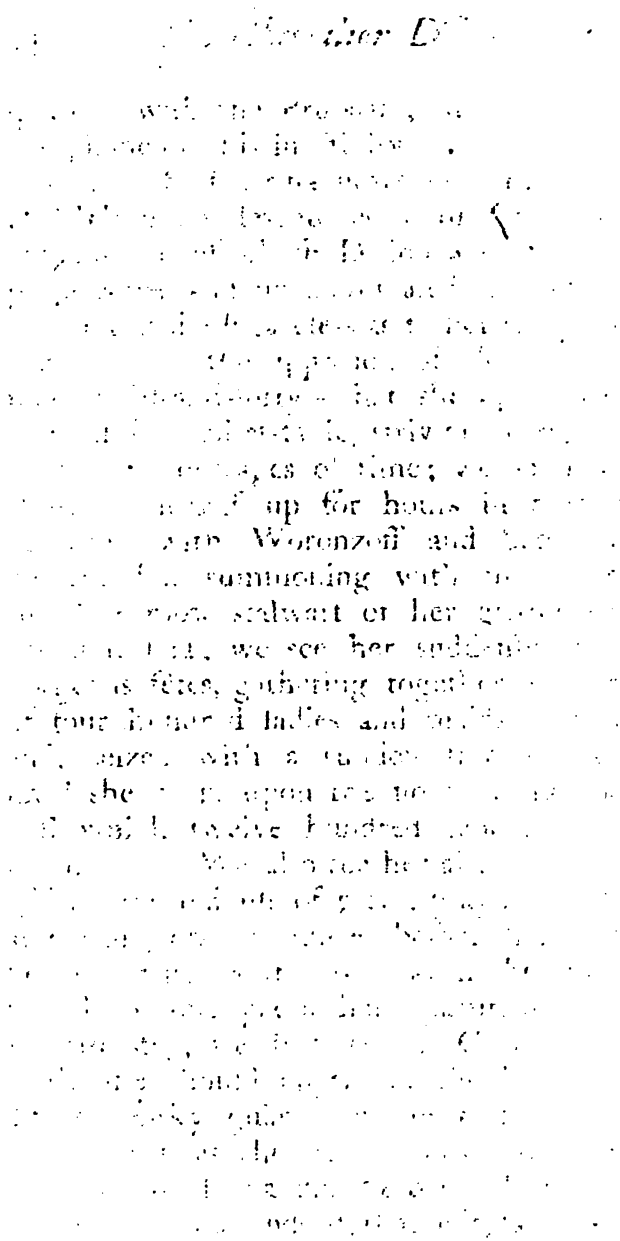
[1] Lord Mahon's "History of England," vol. iv., Appendix.

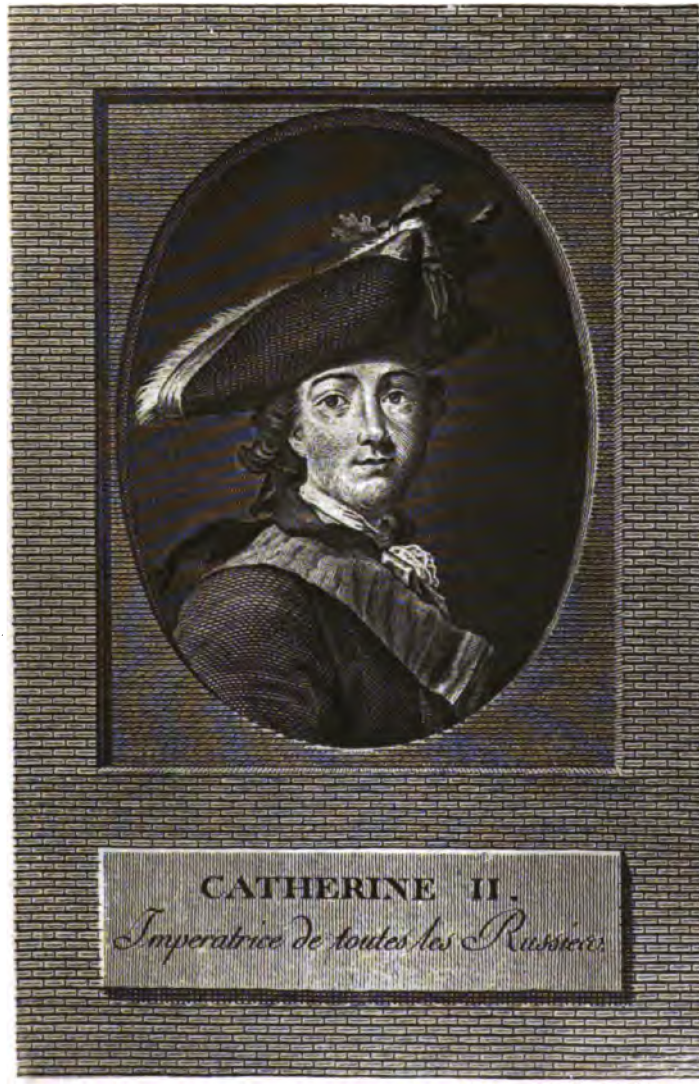
quarters with the Prussians, and many people complained of his inactivity.

Not so the Czarina, however. If we glance at L'Hôpital's despatches to his Court, in the composition of which D'Eon with his literary propensities had no doubt an important share, we see Elizabeth careless as to her army, but so distracted by the approach of old age—she is now eight-and-forty—that she spends entire days at her toilet-table, striving to repair the irreparable outrages of time; we see her also shutting herself up for hours in mysterious seclusion with Woronzoff and Schouvaloff; we see her summoning with unquenchable lust the most stalwart of her guards to the imperial bed; we see her suddenly ordering gorgeous fêtes, gathering together her cortége of four hundred ladies and maids of honour, and, seized with a sudden frenzy, dancing until she drops upon the floor of the marble hall which twelve hundred candles brightly illuminate. We also see her alternately in fits of hysteria and fits of piety, praying for hours at a time, on her knees, before the icon of her favourite saint. And at night she does not sleep, but paces her apartment with a feverish step, dreading lest the Grand-Duchess Catherine should appear at the head of the Preobrajensky guards and bear her away to doom, even as she herself long ago bore off Anna Leopoldovna and the baby Czar.

Catherine and, indeed, that dolt, her husband,







CATHERINE II,

Imperatrice de toutes les Russies.

Peter, are conspiring. They pocket money right and left; they take Austrian gold, and are willing to take French gold, but they are not inclined to render France and Austria any services. If Apraxin delays his onward march, it is in obedience to their orders. The Poles are bitterly complaining of the excesses of the Russian troops; Count de Broglie, secretly supported by Louis XV., urges them to open resistance against Russia, and intrigues for the recall of Poniatowski, Polish minister at St. Petersburg, who, seeking his political inspirations in the arms of Catherine, is entirely devoted to Russian interests. And whilst Broglie makes every effort to obtain the young libertine's recall, L'Hôpital and D'Eon are secretly instructed to win his favour, together with that of his mistress and her husband. They are told to fawn upon the ignoble trio, to coax them, bribe them, do anything in fact to gain them over to the French cause.

But the influence of Bestucheff and Mr. Keith is paramount with Catherine and Peter, who no longer content themselves with delaying Apraxin's operations. In obedience to their instructions, after gaining the battle of Gross-Jägersdorff the Russian troops take no part in the campaign; they remain mere spectators of the war, whilst their Austrian allies are hard pressed in Silesia, and France—on Nov. 5, 1757—sustains the bitter humiliation of Rosbach. And the Russians are still

looking on when a month later Frederick the Great crushes Charles of Lorraine at Leuthen, and hurls him and Daun back into Moravia. Not even then will Apraxin intervene; on the contrary, he sounds a retreat, and takes up his winter quarters in Courland.

At this Elizabeth—remorseful possibly that her allies should have suffered so many reverses through the fault in a great measure of Russian inactivity—rouses herself from her torpor, forsakes the toilet-table and the dance, and despatches Fermor to replace Apraxin. And whilst the latter, now formally accused of treachery, is being sent a prisoner to St. Petersburg, the Muscovite troops are once more ordered across the Niemen. The icy north wind is now blowing over Europe, the rivers are frozen, a snowy pall has spread over the ground; but no matter, for the first time possibly in the annals of eighteenth century warfare, there is to be a winter campaign—no cosy quarters, with blazing logs and vodka in plenty for the Muscovite soldiers, but the march and the battle—all the hardships and dangers of war.

Apraxin, however, is not the only culprit. His papers, which have been seized, are found to contain crushing proofs of treason on the part of Bestucheff, together with a most compromising letter from Catherine. On February 25, 1758, the Chancellor is arrested,[1] and the

[1] Mr. Keith, who was away at Warsaw at the time, wrote

Grand-Duchess gives herself up for lost. To whom can she turn for help? A few days later a Frenchman named Rimbert comes to L'Hôpital and D'Eon—we say D'Eon advisedly, for it is on record, proved by the Marquis's own letters and despatches, that he did nothing without consulting his young secretary—and informs them that Catherine is repentant, and implores the assistance and advice of the French ambassador. At this juncture L'Hôpital and D'Eon blundered—they sacrificed the future for the present. Afraid of offending Elizabeth, they neglected this opportunity to enchain Catherine by bonds of interest, if not of gratitude, and did nothing whatever in her favour. On the contrary, L'Hôpital went to Woronzoff and told him how the Grand-Duchess had appealed to him.

In the end, so far as Catherine and Peter were concerned, the storm blew over. The

to the Earl of Holderness that profiting by his absence L'Hôpital had been to Woronzoff and threatened to break his neck if he did not join him in making "a last push" against Bestucheff; and that the Vice-Chancellor, intimidated by this menace, had entered into his proposals and set to work with his party to blacken Bestucheff's conduct to the Empress. "To give the finishing stroke," says Keith, "the French ambassador took the opportunity of the Court-day to come up to the Empress, and after having kissed her hand, pretending to admire the stuff of her gown, whispered in her ear that there was a person at Court very dangerous both to her Majesty's person and government, and that he thought himself obliged in duty to tell her that the great Chancellor Bestucheff was the man."—Mahon, vol. iv., Appendix.

former withdrew from Court for a period of three months, and lost her favourite, Poniatowski, who was sent back to Warsaw. As for Apraxin, he was found dead in the coach in which he was being brought to St. Petersburg; whilst Bestucheff, convicted of high treason, had all his property confiscated, and was banished, some accounts say to Siberia, and others to one of his estates. At all events, like his predecessors, Biren, Münich, and Ostermann, he took the road to exile, and Woronzoff, promoted to the dignity of Grand Chancellor, reigned in his stead. The Grand-Duke Peter meanwhile was consoling himself by providing his guards with a military band. Meeting L'Hôpital a few days after the ministerial revolution, he said to him: "What a pity it is that my old friend La Chétardie is dead! How happy he would have been to have heard of Bestucheff's fate!"

D'Eon himself must have been well pleased at all this, especially as Bestucheff's papers revealed that the Chancellor had plotted the murder of D'Eon and Douglas in the earlier days of the latter's mission. Now that the obnoxious statesman had fallen, there seemed to be no obstacle to that private cipher correspondence between the Czarina and the Well-Beloved, which was destined to pass through D'Eon's hands. The two sovereigns did not, however, write to one another personally. Louis XV. acquainted Terçier with what he

wished to say, and Elizabeth dictated her letters to Woronzoff, or to her secretary, Alsuvieff, who, curiously enough, was in English pay,[1] so that, unknown to D'Eon, Elizabeth, and Louis XV., many of the confidential communications may have found their way to the Court of St. James. It should be added that there was nothing very important in these cipher letters. The Well-Beloved was afraid of compromising himself, and though it was easy for him to counsel the Empress on political matters through the private channel which had been opened up, he neglected to do so. Indeed, the intercourse between the two sovereigns assumed the character of a *bourgeoise* intimacy, rather than of a political alliance based on common views, sympathies, and interests.

At one time Elizabeth complained to the King of her bad health, and Louis gallantly sent her a French doctor of high repute; on another occasion she appealed to him for a loan of five million roubles, for the imperial exchequer was empty; but from a pecuniary point of view the Well-Beloved was almost as badly off as herself, and he was quite unable to oblige her with the trifle she solicited. At another

[1] Pitt wrote to Keith instructing him to gain Alsuvieff's support, and Keith replied, relating how he had given Alsuvieff five hundred ducats in gold as part of the pension promised by Williams, at the same time telling him that he had orders to pay the pension regularly as the instalments should fall due.—Mahon, vol. iv., Appendix.

time she complained of being bored to death, and begged the King to send her the first actor and actress of the Comédie Française, Lekain and La Clairon. This last matter became quite an affair of state, and was discussed not only in the private correspondence, but also in the official despatches; and Cardinal de Bernis is found gravely writing to L'Hôpital that the artistes in question "belong to the King, who would be very pleased to lend them to the Czarina; but they also belong to the public, being artistes of the Comédie Française, of which they are the mainstay. The pleasures of Paris deserve the attention of the government, and the withdrawal of these actors would be the ruin of the Comédie Française. However, if any artistes can be found among the provincial companies worthy of amusing the Empress, we will do everything possible to send them to St. Petersburg, as much to oblige her Majesty as to diffuse abroad a taste for the French stage." [1]

Another question discussed, both in the private and official correspondence, was a proposal on the Czarina's part that Louis XV. should become godfather to a child of which the Grand-Duchess Catherine was *enceinte*. Louis objected, however, that as a Catholic he could not stand sponsor to an infant who would be brought up in the schismatical Greek faith.

[1] Archives des Affaires Etrangères. Bernis to L'Hôpital, June 24, 1758.

So the matter fell through, but Elizabeth appears to have been deeply hurt by the King's refusal. When the child was born, she gave it no godfather, but acted as sole sponsor.

During the first six months of 1758 L'Hôpital and D'Eon were occupied with a variety of negotiations,[1] whilst the war progressed with divers results on either side. Fermor, quite as lazy and as incapable as Apraxin, did but little with the Russian troops, and after the bloody battle of Zorndorf, when his loss exceeded 20,000 men, he retreated beyond the Vistula. France, moreover, met with so many disasters by sea and land, both in Europe and in her colonies, that Bernis at last became anxious for peace, and sounded Woronzoff as to his own views. Throughout the autumn everything seemed to presage a cessation of hostilities, but Madame de Pompadour still hoped to crush Prussia, and in the result, towards the close of the year, Bernis resigned his office and was exiled from Court; his successor being the celebrated Duke de Choiseul, "the man and the minister of his age," who, as Count de Choiseul-Stainville, had previously represented France at Vienna, where he had been succeeded by his cousin, Choiseul-Praslin.

[1] In this same year D'Eon published in Paris a book in two volumes, on "Taxation among the Ancients and the French." It is not unlikely that he had written it some time previously, and had arranged for its issue during his recent trip to France. Some think it was really his father's work.

Soon after this change L'Hôpital was instructed to inform Woronzoff that, far from desiring peace, France was bent on continuing the war. Louis XV. and Maria Theresa had signed a fresh treaty clearly stipulating their respective duties as allies, and in this compact Elizabeth was asked to join. L'Hôpital and D'Eon were negotiating the matter when an incident of some importance to the latter occurred in Paris: Tercier lost his position as chief clerk at the Foreign Office.

Tercier, it may be mentioned, was a man of much culture. He was both a member of the "Académie des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres," and, like D'Eon, a royal literary censor. In the latter capacity he had been called upon to examine the manuscript of Helvetius's famous book "De l'Esprit," and, in an unguarded moment, overwhelmed as he was with work, having not only to conduct Louis XV.'s secret diplomacy, but also to assist Jeannel, director of the postal service, in managing the Cabinet Noir, besides attending to his official duties, he had authorized the publication of Helvetius's book, the suppression of which was shortly afterwards decreed. Choiseul, who suspected the existence of the secret diplomacy, profited by this to dismiss Tercier, who fell from a post worth 80,000 livres a year, and had to content himself with various pensions, amounting altogether to less than a quarter of that amount.

A letter written by the King to Tercier

about this time[1] relieved him from any further duties with regard to the Cabinet Noir, but instructed him to continue directing the secret diplomatic service. Having left the ministry, however, it was difficult for him to gain access to the official despatches, and various arrangements had to be made in order to supply him with copies of them. The Count de Broglie having been succeeded at Warsaw by the Marquis de Paulmy, had left with the latter a certain Durand, who was in the King's secret, and through Durand most of the official and secret despatches to and from the northern and eastern Courts now passed, in order that he might copy them for Tercier, with the result that months often elapsed before they reached their destinations, and that both the official and secret services became virtually disorganized. Such, however, were the intricate, tortuous, and disastrous courses sanctioned by Louis XV. to gratify his personal whims.

Early in 1759, whilst the Russians, under Prince Soltykoff, who had succeeded Fermor, were marching towards the Oder, L'Hôpital and D'Eon received instructions from Choiseul, who was now planning a grand invasion of England under Soubise, to suggest to Woronzoff that the Russians should make themselves masters of Stettin, and there embark on board a Swedish fleet which would be in readiness to

[1] Archives Nationales, K. 157.

convey them to Scotland.[1] Russia, however, was unwilling to attack England openly, and in the summer the English admirals destroyed all Choiseul's plans of invasion by annihilating the French Mediterranean squadron off Lagos, blockading Brest, bombarding Le Hâvre, and burning the flat-bottomed boats intended for the conveyance of Soubise's forces to our shores. Thereupon peaceful inclinations arose in the French minister's breast, and when Woronzoff suggested that Russia should come forward as a mediator between France and England, he virtually accepted the proposal, but intimated that it would be as well for Russia to mediate first of all between Prussia and Austria. L'Hôpital was instructed to propose this course, and maybe the Seven Years' War would at this period have come to a close, but for D'Eon.

The young secretary of legation governed his superior, and now seemed at the height of his fortune. He had accomplished the difficult feat of winning his ambassador's esteem and affection, whilst acting, unknown to him and in spite of him, as the intermediary in a secret correspondence between the King and the Czarina. The indolent L'Hôpital swore by D'Eon, and was ever assuring him of his protection. Moreover, D'Eon was so high in the favour of the Czarina and her Chancellor, that already in the previous year they had proposed

[1] Affaires Etrangères—Despatch from Choiseul, Jan. 9, 1759.

to him to enter the imperial service. This offer he had courteously but firmly declined. He wrote to Bernis that ever since he had been in Russia "his maxim had been to keep his back turned on Siberia;" whilst to Tercier he said, "I will never leave the service of France for all the Emperors and Empresses in the world. I prefer to live from hand to mouth in France to being in the enjoyment of an income of 100,000 livres in fear and bondage." The sentiments he expressed met with hearty approval at Versailles; and Bernis replied to him, "Continue to serve his Majesty with the same zeal that you have hitherto displayed. It will at all times be a pleasure to me to bring your services, labours, and abilities to the favourable notice of the King."[1]

The private letters which D'Eon frequently received from Tercier kept him well acquainted with the secret views of Louis XV., and accordingly, when Choiseul's instructions with regard to Russian mediation reached L'Hôpital, the young secretary perceived that by following them his superior would surely incur the displeasure of the King. Fearing to increase the prestige of Russia by supplying her with the opportunity for a diplomatic success—for she would assuredly have played the leading *rôle* in the negotiations—Louis XV. would indeed have preferred to treat direct with England.

[1] "Lettres, Mémoires, et Négociations du Chevalier D'Eon."

D'Eon therefore prevailed on L'Hôpital to pay no attention to the minister's orders, pressing though they were.

Choiseul wondered at L'Hôpital's inactivity, complained, swore, begged, hinted that he would get him created a duke, but all in vain. L'Hôpital, backed up by D'Eon, would not move. Choiseul did not care to dismiss him outright, though the Well-Beloved himself declared that he found the Marquis "very dear." From the "Livre Rouge" it appears that between December, 1756, and September, 1758, L'Hôpital had received no less than 1,683,000 livres for "extraordinary expenses" alone; but much of this money no doubt had found its way into the pockets of Woronzoff,[1] Catherine, Peter, Poniatowski, and others. At last, in default of dismissing the Marquis, Choiseul resolved to send him an energetic coadjutor, and selected for the purpose the Baron de Breteuil, a handsome young man of seven-and-twenty, who, so Choiseul planned it, was to make love to the Grand-Duchess Catherine, now pining for her absent favourite Poniatowski, and win her over to the French interest. Unfortunately, however, for Choiseul, Breteuil had but recently married, and was very much attached to his wife; and, as the minister forgot to tell him not to take her with

[1] A memorandum in the Archives des Affaires Etrangères shows that Louis XV. "lent" Woronzoff 150,000 crowns to keep him in his interests.

him to Russia, this fine plan—so characteristic of French eighteenth century diplomacy—came to nothing whatever.

Whilst Breteuil was preparing to set out, D'Eon applied for permission to return to France. He was not only longing for home, but was suffering from scurvy and an affection of the eyes. Louis XV., however, and more especially Tercier and the Count de Broglie, the latter of whom, since his return from Warsaw, had become one of the directors of the secret diplomacy, were not disposed to dispense with the young secretary's services at St. Petersburg. Choiseul's appointment of the Baron de Breteuil was in some measure directed against them, and they resolved to circumvent the minister by taking the Baron into their confidence. Breteuil received the commands of Louis XV. to obey whatever orders might be given him by Tercier and Broglie, to whom he was to communicate all his official instructions and despatches, and he was further informed that on his arrival at St. Petersburg D'Eon would place himself at his disposal.

Before starting, moreover, the Baron received a long memoir containing his secret instructions, in one passage of which Louis XV. paid a formal tribute to D'Eon's services.[1] Referring

[1] Archives des Affaires Etrangères. This curious and important document, first discovered by M. Vandal, is in Tercier's handwriting.

to Choiseul's views respecting Russian mediation, he remarked, "It is a matter for congratulation that the Marquis de l'Hôpital, yielding in this instance to the prudent advice of the Sieur d'Eon, allowed the opportunity to slip which he had been so eagerly enjoined to seize." The royal orders to Breteuil were as follows: No matter how he might be instructed by Choiseul, he was, first, to watch over the interests of Poland, and to endeavour, if possible, to secure the Polish crown for Prince Xavier of Saxony; in any event he was to obtain from the Czarina full liberty for the Poles to choose their own sovereign; he was to combat under all circumstances the Russian demands for a portion of Prussian territory, and to suggest, in lieu of territorial aggrandisement, that Russia should content herself with a pecuniary indemnity payable either by Prussia or England; and especially, if circumstances allowed it, he was to "*retard the military operations of the Russians*, so that they might not set too high a price upon their services and successes, but that his Majesty might by his own armies obtain the leading place in the negotiations for a peace."[1]

To secure, therefore, a puerile satisfaction for his personal vanity, the Well-Beloved was willing to delay the Russian movements, and

[1] That British diplomatists suspected this is shown by a letter from Lord Stormont to Holderness, dated Warsaw, Aug. 23, 1759.—Mahon, vol. iv., Appendix.

place his ally, Maria Theresa, in jeopardy. She had formally promised the greater part of the Austrian Netherlands to his son-in-law, the Infante Don Philip, and to Louis himself she was prepared to cede Mons, Ypres, Furnes, Ostend, Nieuport, Beaumont, and Chimay in Flanders, but for all these his most Christian Majesty cared little. His vanity was of far more consequence. On the other hand, it must be admitted that he still took a keen interest in the affairs of Poland, which country he was anxious to save alike from Russian and Austrian annexation. He declared, indeed, in his secret instructions to Breteuil, that if he had established a private correspondence with the Czarina, it was solely to keep a watch on her in the interest of Poland, and to save that country "from all that might harm it, both in the present and the future." History charges Louis XV. with having utterly abandoned the Poles, but these secret documents peremptorily establish that he was ever mindful of them. Unfortunately, however, he had not the courage to enforce officially the policy which he secretly pursued, otherwise the partition of Poland might have been long delayed, if not averted.

Just before Breteuil set out from Paris the combinations devised by Broglie and Tercier with regard to Poland were almost wrecked by the ever-wary Choiseul, who removed their secret agent Durand from Warsaw. They were able, however, to replace Durand by

VI.

September, 1760—March, 1763.

D'Eon joins the Army, but cannot escape from Diplomacy—He receives the Baptism of Fire—The Battle of Kirch Denkern or Villinghausen—D'Eon entrusted with a perilous Operation—His Feud with Count de Guerchy—He is wounded at Ultrop—His Prowess at Einbeck and Osterwiek—Exile of the Broglies—D'Eon hard-up—He becomes First Secretary to the Duke de Nivernais—The Diplomatic Sylph—D'Eon and Nivernais proceed to England—The rascally Innkeeper at Canterbury—The Negotiations for the Peace of Paris—An English Ultimatum—D'Eon's trick on Mr. Under-Secretary Wood—He conveys the Ratifications to France, and becomes the Chevalier D'Eon.



EON had scarcely reached Paris when he fell ill with the small-pox, and some months elapsed before he was fit for any employment. After his recovery, in December, 1760, Louis XV. granted him a life pension of 2,000 livres, and in the following February the young fellow applied for permission to join the army opposed to the Hanoverian, English, and Prussian forces under Prince Ferdinand of Brunswick in Ger-

many. Whilst in Russia D'Eon had been promoted from the rank of lieutenant to that of captain of dragoons, without, however, as yet having seen any service. He now exchanged from the Colonel-general to the D'Autichamp regiment, and was appointed aide-de-camp to the Marshal and the Count de Broglie. The King particularly approved of his being placed on the staff of these officers, the latter of whom, whilst acting as "maréchal général des logis" to his brother, was also conducting the secret diplomatic service, corresponding with Paris, Warsaw, Stockholm, Constantinople, and St. Petersburg amid all the bustle, excitement, and danger of military operations.

Never before had the management of the secret service been so complicated and difficult an affair. Despatches and memoirs, abstracts and letters, all, as it happened, dealing with somewhat trivial matters, were ever on the wing. They pursued Count de Broglie whithersoever the movements of the army called him. They reached him whilst he was at the outposts, or with the rearguard, or whilst he was quartered in some fortified place on the Lahn or the Eder; and of an evening while he sat in his tent, after giving his orders for the movements of the morrow, he would read all these secret communications and pen his answers, which he forwarded to the ever-diligent Tercier that they might be laid before the King, prior to journeying once more across

Europe to Scandinavia, Muscovy, Turkey, or Poland, as the case might be.

Such were the extraordinary courses adopted by the Well-Beloved, who, when he authorized D'Eon to join the Broglies, intended that the young captain should assist the Count with his secret despatches. And thus D'Eon, who longed for the dashing life of the bold dragoon, could not escape from diplomacy even on joining the army.

Although the campaign of 1760 had resulted to the advantage of Frederick the Great, his losses in men had been prodigious, and recruiting being difficult and his coffers empty he looked forward to the sequel with no little doubt and anxiety. However, in February, 1761, Prince Ferdinand drove the French from their quarters near Cassel, and soon afterwards the Prussian general Sybourg, after effecting a junction with the Hanoverian commander Sporken, took some 3,000 French prisoners. In March, about the time when D'Eon was able to report himself, the French troops in Germany were divided into two corps, which it had been intended should operate separately —the larger corps, under the Marshal Prince de Soubise, in Westphalia, and the smaller one, under the Marshal Duke de Broglie, in Hesse. This plan, devised by Choiseul and La Pompadour, was considered impracticable, however, by both marshals, who, after a period of inactivity following upon the defeat of the here-

ditary Prince of Brunswick at Stangerode and the raising of the siege of Cassel, resolved to effect a junction. Whilst Soubise pushed forward from the Rhine, Broglie, whom D'Eon accompanied, advanced from Cassel, and on his way fell in with a division commanded by General Sporken, from whom, after a sharp engagement, he took 800 prisoners and nineteen pieces of cannon. It was on this occasion presumably that D'Eon received the "baptism of fire."

Meeting at last, the French marshals found the Anglo-Hanoverian forces under Prince Ferdinand drawn up in a strong position between the Aest and the Lippe, near the village of Kirch-Denkern. Water protected them in front, and rugged, bushy ground covered one of their flanks. The Marquis of Granby commanded the left wing, whilst the centre was under the orders of General Conway. At first it was arranged between Broglie and Soubise that they should give battle on the morning of July 16, but on the previous evening Broglie found it expedient to assail Lord Granby's wing, with the result that after a hard fight he secured for a time the important position of Villinghausen. Anticipating, however, that Prince Ferdinand would make every effort to recover the lost ground, he sent an aide-de-camp to Soubise asking for immediate reinforcements, and begging that a preconcerted diversion towards Scheidingen might be made at once, instead of being deferred till the morrow.

However, Soubise was jealous of his colleague, and not only failed to supply the reinforcements he was asked for, but so delayed his own movements that Broglie was driven out of Villinghausen with great slaughter. It was now impossible to avert a defeat, and although at an early hour on the following morning both of the French marshals, with nearly the whole mass of their forces, repeated the attack, again beginning with Lord Granby's posts, they were unable to achieve their purpose. After a murderous fire of five hours' duration, they fell back on all points, leaving their wounded and several of their guns behind them.

Bitter recriminations then ensued between Broglie and Soubise—indeed, during several months this engagement furnished a subject of controversy for all Europe—and D'Eon, who warmly espoused the cause of his own commander, repeatedly asserted that the reverse was entirely due to Soubise's conduct. This assertion was possibly of too sweeping a character, but most English, French, and German historians admit that if Soubise had displayed any alacrity in supporting Broglie on the evening of the 15th, the Anglo-Hanoverian army might have been unable to withstand the onslaught.

We next hear of D'Eon with the French force that crossed the Weser near Höxter on August 19, when he received orders to convey a large quantity of powder and other stores across the river—a somewhat perilous operation,

since it had to be accomplished under the fire of the enemy's guns. Once across the stream, the young captain was to hand to Lieutenant-General Count de Guerchy Broglie's written instructions for the distributinn of 400,000 cartridges among the infantry, and this order D'Eon gave to Guerchy, but the latter had no sooner received it than for some inconceivable reason he galloped away, shouting: "If you have a supply of ammunition, you have merely to convey it to a park of artillery which you will find half a league from here." A warm altercation then arose between the two officers, with the result that D'Eon was left to carry out Broglie's orders according to his own judgment. With the assistance of some artillery officers who volunteered their services, he proceeded to distribute the cartridges—the enemy directing their fire upon the party the whole time.

This is the first recorded occasion on which D'Eon came in contact with Count de Guerchy, with whom he was remotely connected by past-century matrimonial alliances, and whose ancestral property was situated near the estate of Beaumont which had belonged to D'Eon's father. Later on D'Eon and Guerchy will be found involved in a bitter feud, which possibly may have taken its origin in the military incident we have just recorded.

Soon after the passage of the Weser, D'Eon took part in a reconnaissance and combat at Ultrop, where he was wounded both in the

head and the thigh, and then he is lost sight of until the action at Einbeck, in November, when he is said to have tried conclusions with the Marquis of Granby's gallant Highlanders. We are told, indeed, that the young captain charged the clansmen at the head of the Champagne Grenadiers and a body of Swiss, and pursued them from a mountain gorge in which they were established to the English camp;[1] but it will be satisfactory to the British reader to learn—on the authority of a despatch from Count de Broglie to his brother the Marshal—that D'Eon was merely sent to withdraw the Grenadiers and the Swiss, as the French, already worsted by the Highlanders, had determined to retreat!

Later on, at Osterwiek, when M. de Saint Victor had been ordered to dislodge some six or seven hundred Franconian Prussians who intercepted communications with Prince Xavier of Saxony, then besieging Wolfenbüttel, he entrusted this task to a party of volunteers, with a score of hussars, and some eighty dragoons of the Autichamp and La Ferronaye regiments. D'Eon, who was serving as second captain of the Autichamp troop, took part in the charge, which, according to Marshal de Broglie, was accomplished "with such effect and determination" that the Prussian battalion was thoroughly routed, and every man of it taken prisoner.

[1] Gaillardet, p. 79.

If we may believe another account,[1] D'Eon, not content with his share in this exploit, galloped on to the camp of Prince Xavier, to whom he handed Broglie's orders to assault Wolfenbüttel, which shortly afterwards surrendered.

It was now late in the year, and the campaign was drawing to a close. For months past Broglie and Soubise had been angrily accusing each other in memorials and despatches to the Court of Versailles, and the former ultimately requested permission to return to France. He arrived in Paris early in 1762, accompanied by his brother and D'Eon, who was sorely vexed at having to leave the army, though by way of consolation he carried in his pocket a highly flattering certificate of his prowess signed by both the Marshal and the Count. The Marshal, on repairing to Marly, was received with marked displeasure by the Well-Beloved. Not at all abashed, however, Broglie, well aware that, high as Soubise might stand in La Pompadour's favour, he alone possessed the confidence of the army and the nation, handed Choiseul a lengthy memorial, which fully discussed every incident of the defeat at Villinghausen, and contended that the responsibility of that reverse rested with Soubise and those who had divided the French army into two corps.

This document was indeed a deliberate attack on Choiseul and La Pompadour, who

[1] Gaillardet, p. 79.

were by no means disposed to let it pass unnoticed, and shortly afterwards both Marshal and Count de Broglie were summarily exiled to their estates in Normandy and Saintonge. On the same evening "Tancrède" was performed at the Comédie Française, and when La Clairon recited the lines:

> "Tancrède est malheureux, on l'exile, on l'outrage;
> C'est le sort des héros d'être persécutés." [1]

the spectators, rising to their feet in their enthusiasm, shouted "Broglie! Broglie!" and gave vent to tumultuous applause.

However, whilst exiling the Marshal and his brother in deference to the wishes of his minister and his mistress, Louis XV. realized that he could not dispense with the assistance of his "pocket vizier." So Count de Broglie still retained the management of the secret diplomacy, all the despatches connected with which were now sent to him at his château of Ruffec.

Just about this time D'Eon had reason for alarm. He had seen enough of Russia, and dreaded returning thither. But the Czarina Elizabeth having died, and Peter III. after a brief reign having been overthrown by his wife Catherine, and subsequently strangled, possibly at her instigation, by the gigantic Alexis Orloff, her favourite's brother, both Choiseul and Count de Broglie urged that D'Eon

[1] "Tancred is unfortunate, exiled, and outraged; 'tis the fate of heroes to be persecuted."

should be sent back to St. Petersburg. Ultimately, however, the plan was abandoned, and to console D'Eon for the loss of an appointment which he by no means desired, Louis XV. granted him a gratuity of 3,000 livres.

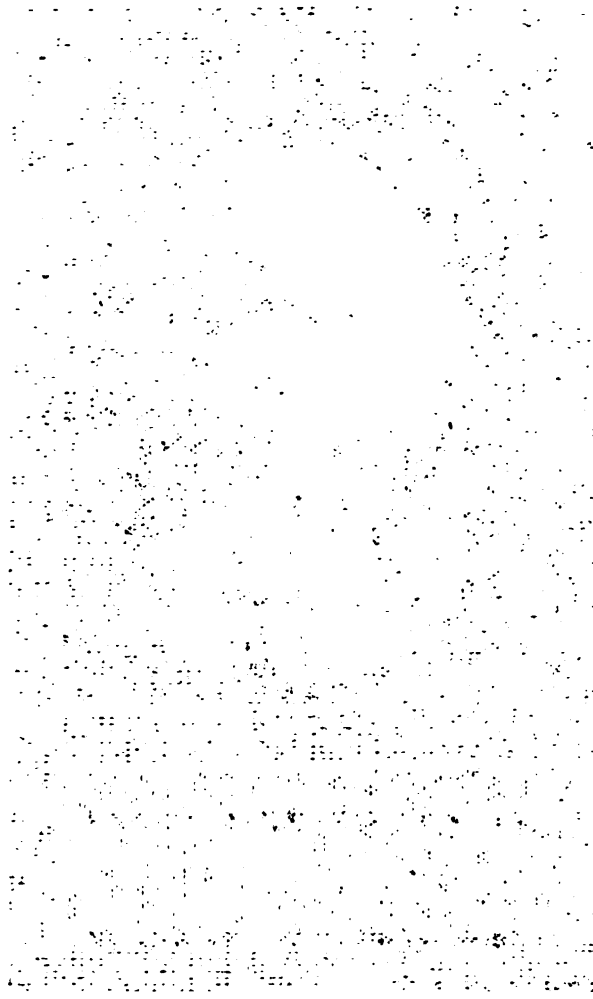
This little sum was very acceptable, no doubt; for D'Eon, despite all his pensions on paper, was still as poor as ever. He was being pressed for repayment of the loan which he had been obliged to raise when he first went to Russia, and ministers only hummed and ha'd, and referred him to their predecessors, many of them dead and buried, when he suggested that this loan ought to be paid by the State. Then, too, his war pay was in arrear, so that he must have had a difficulty even in supporting himself.

Remaining for a time without employment, he was desirous of returning to his military duties, but this was not to be. The war, inasmuch as it concerned France and Spain on the one hand, and England on the other, was now drawing to a close. Already, in July, 1761, Mr. Stanley had been sent to Paris, and Count de Bussy had come over to London, when preliminaries having been mutually proposed and examined the demands of France were rejected as inadmissible. In the midst of it all, however, came the signing of the famous Family Compact between France and Spain, followed by the resignation of Pitt and the accession to power of Lord Bute, who was opposed to the continuation of hostilities. In

the summer of 1762, after contending for some months, successfully, but despite himself, against the Bourbon alliance, Bute made overtures of peace to Versailles through the neutral Court of Sardinia, whose proposals were eagerly entertained by Choiseul. Great Britain and France thereupon appointed ambassadors, the Duke of Bedford on the one side, and the Duke de Nivernais, grand-nephew of Cardinal Mazarin, and formerly French envoy at Rome, on the other; and Nivernais, as soon as nominated, selected D'Eon as his first secretary.

A grand chance now offered for the young diplomatist, who hastily made his preparations, and early in September set out from Paris with the Duke, whom he found to be as pleasant a patron as that easy-going voluptuary, the Marquis de l'Hôpital. Physically Nivernais was a curiosity. He was so short and slight of build that his own countrymen had nicknamed him the diplomatic sylph, and D'Eon tells us that when the ambassador and himself embarked at Calais on the "Princess Augusta" yacht, which was to convey them to our shores, an English sailor, standing by, remarked to one of his mates: "Just look at that skinny duke! I knew him when he was a fine fat fellow. That's how we've skinned them French lords in the war!"

Somewhat later, when a leading member of the "Flag" party saw Nivernais, he jocosely declared that the French had sent the preliminaries of a man to sign the preliminaries of



the [illegible] after contending for some months [illegible] but despite himself, he must [illegible] Fate made [illegible] through the neutral C[illegible] [illegible] preliminaries were eagerly [illegible] [illegible] Great Britain [illegible] appointed ambassador, the [illegible] the [illegible] and [illegible] nephew of Cardinal [illegible] French envoy at Rome, [illegible] [illegible] as soon as [illegible] first secretary.

[illegible] for the young [illegible] made his preparations, [illegible] set out from Paris with [illegible] to be as pleasant a [illegible] voluptuary, [illegible] [illegible] physically Nivernais [illegible] He was so short and slight of [illegible] that [illegible] had nicknamed [illegible] diplomatic [illegible], and D'Eon tells us that [illegible] the ambassador and himself embarked at Calais on the "Princess Augusta" yacht, which was to convey them to our shores, an English sailor, standing by, remarked of his master: "Look at that chap, master! I know him well enough, that fat fellow. That's how we've [illegible] French lords in the war!"

[illegible] later, when a leading member of [illegible] saw Nivernais, he joyously [illegible] that the French had sent the pr[illegible] [illegible] to sign the preliminaries of


MANCINI DE NIVERNAIS.
Né en 1716

peace. Nevertheless, whatever he may have been physically, this diminutive dukelet—of whom Frederick the Great had once remarked that without glasses he could not even see him—was a man of good counsel and ready acumen, a great wit, a graceful versifier, and a fervent admirer of beauty.

Landing at Dover the ambassadorial party proceeded to Canterbury, where they decided they would sup and pass the night. The landlord of the "Red Lion," where they put up, was of opinion apparently that however skinny poor Nivernais might be, he no doubt carried a bulky purse with him. Possibly, too, he had heard that his excellency had given a hundred guineas as a "gratuity" to the crew of the yacht which had brought him over. At all events, the next morning he presented the ambassador with the following little bill, which even in those days of high charges was considered so remarkable that it shortly afterwards obtained a place of honour in the "Annual Register":

Tea, coffee and chocolate	£1	4	0
Supper for self and servants	15	10	0
Bread and beer	3	0	0
Fruit	2	15	0
Wine and punch	10	8	8
Wax candles and charcoal	3	0	0
Broken glass and china (!)	2	10	0
Lodging	1	7	0
Tea, coffee and chocolate	2	0	0
Chaise and horses for next stage	2	16	0
	£44	10	8

D'Eon, who had so often journeyed to and fro across Europe, was no doubt accustomed to extortionate charges, yet even he must have been amazed and possibly alarmed when he remembered his own slender purse, at the sight of this phenomenal bill. If this were a sample of English charges, how would he manage to live? Smollett subsequently declared that Nivernais had been "charged forty pounds for what wasn't worth forty shillings." However, there was no help for it, mine host had to be paid, and, whilst he was jingling his excellency's gold, the party set out for London.

With respect to the negotiations for the so-called treaty of Paris, reference need only be made to the matters in which D'Eon was personally concerned. It was very generally believed in England at the time that Bute and other prominent politicians were lavishly bribed by Nivernais and his secretary; and Lord Camden to the day of his death maintained this to be a fact. Bute, he said to Wilberforce in 1789, had to his knowledge sunk nearly £300,000 in land and houses, and yet his paternal estate was not worth more than £1,500 a year, and he was only a life-tenant of Wortley, which represented between £8,000 and £10,000 annually. Count Viri, the Sardinian minister in London, who was largely concerned in the negotiations, was rewarded by both sides. Louis XV. sent him presents of a value of 50,000 crowns, whilst from the British Parliament he

obtained a pension of £1,000 for thirty years as the price of his services. As for the Duke of Bedford, when Junius six years later attacked him for having taken money at Versailles, he but repeated, in part, the universal cry that Great Britain had been sold to France and Spain.[1]

It had been agreed that any conquests which might be made by any of the parties, but should not be known at the time of the signing of the preliminaries, should be restored without compensation, and on this understanding the treaty was drafted and was almost ready when news arrived that the city of the Havannah had surrendered to the English, who by the terms of the capitulation had become possessed of all the

[1] This is the style in which Junius assailed his Grace: "You are indeed a very considerable man. The highest rank—a splendid fortune, and a name glorious till it was yours, were sufficient to have supported you with meaner abilities than I think you possess. . . . Your history begins to be important at that auspicious period at which you were deputed to represent the Earl of —— [Egremont] at the Court of Versailles.... Your patrons wanted an ambassador who would submit to make concessions without daring to insist upon any honourable condition for his sovereign. Their business required a man who had as little feeling for his own dignity as for the welfare of his country, and they found him in the first rank of the nobility. Belleisle, Goree, Guadaloupe, St. Lucia, Martinique, the Fishery, and the Havana are glorious monuments of your Grace's talents for negotiation. My Lord, we are too well acquainted with your pecuniary character to think it possible that so many public sacrifices should have been made without some private compensations. Your conduct carries with it an *interior evidence beyond all the legal proofs of a court of justice.*"

shipping in the harbour, together with treasure and merchandise valued at three millions sterling, and the most fertile district in all Cuba. Walpole tells us that this intelligence reached Bute whilst he was entertaining Nivernais at dinner, and that the joy of the company displayed itself in gross impoliteness towards the French ambassador, who was probably accompanied on this occasion by his indispensable first secretary.

The terms of the treaty now required some modification, for England could only restore the Havannah to Spain on receiving suitable compensation. Nevertheless, Bute—possibly eager for his bribe—would not have insisted on the point had not the Earl of Egremont, Foreign Secretary, and George Grenville, Secretary for Home Affairs, backed up by public opinion, compelled him to take action. What then occurred may be related in D'Eon's own words, which are confirmed by a despatch from Nivernais in the Archives des Affaires Etrangères:

"The negotiations had encountered an obstacle, a kind of crisis had arisen, when Mr. Robert Wood, Under-Secretary of State, called on the Duke de Nivernais to confer with him concerning some disputed points. He had a portfolio with him, and was indiscreet enough to tell us that it contained the Earl of Egremont's last instructions and ultimatum, which were to be sent to the Duke of Bedford at Versailles. On hearing this, the Duke de Nivernais first looked

at me and then cast his eyes on the portfolio. I at once understood the meaning of this pantomime. It would be most advantageous for our Court to know the nature of the instructions and the terms of this fatal ultimatum. I knew that the Under-Secretary was partial to good wine and was also a hard drinker, so, in my turn, I made a sign to the Duke, who at once invited Mr. Wood to stay to dinner with him that they might discuss matters more at their ease. He wished him, he said, to taste some capital Tonnerre wine—with which, by the way, I have tickled more than one foreigner's palate — and Mr. Wood, sorely tempted, swallowed the bait.

"Whilst he and the Duke were drinking their bumpers, I made off with the portfolio and extracted from it Lord Egremont's despatch, of which I had a full copy taken, which I immediately forwarded to Versailles. Our courier arrived there four-and-twenty hours before Mr. Wood's,[1] and when the Duke of Bedford called to broach the subject, the ministers, already apprised of the difficulties

[1] This was not the only misfortune Mr. Wood met with in his lifetime. He was included in the actions which Wilkes brought for false imprisonment, and after a trial of fourteen hours' duration a special jury gave a verdict against him with £1,000 damages. Lord Egremont, whom Wilkes had also prosecuted, had meantime escaped all penalty by dying, and Lord Halifax, a third defendant, stood on his privilege as a peer. Thus the unlucky Mr. Wood had to make amends for proceedings in which he had had little, if any, responsibility.

about to be raised and of the British ambassador's final instructions, were speedily able to bring him to terms."

Those terms were that Florida—then little more than waste land—should be ceded to England by Spain in exchange for the Havannah. At this many English politicians waxed indignant, contending rightly enough that Florida was no adequate equivalent for our valuable conquest. An outcry arose that we ought to have obtained Porto Rico as well, but it was then too late, for Florida had been formally accepted. But for D'Eon's piece of trickery, which enabled Choiseul and Grimaldi—the Spanish plenipotentiary—to come to a prompt decision and settle the matter before opposition could be roused in England, our flag possibly might now wave over one of the fairest islands of the Western Indies.

Nor was this the only success achieved by D'Eon in the negotiations. From documents in the Archives des Affaires Etrangères it appears certain that he was largely instrumental in securing to France the confirmation of those fishery rights in Newfoundland which originated with the treaty of Utrecht, and which to this day have been a source of dispute between France and Great Britain.

No doubt at the time the treaty was negotiated this question was looked upon as a secondary one. At all events, the sharpness which D'Eon constantly displayed seems to have done

him no harm with English statesmen, for they treated him with what might, at first sight, seem amazing confidence. At the suggestion of Nivernais, he was, although a foreigner, entrusted with the English ratifications for conveyance to the Duke of Bedford in Paris. From the despatches exchanged on this occasion one might believe that in selecting the young French secretary as its courier the English ministry simply desired to pay him a compliment and furnish Louis XV. with a proof of confidence and friendship; but it is possible that D'Eon was chosen so that whilst in Paris he might settle any points yet in abeyance respecting the pecuniary payments for which Bute and others were waiting. He met with a most flattering reception in France. The Duke de Praslin, Minister for Foreign Affairs, with whom, as Count de Choiseul-Praslin, D'Eon had long been on cordial terms, declared that the young fellow was a "unique" subject, well worthy of the royal favour, and presented him with 3,000 livres from the foreign service funds. Louis XV. moreover received D'Eon very graciously, and besides giving him 6,000 livres out of the privy purse, and promising him a regular salary of 3,000, bestowed upon him the much-coveted cross of the order of St. Louis. Henceforth, therefore, the Sieur D'Eon de Beaumont becomes the Chevalier of that name.

VII.

March—May, 1763.

Shielded from his Creditors D'Eon basks in the Smiles of Beauty—His alleged Flirtation with Madame de Rochefort—The obnoxious Count de Guerchy—D'Eon returns to England and becomes Minister Resident—The "battered" Duke de Nivernais, the English Climate, and English Cookery—The Countess de Boufflers and D'Eon at Strawberry Hill—La Condamine and his Landlady—D'Eon and Queen Charlotte: their mythical midnight Interviews and secret Negotiations—A Scheme for invading England—D'Eon's Share in this Affair—His secret Correspondence with Broglie—Louis XV. as "the Advocate" and D'Eon as the "Dragoon's Head"—Is Diplomacy an honourable Calling?—D'Eon at the Height of his Fortune.

THE distinctions accorded to D'Eon now brought him into general notice, and during his stay in France he figured both at Court and in aristocratic society. He was the better able to do this as he now had some money in his pocket, and, what was of even greater importance, he carried with him a royal warrant by which his creditors were formally forbidden to sue or molest him in any way for a period of six

months. Ministers were still disinclined to settle his various claims for arrears and indemnities, and in order to prevent his arrest for debt they had been obliged to provide him with the aforesaid piece of parchment, but for which he would hardly have ventured to carry the ratifications to Paris.

The ladies with whom the newly-fledged Chevalier now associated appear to have been delighted with him. The Duchess de Nivernais and her daughter, the Countess de Gisors, widow of the brave young son of Marshal de Belle-Isle, did not tire of singing D'Eon's praises, whilst the Countess Marie Thérèse de Rochefort, another widow, *née* de Brancas, is said to have positively doted on him. None of the Chevalier's biographers seem to have been aware that this Countess de Rochefort—a great friend, by the way, of Anne Pitt, the eminent statesman's clever sister—was the particular flame of the Duke de Nivernais, who had long been paying his addresses to her, although he was a married man; and D'Eon no doubt became acquainted with her through having to deliver to her some letter or madrigal with which he had been entrusted by the Duke. It was in celebration of the Countess de Rochefort's charms that Nivernais penned some of his best verses. He worshipped at her shrine for nearly forty years, and at last, on becoming a widower in 1782, he was able to marry her, each then being sixty-six years of age. But Nivernais' happiness was

of brief duration, for twenty days after the wedding the Duchess died.

Unprepossessing as Nivernais was in appearance, one can well understand Madame de Rochefort preferring his good-looking young secretary; still, we strongly doubt the story of her flirtation with D'Eon—a flirtation magnified by some into a positive intrigue. In point of fact, the Countess had at this period quite lost her bloom, and she was forty-seven years of age. For the sentimental, frail, large-eyed, hollow-cheeked Nivernais — nicknamed by certain caricaturists the "Duke of Barebones"[1] —she doubtless presented attractions; but it is difficult to imagine D'Eon, ever so frigid and dispassionate, falling in love with a woman already extremely *passée* and old enough to be his mother. In retailing their improbable story D'Eon's English and French biographers do not seem to have paid any attention to the question of Madame de Rochefort's age and looks; for they allude to her as a sprightly and handsome young widow! At all events, if there was any flirtation between the pair, it was doubtless a purely platonic one, and certainly it was brief, for the Chevalier only remained a few weeks in

[1] I have borrowed these epithets from Mr. Austin Dobson's sketch of Nivernais in his "Eighteenth Century Vignettes" (2nd Series), but it is as well I should mention that my brief account of the Duke and his embassy was prepared long before the publication of Mr. Dobson's entertaining volumes. In several instances Mr. Dobson and myself seem to have gone to identical sources of information.

France, whither he was not destined to return for many years.

It had been prearranged that Nivernais' mission should come to an end as soon as the peace was ratified, and a successor had already been found for him in the person of the Count de Guerchy, the general with whom D'Eon had quarrelled during the war of 1761, when conveying Broglie's powder waggons across the Weser. Guerchy appeared to be singularly ill-fitted for ambassadorial functions, as he possessed very little education. Even Praslin, the Foreign Minister, admitted that he "dreaded the Count's despatches like fire," but added that he had no one better fitted for the post. Guerchy, by the way, was rich in titles and estates—for, besides being a Count, he was Marquis de Nangis and Viscount de Fontenay-le-Marmion—but, like many another *grand seigneur* of the time, he was not particularly well supplied with money. Such influence as he possessed was derived, on the one hand, from his wife, who belonged to the powerful Harcourt family and is said to have been the mistress of the Duke de Praslin; and, on the other, from Madame de Pompadour, whose favour he had courted by the performance of sundry petty offices, such as picking up her slippers and carrying her candlestick. This may seem strange, but it was indeed by such services as these that Frenchmen became marshals and ambassadors in those days.

D'Eon was not at all disposed to serve under

Bridge, affording plenty of sport for idle apprentices, and that fairs were held on the Thames, which was covered with so thick and solid a coating of ice that at Richmond some members of the nobility drove up and down the river in their coaches. And it was not merely the cold and the fog that made Nivernais so wretched. According to his own account, he had to walk about during the morning to attend to his diplomatic duties, while in the afternoon he had to take horse and ride so as to rid himself of the terrible attacks of indigestion which he owed, he said, to our abominable English cookery. "Battered" though he may have been, we find that occasionally he did evince some liveliness, as for instance when he played the violin and danced a minuet with Horace Walpole, to the delight and amusement of a large company, at an entertainment given by Miss Pelham at Esher. He also bestirred himself at times to pay his addresses to the "lean, coarse-featured" Duchess of Grafton.[1] Still, these were but transient flashes, and on the whole Nivernais was sadly bored, and had no keener desire than to get back to sunny France and Parisian or Versaillese kickshaws; to which indeed he once more betook himself in May, after making a trip to Oxford to receive the degree of D.C.L.

A brief period of prosperity now opened for

[1] Mr. Austin Dobson calls the Duchess beautiful, but Walpole, perhaps in spite, uses the adjectives given above.

D'Eon, who had begun to figure in English society. One result of the peace had been a great rush of English people of wealth and title to Paris, and various French notabilities returned the compliment by coming to London. Among the latter were many of the Prince de Conti's admirers and satellites, including even the so-called "Idol" of the Temple—the witty Countess de Boufflers-Rouverel.[1] Walpole mentions inviting this lady and some of her compatriots to a lunch at Strawberry Hill, and D'Eon formed one of the party, which does not appear, however, to have been a very merry one, for Madame de Boufflers had already been so terribly lionized, and subjected to so much sight-seeing, that she was hardly herself. "She arrived," says Walpole, "with her eyes a foot deep in her head, her hands dangling and scarce able to support her knitting-bag." A certain Madame d'Usson was apparently more to his liking, for she was "Dutch built" and endowed with "pleasure-proof" muscles.

Walpole, for whom, after all, there was only one French woman in the world, and that one Madame du Deffand, did not, judging by his correspondence, think much of Madame de Boufflers' claims to be considered a *bel esprit*, though in public he addressed complimentary verses to her, asserting that she would

> "read her praise in every clime,
> Where types can speak or poets rhyme."

[1] See *ante*, pp. 4, 5.

This, however, is no more than one might expect from such an inveterate backbiter. Nor was he—in private, at all events—an admirer of the wit of the Princess de Beauvau, or that of the Maréchale de Mirepoix, who also came over to England about this time, and upon whom D'Eon as minister resident necessarily had to dance attendance. Of this trio of *grandes dames* the *petite maréchale*, as Madame de Mirepoix was familiarly called, was apparently the most agreeable person. According to the Prince de Ligne she was less artificial than any of her contemporaries, and yet even she failed to please the fastidious English society of the time.

D'Eon did not only have to wait on noble dames, his office also brought him into intercourse with eminent *littérateurs* and *savants*. Duclos the historian now paid us a visit, and the Academy of Sciences despatched La Condamine, Le Camus, and Lalande to London to report on the chronometer for determining longitude at sea, which gained for John Harrison a State reward of £20,000. D'Eon presented these gentlemen at Court, and took them to see the London sights. One afternoon, La Condamine, who was lodging at a milliner's in Suffolk Street, sent for the Chevalier, in dire alarm. For some reason or other his landlady had found him to be an undesirable tenant, and wishing to eject him had procured the assistance of a couple of sheriff's officers, who laid violent

hands upon the indignant *savant*. He was not strong enough to resist them, but after despatching a messenger for D'Eon he resorted to invincible tactics by producing a couple of shillings, which the men eagerly pounced upon, and hurried off to spend at the nearest tavern, leaving the landlady's orders unexecuted. When D'Eon arrived, therefore, his help was not needed. Nevertheless, La Condamine, after venting his anger in a long letter to the public prints, in which he described the English as "a nation of barbarians," packed up his luggage and returned to France.

Being constantly called upon to present more or less distinguished compatriots at the levées at St. James's Palace, D'Eon necessarily spent a good deal of his time at Court, and it appears that George III. and Queen Charlotte treated him very graciously. Now and again the Chevalier's diplomatic duties required that he should have audience with their Majesties, at times with the King on some affair of state, at others with the Queen to deliver some complimentary message. D'Eon necessarily received notes fixing the date and hour of these audiences, and some of these notes are among his papers preserved at the public library at Tonnerre. Rather more than half a century ago, a French author (the first to write a work of any importance on the Chevalier), who had examined these papers, including the notes in question, declared they supplied proof that at

the period now being dealt with an immoral intrigue had existed between D'Eon and that royal pattern of propriety, Queen Charlotte.[1]

That the charge was nothing more than a foul fabrication was at the time shown, and subsequently admitted by its author; nevertheless, thirty years later, on rewriting his work[2] and expunging from it everything which, according to his own account, was not true, he returned to the charge by formally asserting that various notes in the Tonnerre library, signed Cockrell, and sealed with the royal arms of England, proved that there had at least been some very mysterious intercourse between the Queen and D'Eon, whom her Majesty had been in the habit of receiving secretly at midnight.

It may seem superfluous to defend Queen Charlotte's memory against such an accusation as this, still we have procured copies of the notes in question, and from their contents, now, we believe, for the first time made public, the reader will see that they in no wise bear out the accusations referred to.[3] They are, indeed, the most innocent little *billets* in the

[1] Gaillardet's "Chevalier D'Eon," 1836.

[2] Under the title of "Mémoires sur la Chevalière D'Eon," Paris, 1866.

[3] The author is indebted for these copies, and for copies of other documents and much valuable information generally respecting the Chevalier D'Eon, to M. Isidore Hariot, the courteous librarian of Tonnerre, to whom he here desires to tender his grateful acknowledgments.

world, and only a Frenchman of highly imaginative mind could have construed them as indicating either impropriety or mystery.

There are four of them in all. On the margin of one, D'Eon himself has written: "Note from Mr. Cockrell, Master of the Ceremonies at the English Court." Another bears a seal, the imprint of which is so defaced that it is impossible to say whether it was ever that of the English royal arms, as is supposed, or not. This, however, is a matter of little consequence. All four notes are in the French language. One, dated October 26, 1763, requests D'Eon to attend the King's levée, in order that he may afterwards be received in audience. A second one, dated "Sunday morning, October, 1763," desires the Chevalier to repair on the following Tuesday to Leicester House (the residence, it may be mentioned, of the Dowager Princess of Wales), "where Mr. Cockrell will meet him to conduct him to his audiences." The two other notes concern the Queen, and run as follows:

No. 1. "Mr. Cockrell presents his compliments to Monsieur d'Eon, and begs him to be at St. James's to-morrow, when he will have the honour to meet him and conduct him to an audience with the Queen after the circle.—Saturday, May 21, 1763."

No. 2. "Mr. Cockrell presents his compliments to Monsieur le Chevalier d'Eon, and has the honour to inform him that he will be

received in audience by the Queen to-day, before or after the circle. Mr. Cockrell will therefore have the honour to call upon Monsieur le Chevalier at a quarter past one o'clock, or will wait for him at Court, whichever may be more convenient.—Sunday morning."

That is all! And yet these notes served—it is admitted—as the sole basis, in the first instance, of an elaborate account of the amours of Queen Charlotte and the Chevalier d'Eon, and in the second of the charge that there were at least secret nocturnal interviews and mysterious negotiations between them. Had there been anything of the kind, it is quite unlikely that Mr. Cockrell, the royal Master of the Ceremonies, would have been employed to introduce D'Eon into the Queen's presence on these occasions. The author of the charges referred to is now dead and gone, still it was necessary that attention should be called to his preposterous invention, as his writings remain, and are still considered the chief authorities on D'Eon in France.

Far from being engaged in any intrigue with Queen Charlotte, the young Chevalier was at this period devoting himself to an important matter which had been entrusted to him by Louis XV. and Count de Broglie. Among the clauses of the treaty of Paris there was one specifying that the fortifications of Dunkirk should be levelled and the harbour "reduced to the state which had been fixed by the treaty

of Aix-la-Chapelle and preceding treaties." This clause was hateful and offensive to the Well-Beloved, the more so as it especially provided that an English commissary should be present to see that the work of levelling the fortifications was properly carried out.[1] Louis on more than one occasion expressed his desire to revenge himself for "this piece of English insolence," which so rankled in his mind that in April, 1763, when the Count de Broglie forwarded him a long memoir suggesting an invasion of England, he readily entertained the proposal. The treaty of peace was then but two months old.

This idea of a descent on our shores had originated with the Sieur Durand, who has been previously mentioned as Louis XV.'s secret agent at Warsaw,[2] and who had now become archivist of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

He, Broglie, and Tercier were ordered to take all needful steps in the matter, and they resolved to send to England a certain Marquis Carlet de la Rozière, who was distantly related to D'Eon, and had been originally an engineer, then a staff-officer, and afterwards chief commander of the dragoons serving with Marshal de Broglie in 1760-61. La Rozière, who was still young, already enjoyed a high reputation as a military man; and at one time,

[1] D'Eon as Minister Plenipotentiary managed to delay the demolition of the lunette at Dunkirk for five months.

[2] See *ante*, pp. 103, 109.

when he was a prisoner of the Prussians, Frederick the Great had refused to sanction his exchange, remarking: "As I have been lucky enough to take so distinguished an officer, I mean to keep him as long as possible."

La Rozière received instructions to inspect the English coast, to select a suitable spot for landing a French force, and to decide on the best line of route for a march on London. As he might be arrested in the course of his investigations, it was arranged that he should leave all compromising papers with D'Eon. The latter being officially accredited enjoyed immunity from arrest, and could moreover prevent the seizure of the documents in question by keeping them concealed within the inviolable precincts of the French embassy. Louis XV. was plotting this invasion of England quite unknown to his ministers and his mistress; and Broglie accordingly instructed D'Eon to be very cautious with everybody, and particularly with Count de Guerchy, whom he described somewhat erroneously as a "very cunning" man. He indeed feared that when Guerchy came to London he might endeavour to fathom this secret intrigue, and every precaution therefore was to be taken to prevent La Rozière's instructions, plans, and reports from falling into his hands. All possible contingencies were foreseen in Broglie's instructions. An accident might happen to D'Eon, and he might even suddenly die, in which case his private papers

would be at the mercy of his superior. Accordingly it was arranged that one of his cousins, Charles Maurice d'Eon de Mouloize, a young fellow of eight-and-twenty, serving as a lieutenant in the Conti regiment, should join him in London for the purpose of keeping watch over his papers, and taking possession of them should such a course become necessary to prevent them from being appropriated by Guerchy.

The first suggestions respecting the invasion of England were made in April, 1763, and in the latter part of May La Rozière set out for London. On June 3rd Louis XV. wrote to D'Eon urging him to the greatest secrecy, and telling him that he must not communicate the matter to any living being, particularly the ministers. Whilst assisting La Rozière, moreover, he was to acquaint Count de Broglie and Tercier—by means of a special cipher and under cover of addresses which would be communicated to him—with all the information he could collect on the designs of England with reference to Russia and Poland, the North (*i.e.*, Sweden, Norway, Denmark), and the whole of Germany.[1]

For his communications with Broglie, D'Eon did not consider a special cipher a sufficient precaution, and accordingly he suggested that nicknames should be assigned to the various

[1] Archives des Affaires Etrangères.

persons who were likely to be mentioned in the correspondence. This proposal was adopted, and it was arranged that the King and others should always be referred to by the *sobriquets* given below:

Louis XV.	The advocate.
M. Tercier	The procuror.
Count de Broglie . .	The assessor.
M. Durand	The prudent.
Duke de Nivernais .	The honey-tongued.
Duke de Praslin . .	The bitter-mouthed.
Duke de Choiseul .	The red lion or porcelain.
Count de Guerchy .	The novice, ram, or horned sheep.
Chevalier d'Eon . .	The intrepid, or the dragoon's head.[1]

Thus, whilst D'Eon was smirking at St. James's and at Leicester House, lunching at Strawberry Hill, or regaling English politicians and foreign diplomatists with that "petit vin de Tonnerre" which he called "the great loosener of tongues," whilst he was consorting at state entertainments and public assemblies with members of the ministry and aristocracy, fawning upon one, smiling upon another, seeking to ingratiate himself with everybody of note he came across, he was simply planning a resumption of hostilities, an invasion of the country in which he had received so cordial a welcome. Of course, there is nothing to excite surprise in this. Members of the diplomatic service all the world over do much the same

[1] "Tête de Dragon," which means of course both the dragon's head and the dragoon's head.

thing. What are ambassadors but licensed spies and professional tricksters, lavishly paid and decorated for their services? The people who deny this simply shut their eyes to the truth. The foreign envoy, whoever or whatever he may be, is usually made much of, banquetted, entertained in a variety of ways, and on his side he entertains the society that has received him, and now and again becomes immensely popular with it—until perhaps a war breaks out, and he stands revealed in his true light. Or there may be no war, the envoy may become ripe in years and honours, and go the way of all flesh, deeply regretted by those he lived among; and a century or so may pass away before some historian, ferreting among old records and archives, discovers that this highly-respected diplomatist spent his time in trying to trick and ruin those with whom he was most intimate. Diplomacy is no doubt a necessary evil, but only Pharisees can contend that—pursued as it too frequently is, even nowadays, with deceit on the lips and bribes in the hand—there is anything honourable about it.

So far as the Chevalier d'Eon was concerned, in carrying out the instructions of Louis XV. and Broglie one may admit that he did no worse than many another envoy had done before him. The only difference in his case was that he was not officially instructed to follow the course he pursued. The invasion of England being the King's secret scheme,

ministers knew nothing about it, and it was this circumstance of having to play a double *rôle* which contributed as much as anything to D'Eon's sudden downfall and ruin. He had now reached the highest point of his fortune. It so happened that Mr. Neville, who had been sent as Minister Resident to France, was informed by the Introducteur des Ambassadeurs that, according to French Court etiquette, a Resident could not present his letters in person. In England the regulations were different, and D'Eon had been duly received by George III. Neville urged his claim to similar treatment, but the punctilious French would not hear of it. A long correspondence ensued between the two governments, with the result that D'Eon was promoted to be Minister Plenipotentiary, Neville obtaining a similar step in rank, which enabled him to present his credentials to the Well-Beloved. This no doubt was a source of considerable satisfaction to both diplomatists; however, as will now be shown, D'Eon's delight was by no means unalloyed.

VIII.

MAY—NOVEMBER, 1763.

D'Eon is accused of Extravagance—He writes intemperate Letters to France and removes State Papers from the Embassy—An alleged Letter of Warning from Louis XV.—The Chevalier, recalled to France, sets his Orders at Defiance—He refuses to deliver his Papers to Guerchy—Madame de Pompadour in the part of Paul Pry—Why Praslin wished to secure D'Eon's Papers—The Chevalier's Quarrel with Vergy—A strange Scene at Lord Halifax's and its Sequel—One of Horace Walpole's Jokes—D'Eon asserts that Guerchy has drugged him—He is surrounded by Spies, Thieves, and Kidnappers—Spirit-rapping extraordinary.

NIVERNAIS had returned to France without making any arrangements respecting the establishment he had kept up in London, where he had quartered himself at Lady Yarmouth's house in Albemarle Street; D'Eon and the *secrétariat* finding accommodation in Soho Square.[1] The Duke gone, D'Eon had to attend

[1] The French embassy there occupied the centre house on the south side, then the property of Lord Bateman, and, previously, the London residence of the Duke of Monmouth, Charles II.'s illegitimate son.—Pennant.

to everything. There were servants to be dismissed, others to be passed on to Count de Guerchy; horses, also, and articles of furniture to be disposed of in one way or another, and the result was a perfect imbroglio, in which D'Eon became hopelessly entangled. He was entitled as Minister Plenipotentiary to a salary of 12,000 livres, but his expenses of living were to be paid out of the embassy funds. Very soon, however, Praslin, Guerchy, and Nivernais alike complained that he was unnecessarily extravagant; and, in addition to this, when he charged some item of expenditure to Nivernais, the Duke declared that it ought to be charged to Guerchy, who, on his side, protested that it did not concern him. Driven in this way from pillar to post, D'Eon soon became extremely indignant, and a lively correspondence ensued.

Enjoying as he did the royal confidence with reference to the scheme for invading England, D'Eon appears to have considered himself indispensable, and unwisely assumed a most aggressive style in writing, not only to Guerchy, but also to the Duke de Praslin. The former, it is true, had imputed the Chevalier's appointment as Minister Plenipotentiary to mere chance, and the latter had expressed his surprise that D'Eon should have allowed his promotion to make him forget the point whence he had started. These remarks stung D'Eon to the quick, and he retaliated by

penning some defiant effusions which sorely distressed his friends in France. Tercier, whilst admitting that he was in the right, implored him to be prudent, and Broglie became quite alarmed at having confided the King's secret to such an excitable individual.

However, the dispute went on. Pressed by his creditors, D'Eon on his side pressed, but in vain, for his arrears and indemnities. At the same time he denied, and indeed disproved, the charges of extravagance which were preferred against him, mainly by Guerchy, who was continually complaining that all his money would be spent before his arrival in London.

The pecuniary side of the question was that which most affected the new ambassador, and to adjust matters he eventually suggested that the King should be requested to grant an indemnity to D'Eon, which indemnity should go into his (Guerchy's) pocket, as a set-off against the embassy money which D'Eon was spending. This proposal of course added fresh fuel to the fire. Then, too, D'Eon had another important grievance. Upon Guerchy's arrival in England he was to lose his rank as Minister Plenipotentiary and become once more a simple Secretary of Legation. Nivernais, Durand, Tercier, and others frankly admitted that this was a great piece of injustice, but D'Eon's letters to Minister Praslin were not of a character to win him the latter's favour or to facilitate any adjustment of the difficulty.

The Chevalier no doubt displayed at this period great spirit, disinterestedness, and independence of character, but these were certainly not qualities suited to the times in which he lived. In the eighteenth century—*par excellence* the age of sycophantry—men invariably addressed their superiors with bated breath and whispering humbleness; and it was because D'Eon failed to conform to this usage that most of his misfortunes fell upon him.

The English government having appointed the Earl of Hertford Ambassador to France, early in the autumn of 1763 it became necessary that Count de Guerchy should repair to his post without further delay. Count de Broglie, as we have already seen, was extremely suspicious of Guerchy, whom he deemed to be remarkably cunning, and, as the time for the ambassador's departure for England drew nigh, he grew more and more anxious respecting the documents connected with La Rozière's mission. As he was more afraid even of their falling into Guerchy's hands than into those of the English authorities, he at last instructed D'Eon to remove them from the French embassy; and the Chevalier then deposited them at the residence of his cousin, D'Eon de Mouloize, in Dover Street, whither he himself removed immediately upon Guerchy's arrival.

A few days before the new ambassador reached London, D'Eon, according to his own account—written long afterwards—received by

a secret courier the following remarkable autograph letter from Louis XV.:

"VERSAILLES,
"*October* 4, 1763.

"You have served me as usefully in woman's clothes as in those which you now wear. Reassume them at once, and withdraw into the City. I warn you that the King has this day signed, but only with the stamp, not with his hand, an order for your return to France; but I command you to remain in England with all your papers until I send you further instructions. You are not in safety at your residence, and here you would find powerful enemies. "LOUIS."

Though it is a fact that the Chevalier's recall had at this time been determined on by Praslin, it is extremely improbable that D'Eon ever received any such warning note as the above from Louis XV.;[1] for had he received it

[1] Captain Telfer repeatedly quotes this letter, and refers to it as a genuine document on the strength of Madame Campan's assertion that in 1777 she heard D'Eon repeat the contents of it to her father. However, among the mass of documents which have been preserved in connection with D'Eon, both in England and in France, there is no trace of this letter, other than an alleged copy of it in D'Eon's own MS. memoirs in the Archives des Affaires Etrangères. Yet Captain Telfer, each time that he mentions it, appends the note, "autograph letter," and refers one to M. Boutaric's well-known work on Louis XV.'s secret correspondence. M. Boutaric, however, simply derived the letter from the D'Eon MS. memoirs. The original does not exist in any of the French archives, or in the library at Tonnerre. The

indeed, he, who prided himself on his alacrity in obeying the royal commands, would doubtless have at once acted on the instructions thus conveyed to him. But he neither assumed female attire nor did he retire into the City. And it is strange that Louis XV. should have sent him such a communication, for writing secretly to his confidant Tercier, on October 11 and 12, 1763 (that is, a week after penning the note which D'Eon asserts he received), the King said: "D'Eon's office as Minister Plenipotentiary appears to have turned his head. M. de Praslin has proposed to me that he should be brought here in order that one may inquire into the matter. Be careful with reference to everything concerning the secret. . . . You will see him (D'Eon) on his arrival in Paris, and I authorize you to concert precautions with him in order that the secret may be kept." [1] From these words it would appear certain that the King expected D'Eon to return to France; Louis had no reason to deceive, or hide anything from, his confidant Tercier; so what is to

Duke de Broglie pointed this out in his "Secret du Roi," which Captain Telfer quotes readily enough when it serves his purpose to do so. The Duke's opinion, which is also our own, is that D'Eon concocted this letter at a subsequent stage of his career, with the view of accounting for the line of action which he ultimately thought fit to adopt.

[1] The originals of these letters are in the National Archives. Captain Telfer quotes them, but fails to perceive that they are in formal contradiction with the alleged instructions to remain in London.

be thought of the allegation that he at this juncture instructed the Chevalier to remain in England?

The Count de Guerchy arrived in London in the middle of October, and put up, we are told, at Lord Holland's. When D'Eon waited on him shortly afterwards, an unseemly wrangle arose between them respecting the more or less abusive missives which they had recently exchanged. On the morrow Guerchy handed D'Eon his letters of recall, which, according to the instructions of the Duke de Praslin, were to be presented to George III. with the least possible delay, after which the Chevalier was to quit London immediately and proceed to Paris, where he was to report his arrival and await instructions without going to Court.

It is admitted by all D'Eon's biographers that he was extremely startled by the receipt of this intimation, which would hardly have been the case had he really been in possession of the alleged secret note written to him by the King a fortnight previously. Recalled in disgrace, forbidden to appear at Court! This was the crowning blow. He had had other grievances; he had been falsely charged with extravagance amounting almost to peculation; he had over and over again vainly endeavoured to obtain money which was his due; still he had hitherto anticipated that justice would finally be done him. But this seemed farther away than ever; and, disgraced when he

deemed himself worthy of reward, he was urged by his excitable, impulsive Burgundian nature into an extremely foolish line of conduct. It may readily be granted that he was not absolutely demented, though in France at the time such was believed to be the case—this assumption being largely based on the extraordinary letters which for some months he had been writing to the ministers and Guerchy. These letters—one of which, now in the French foreign archives, was really a most offensive and even obscene effusion—had been shown to Louis XV., and would alone suffice to account for the Chevalier's peremptory recall.

D'Eon, however, whether backed up or not by secret instructions to remain in London, resolved to set his official orders at defiance. He gave up to Guerchy some portion of the ordinary embassy archives, but retained in his possession quite a mass of official papers, including numerous letters from Praslin to the Duke de Nivernais and copies of many of Nivernais' letters to Praslin; and these, by a scarcely justifiable breach of confidence, he subsequently made public. He further retained (as in duty bound) all the documents bearing on the projected invasion of England, in fact everything belonging to the secret correspondence; and we are led to infer that he also kept back papers relating to his own official work as Minister Plenipotentiary. Guerchy at once declared that D'Eon had by no means handed

everything over to him, and demanded that all the documents which had passed into his custody during his term of office should be immediately given up; but D'Eon replied that he had only kept such papers as he considered he had a right to keep, and that he would not surrender them unless he had orders to that effect from the King himself.

This answer alone was sufficient to arouse suspicion, even if Guerchy had not been suspicious already. He had, however, brought with him to London, as one of his secretaries, a certain Monin, who had once been his tutor, and had subsequently become confidential secretary to the Prince de Conti,[1] in which capacity he had been well acquainted with D'Eon and the Chevalier Douglas. Monin was not at this period employed by the Count de Broglie and Tercier in the secret service, and therefore knew nothing of the contemplated invasion of England; but he was well aware that D'Eon, Broglie, and Tercier had corresponded together in the past. D'Eon asserts that Monin had already told Guerchy all he knew about himself and Broglie, and that Guerchy had carried his information to Praslin, who in his turn had communicated it to Madame de Pompadour. "Thereupon," says D'Eon in his MS. memoirs,[2] "the King's favourite resolved to investigate the matter."

[1] See *ante*, pp. 44, 92.

[2] Archives des Affaires Etrangères.

So far the Chevalier's assertions are plausible enough, but he goes on to relate a highly romantic and improbable story, which may be briefly rendered as follows:

Madame de Pompadour, we are told, had noticed that Louis XV. habitually "carried about him the small golden key of an elegant piece of furniture, a sort of escritoire, in his private apartments. Never could the favourite succeed, even in moments of her greatest influence, in obtaining access to this piece of furniture. It was a kind of sanctuary, a holy ark, the refuge, the place of exile, as it were, of the sovereign's will. Louis XV. no longer reigned except over this escritoire. 'It contains State papers!' Such was his reply to her frequent solicitations." However, one night in June, 1763, after supping *tête-à-tête* with his mistress, the King fell fast asleep, it is alleged, and during his slumber Madame de Pompadour made off with the key in question, and rummaged among the papers in the escritoire; subsequently communicating her discoveries to Praslin, who was in her confidence. It has been pointed out, however, that in the summer of 1763 La Pompadour was already suffering from the slow fever or decline which eventually carried her off, and that for some months all amorous intercourse between herself and the King had ceased.[1] Moreover, none of the existing documents connected with the secret

[1] Broglie, vol. ii. p. 138.

service corroborate the above account. Broglie and Tercier, who should have been the first persons warned by the King respecting this discovery—since we are told that the Well-Beloved realized what had happened by finding his papers in confusion—do not appear to have ever known of it. D'Eon, it is true, asserts that Tercier wrote informing him of what had happened, and commanding him in the King's name to observe the greatest prudence and circumspection in his intercourse with Guerchy, who, his Majesty had reason to believe, "was entirely devoted to the Duke de Praslin and Madame de Pompadour." This, however, is simply D'Eon's statement, and it is not corroborated by any independent testimony.

If his story were true, Madame de Pompadour must have satisfied her curiosity, and have ascertained what secret work it was that he, Broglie, and others, were engaged upon. But it is certain that she only entertained suspicions on the subject; and the jealousy with which we find Louis XV. subsequently guarding his secret shows that it cannot have been surprised by his favourite. But really there is no need of the romantic story related by D'Eon to explain why Guerchy should have been instructed by Praslin to secure D'Eon's private papers. Monin's revelations would alone account for everything. For years and years, moreover, Count de Broglie's secret intercourse with the Well-Beloved had been suspected by those in

power. Both La Pompadour and Praslin hated the Broglies; and, whether the favourite and the minister acted together, or whether the minister alone initiated the affair—with the approval of his cousin the Duke de Choiseul, also strongly opposed to the Broglie family—the object of the orders given to Guerchy was undoubtedly to fathom D'Eon's relations with Count de Broglie. There was a desire to punish D'Eon for what was considered the presumptuous and intemperate manner in which he had addressed ministers, but there was yet a stronger desire to ruin Count de Broglie, and to prevent him from exercising any further influence with the King. D'Eon in himself was not at this stage considered dangerous by those in power, but they feared Broglie, and over and over again exerted themselves to expose him and frustrate his secret intrigues.

As D'Eon would give up no papers beyond those which he had surrendered in the first instance, and as he likewise refused to present his letters of recall, and proved altogether intractable, he and Guerchy were soon at daggers drawn, though for a short time appearances were kept up, and they still met and dined together.

A few days subsequent to the ambassador's arrival, D'Eon, after dining at the embassy with his superior, was (according to his own account) spending the evening there, when a certain M. Treyssac de Vergy was announced. This person,

whom the Chevalier deemed to be a suspicious character, with designs possibly on his secret papers, had come over to London without any letters of recommendation, and had been hanging about the embassy for some months, asserting that he was a great friend of the Guerchy family. On the evening referred to, D'Eon challenged him as to this friendship, whereupon he still declared that he knew the ambassador extremely well, but Guerchy sharply retorted that such was not the case. Vergy, nettled by D'Eon's interference, thereupon accused the Chevalier of being an ill-bred man, and added, in a declamatory tone, that he (D'Eon) did not know the fate that awaited him in France. An altercation ensued, but was stopped by the ambassador; however, to D'Eon's amazement, instead of turning the "unknown" Vergy out of the house, Guerchy allowed him to spend the evening in his company.

Three days later, Vergy called upon D'Eon in Dover Street, and, D'Eon being absent, left word that he would return the next morning, in full expectation that the Chevalier would then be at home. D'Eon perfectly understood the meaning of this message, and was quite prepared to encounter Vergy with either sword or pistol. That same evening the Earl of Halifax, then Foreign Secretary, gave a dinner in Guerchy's honour at his residence in Great George Street, and D'Eon was among

the company. After the repast, the Chevalier thought fit, with what motive one can hardly say, to inform Lord Halifax of his quarrel with Vergy and of his intention to fight a duel with him. Halifax, disapproving of this contemplated breach of the peace, at once begged D'Eon to renounce his design, but D'Eon retorted that as Vergy had appointed an hour to see him he should most certainly await his coming. "Well, then," said Lord Halifax, "were you even the Duke of Bedford I should have to give you in charge of the Guards."

The Earl of Sandwich and George Grenville, who were present, joined Lord Halifax in endeavouring to bring D'Eon to reason, but he proved obdurate, and was about to leave the room when he found the door locked, and was informed that before he could depart he must sign a document promising that he would on no account fight Vergy. As he obstinately refused to comply with this condition, the door was at last thrown open, and a detachment of the Guards with fixed bayonets marched in as though for the purpose of securing his person. For the moment, however, the soldiers were simply stationed in the apartment in such a way as to prevent all attempts at escape.

Their presence failed to intimidate D'Eon, who, after indulging in some mock heroics, still persisted in his refusal to sign the declaration submitted to him; and it was only after a

prolonged wrangle that an understanding of a nature to satisfy Lord Halifax's requirements, and at the same time "save D'Eon's honour," was arrived at. The Guards were withdrawn, so that it might not be said that the Chevalier yielded to any fear of their intervention, and he then appended his signature and the words, "By order, and because of the respect which I owe to the Ambassador of the King my master," to a paper stipulating that "he would not fight M. de Vergy or insult him in any way without previously communicating his intentions to the Earls of Sandwich and Halifax, so that they might be able to prevent any evil consequences arising from his conduct."

This strange affair, it may be pointed out, was an after-dinner occurrence, and, heavy drinking then being so much the fashion, it is quite possible that D'Eon was purely and simply intoxicated. However, it would seem to have increased the belief that his mind was really unhinged. Horace Walpole wrote to Lord Hertford in Paris that the honour of having a hand in the peace had overset D'Eon's poor brain. "On the fatal night at Lord Halifax's," added Walpole, jocularly, "when they told him that his behaviour was a breach of the peace, he was quite distracted, thinking it was the peace between his country and this."

Vergy (in all likelihood knowing nothing of the scene at Lord Halifax's) duly presented himself at D'Eon's rooms in accordance with

the message he had left there, and took fright, it seems, on espying a brace of pistols and a sabre, with which he imagined that the Chevalier intended to despatch him. But D'Eon—always according to his own account—contented himself with calling Vergy an adventurer, and—in imitation of Lord Halifax's tactics—compelling him to sign a declaration that he would either produce proper letters of recommendation from persons well known or in authority at Paris or Versailles, or else never show his face at the French embassy again. As soon as Vergy had put his name to this paper, which D'Eon subsequently forwarded to Guerchy, he was suffered to depart; whereupon, by way of taking his revenge, he swore an information against the Chevalier for contemplating a breach of the peace. D'Eon, however, calmly ignored the summons which was sent him to appear at Bow Street, so that the affair, for the time, came to nothing.

After the Chevalier's numerous altercations with Guerchy, it seems somewhat strange that he should still have consorted with him and have continued to dine at the embassy, as he did every now and again. Probably, however, he adopted this course by way of asserting that, not having presented his letters of recall, he was still Minister Plenipotentiary. These letters he resolutely refused to deliver, contending that they were informal, since they were signed with the King's stamp instead of

with his hand, and failed to specify that he, D'Eon, was a Knight of St. Louis and a Captain of dragoons, as well as a diplomatic envoy.

Two days after the scene at Lord Halifax's, the Chevalier is found dining at the French embassy in the company of the Countess and Mademoiselle de Guerchy, Secretary Monin, and Messieurs de Blosset and D'Allonville, the ambassador's aides-de-camp. Soon after dinner, so D'Eon subsequently declared, he began to feel unwell and extremely drowsy. He resolved to go home, and on leaving the house the use of a sedan chair was offered him. He declined it, however; returned home on foot, and fell sound asleep in his easy-chair. When he awoke he felt worse, for it now seemed to him as if his stomach were on fire; however, on going to bed, he slept soundly until noon, when his friend La Rozière roused him by kicking violently at his door.

This would seem to be a very trivial affair, were it not that, writing subsequently to Louis XV. and Tercier, D'Eon asserted that M. de Guerchy had caused some opium to be put in his wine on the occasion in question; the plan being to send him to sleep, so that he might be placed in a sedan and carried to the Thames, where there was a boat in readiness to convey him away.[1]

[1] The dinner took place on October 28. D'Eon's account of it was not written till November 18. On the former date there was no idea of kidnapping him. Documents in the

Guerchy, it should be mentioned, was dining that day with the Earl of Sandwich, and, according to D'Eon, had instructed a physician whom he kept in his house to put the opium in the wine. On Monin coming to see him on the morrow, the Chevalier began to complain of his illness, and Monin thereupon responded that he himself had experienced similar, but not equally serious symptoms. A few days then elapsed, when, early one morning, Guerchy with his two aides-de-camp came to pay D'Eon a visit. The Chevalier at once related how ill he had been since last dining at the embassy, and the ambassador replied: "Oh, I have instructed my butler to keep a better eye on the kitchen department in future, for these gentlemen and M. Monin have also felt unwell."

This seemed a very plausible statement; still D'Eon could not divest himself of his suspicions. He felt sure that he had narrowly escaped foul play, and became extremely wary. There being something amiss with the lock of his door, his valet, apparently, procured the services of a locksmith, and not unnaturally selected one who had been in the habit of working at the embassy.

Archives des Affaires Etrangères show that this only originated when an attempt to extradite him had failed. By November 18 the preparations for the kidnapping scheme were in progress, and D'Eon, who knew of them, wrongly inferred that they dated from the time of his dinner at the embassy. See *post*, p. 171.

This circumstance, however, at once filled D'Eon with the deepest suspicions, which, if one may believe him, were speedily verified, for he wrote to the King and Tercier that he had actually detected the locksmith taking a wax impression of the key, whilst pretending to attend to the lock. He also asserted that about this time attempts were made to corrupt his servants, and that he constantly found a couple of sedans stationed outside his door, although he had never ordered them. But his suspicions and alarm were brought to a climax by the circumstance that Monin and a certain L'Escallier (private secretary to the ambassador), together with other of Guerchy's dependants, suddenly took rooms in the same house as himself. L'Escallier, we are told, constantly employed a young sweep to ascend the chimney and make ghostly noises there; so that in the small hours of the morning D'Eon was awakened by repeated rapping, mingled with plaintive sounds, which, in a timid person, would doubtless have excited some alarm. According to the Chevalier, it was Guerchy who had instigated L'Escallier to employ the sweep, the idea being that the rapping and groaning would on some occasion so terrify him (D'Eon) as to induce him to summon his servants. Monin and the others were then to come forward and declare that nothing whatever could be found, and that there was really not the slightest cause for fear. In the result

D'Eon would be looked upon as a visionary or lunatic, and it would be possible for the ambassador to have him arrested and consigned to Bedlam.[1]

This was a fate which D'Eon by no means cared to experience, and as, in his estimation, so many suspicious things went on around him, he resolved to change his quarters. Having hastily packed his clothes and papers, he dismissed his servants and sought an asylum with his friend and relative, La Rozière, who was living in the house of a wine merchant in Brewer Street, Golden Square.

[1] Telfer, p. 122.



R. Cosway R.A. pinx.t 1787. Thos. Chambars Sculp.t

Mademoiselle La Chevaliere

D'EON de BEAUMONT.

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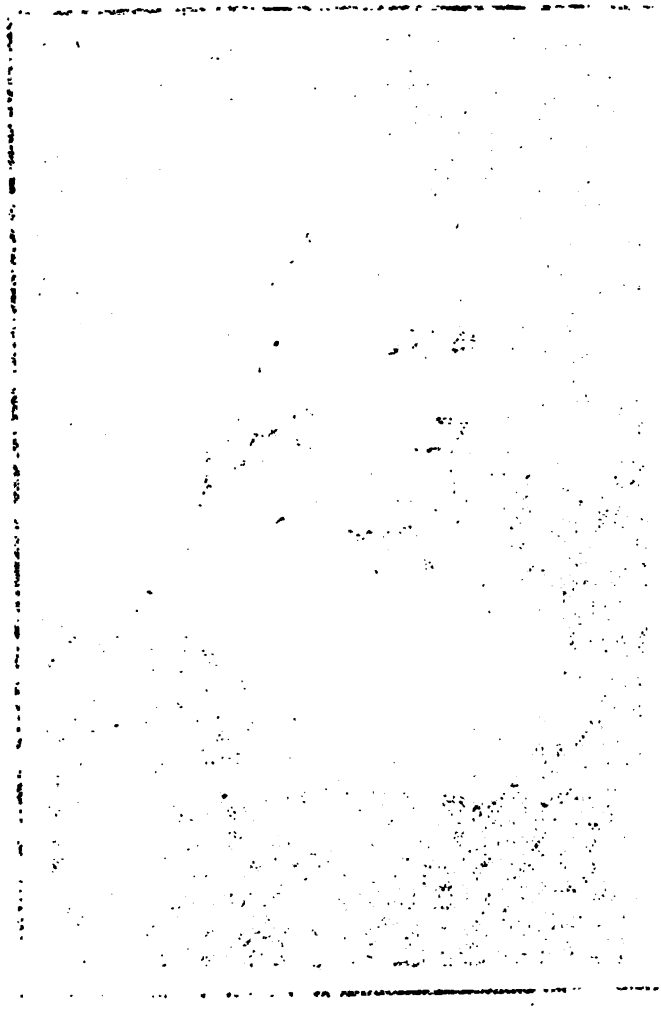
IX.

NORWICH, 1763—[illegible]

A Demand for the Chevalier's Papers—[illegible] fides at Guerchy, Letters [illegible] the Chevalier—[illegible] forbidden the Royal Court [illegible] Treason—His Letters, Memorials [illegible] create a Sensation in London and [illegible] —D'Eon threatens to [illegible] Death of Madame [illegible] Consiscul and D'[illegible] M. de Nort—Guerchy [illegible] demands Guerchy's [illegible] offers D'Eon £40 [illegible] to kidnap him—[illegible] Vauxhall—The Mob [illegible] The Chevalier is found [illegible] disappears.



UERCHY [illegible] D'E[illegible] the Du[illegible] to the k[illegible] cond[illegible] and that [illegible] [illegible]n ought t[illegible] never [illegible] to appear [illegible] and become [illegible]



IX.

November, 1763—July, 1764.

A Demand for the Chevalier's Extradition—The King confides in Guerchy, but warns D'Eon—A Plot to kidnap the Chevalier—His Stronghold in Brewer Street—He is forbidden the English Court and declared Guilty of Treason—His "Lettres, Mémoires et Négociations" create a Sensation in London and a Panic at Versailles—D'Eon threatens to divulge the King's Secret—Death of Madame de Pompadour—The Duke de Choiseul and D'Eon—The Chevalier's Interview with M. de Nort—Guerchy prosecutes him for Libel, and he demands Guerchy's Recall—The English Opposition offers D'Eon £40,000 for his Papers—Fresh Attempts to kidnap him—His Reconnaissances at Ranelagh and Vauxhall—The Mob attacks the French Embassy—The Chevalier is found guilty of Libel and mysteriously disappears.

GUERCHY'S efforts to secure D'Eon's papers having failed, the Duke de Praslin represented to the King that the Chevalier's conduct was highly treasonable, and that an application for his extradition ought to be made. Louis XV. never dared to oppose his ministers openly, and had he done so on this occasion he would certainly

have aroused suspicions of his own complicity with D'Eon. He therefore authorized the application for the Chevalier's extradition, which application was at once drawn up. It was now early in November, 1763, and the Court was at Fontainebleau, whilst Tercier had remained in Paris, and Broglie was still in exile at Ruffec. The King therefore could not obtain prompt advice from his private counsellors, and yet he was most desirous that D'Eon's papers should not fall into his ministers' hands. Immediate action alone could avert an exposure, and in his dilemma the Well-Beloved resolved to unbosom himself to M. de Guerchy. He accordingly wrote him a very gracious autograph letter, instructing him, first, to retain all the papers which he might find in D'Eon's possession should the extradition be granted, and, secondly, to bring these papers with him to France at his next annual trip, when he was to deliver them to him (the King) in person. Louis XV. enjoined strict secrecy with regard to the matter, and added that, having learnt that Monin had some knowledge of the place where D'Eon had deposited the papers, he wished to know what Monin might have to say on the subject.

Whilst writing in this strain to his ambassador the Well-Beloved had some misgivings apparently respecting Guerchy's and Monin's fidelity to himself, and it occurred to him that it might after all be preferable that D'Eon should escape

extradition, or at all events that he should place his precious papers in safe keeping. So, at the same time, Louis wrote to the Chevalier warning him of the demand for his extradition, and adding, "If you cannot make your escape, save at least your papers, and do not trust M. Monin. . . . He is betraying you."[1] Then he acquainted Tercier by letter with what he had done, remarking: "If Guerchy should betray the secret he will betray me, and he will be a lost man. . . . I hope that he will not tell his wife" (!)[2]

Tercier was by no means easy in mind on learning the course that his master had taken, and Broglie, on his side quite alarmed, expressed the opinion that the secret would certainly be divulged by Guerchy, who had, no doubt, communicated it to his wife already.

With the demand for D'Eon's extradition a number of French police-officers or "exempts" were despatched to London, in order to enable Guerchy to apprehend the Chevalier. But the British government having consulted the law officers of the crown, promptly informed the French ambassador that "according to the law of this kingdom it would be impossible to justify the seizure either of the person or of the papers of the Chevalier d'Eon." Then it was that Guerchy thought of another device.

[1] It was, we believe, the receipt of this warning, dated *November* 4, which in after years partly prompted D'Eon to concoct the alleged letter of *October* 4. See *ante*, p. 153.

[2] Archives Nationales, K. 157.

The French exempts were to kidnap D'Eon, put him into a six-oared boat which was to be in readiness at Westminster, and convey him on board a small vessel lying at Gravesend.

D'Eon had by this time handed some portion of his papers over to La Rozière, who had taken them to France; however, he still held a large number of documents, including the King's note of June 3rd, 1763, commissioning him to act in concert with La Rozière, and a most elaborate memoir by Count de Broglie, detailing the whole plan for the invasion of England. To protect these from seizure, and himself from abduction, the Chevalier converted his apartments in Brewer Street [1] into a perfect stronghold, mining, he asserts, not only his three rooms on the first floor, but also the staircase, which he further entrenched. "He kept a lamp burning throughout the night, and had a red-hot poker at his side during the day. His arsenal included four brace of pistols, two guns, and eight sabres. The garrison consisted of several dragoons of his old regiment, for whom he had sent, and some deserters whom he picked up in

[1] D'Eon resided at No. 38, which is still standing. The writer of an article on the Chevalier in the "Book Plate Annual for 1895" says that D'Eon's house seems to have suffered more than any other in the street. "The ornamental door has been removed, and the façade stuccoed. . . . In D'Eon's time this quarter was the centre of a *haut ton*, Regent Street not then having been pierced, and the town ending at Hyde Park Corner. Soho was but commencing to decay, and its sister parish, Marylebone, to gain an ascendancy."

London, and who occupied the basement of the house, with orders to admit the French police-officers should they at any time seek to enter, and then cut off their retreat whilst he himself defended the entrenchment. It was arranged that in the event of his being worsted he should make a preconcerted signal to his men to intimate that they were to run for their lives while he fired the mine." [1]

The demand for D'Eon's extradition not having been granted, and there being seemingly but little prospect of kidnapping him, Guerchy now made a last attempt at conciliation, which likewise failed; and thereupon he and Monin reported to Louis XV. that they had been quite unable to seize the Chevalier's papers. La Rozière, however, had now arrived in France, and for a short time the King possibly believed that he had brought all the compromising documents with him. At all events, Louis suddenly ceased communicating with D'Eon. Then came a *coup de théâtre*. The "London Gazette" notified that His Majesty George III. had forbidden the Chevalier his Court, and the French government formally divested him of all diplomatic status, pronounced him guilty of high treason, and declared that all his arrears of emoluments were forfeited to the crown.[2] The news caused a stir both in London and at Versailles. However, almost immediately

[1] Mr. Christy's D'Eon MSS., quoted by Telfer, p. 128.
[2] "A new (and convenient) way to pay old debts."

afterwards, Louis XV. realized that he had made a mistake in sanctioning such extreme proceedings, for Broglie, after conversing with La Rozière, who painted the situation in the blackest colours, reported that D'Eon still held the most important of the secret papers.

Louis thus found himself in an awkward predicament, for if D'Eon, degraded and deprived of his livelihood, should either for money or revenge choose to divulge the documents he held—documents proving that on the very morrow of signing the Peace of Paris the King of France had begun to plot and prepare an invasion of England, another war would almost inevitably ensue between the two countries. This prospect, since France was by no means prepared for immediate hostilities, was well calculated to alarm the Well-Beloved, and in his dilemma he turned for help to Broglie, whose advice was that Guerchy and Praslin should leave D'Eon in peace, and that a friendly messenger should be sent to the Chevalier requesting him to return to France, and giving him a formal assurance that the royal protection should not fail him.

This was sensible advice, no doubt, and might have led to the termination of the whole business, but Louis XV. was at a loss for an excuse to induce Praslin to cease persecuting D'Eon, and also, for the time being, believed the latter to be less dangerous than Broglie asserted. Thus some months elapsed without anything

being done, so that the Chevalier had every reason to consider himself abandoned. True, on one occasion, at this period, he received from Tercier a small sum of money, but such few letters as Tercier wrote to him were most discouraging.

For some time a vigorous pamphlet warfare had been going on in London between Guerchy and D'Eon. The former had opened hostilities by employing the adventurer Vergy and a certain Goudard to attack the Chevalier in print. D'Eon retorted vigorously, and at the beginning of the year 1764 resolved to strike a decisive blow. About the middle of March there was published in London a large quarto volume, entitled, "Lettres, Mémoires et Négociations du Chevalier D'Eon," which opened with a most virulent attack on Guerchy, and contained not only copies of certificates, letters, and despatches favourable to D'Eon, but also copious extracts from the private correspondence of Praslin, Nivernais, and others, in some of which ministerial secrets and matters of a delicate and confidential nature were discussed, whilst in others Guerchy was held up to contempt and ridicule as being unable to write and scarcely competent to discharge his ambassadorial functions. D'Eon had further inserted in the volume some of his own offensive missives to Praslin and Guerchy—the very letters, in fact, which had been utilized as a pretext for recalling him—and, indeed, he had

neglected nothing to ensure the work creating a sensation.

It fell like a bomb in the enemy's camp. In London everybody was amazed; and Horace Walpole, having purchased a large number of copies, sent them flying over Europe to Lord Hertford, Sir Horace Mann, and others. Consternation prevailed at Versailles, and the Well-Beloved, whilst lamenting his recent inaction, must have had serious misgivings as to D'Eon's next move. So far, his Majesty's secrets had not been mentioned, but the Chevalier threatened a second work, and who could tell what that might not contain?

D'Eon was indeed now playing a desperate game. Deprived of his rank and emoluments, he was resorting to something very like black-mailing—the favourite tactics of those who possess a secret. We are no longer in presence of the young doctor of civil and canon law, so anxious to win renown by penning elegant literary effusions; no longer in presence of the diplomatic secretary who strove so earnestly to reconcile France and Russia, the zealous messenger who flew to Paris with important tidings, careless alike of fatigue and broken limbs. All notion of discipline has faded from the mind of this whilom captain of dragoons, who, soured and angered by disappointment, injustice, and neglect, has determined to give back blow for blow, to oppose cunning to cunning, and abuse to abuse. As for those by whom he

considers himself abandoned, he is resolved to make them realize that he has it in his power to expose them to the world, and if they should not come to his help, expose them he will.

In England at this period the Peace of Paris was still the subject of much angry discussion. The assertions that Lord Bute, the Princess of Wales, and many others had been bribed by France had re-echoed all over the country. It was suspected that D'Eon possessed papers which would fully confirm the popular reports. In fact, it was imagined that these were the very documents that Guerchy was so anxious to secure, and this idea was no doubt confirmed by the publication of the "Lettres, Mémoires et Négociations," which D'Eon heralded forth as being but a first instalment—a sample, as it were—of the documents he possessed. As everybody knew him to be in needy circumstances, it is not surprising that overtures should have been made to him. We are told, indeed, that at this juncture he was offered £20,000 for his papers,[1] and he appears to have been sorely tempted, for, on March 23, 1764—a few days after the issue of his book—we find him writing to Tercier: "The leaders of the English Opposition have offered me any money I may require on condition that I deliver to them my papers and letters. . . . You must feel how repugnant such an expedient must be

[1] Telfer.

to me, and yet if I am forsaken what would you have me do? . . . If I am entirely forsaken, and if between now and Easter Sunday I do not receive a promise, signed by the King or by Count de Broglie, to the effect that reparation will be made to me for all the ills that I have endured at the hands of M. de Guerchy, then I declare to you formally I shall lose all hope; and in forcing me to embrace the cause of the King of England . . . you must make up your mind to a war at no distant period; . . . this war will be inevitable."

D'Eon confided this letter to a certain Colonel Nardin, who had been assisting La Rozière in surveying the English coast and the roads leading through Kent to London. Nardin carried the letter to France, and four days later D'Eon again wrote to Tercier,—somewhat apologetically with respect to the "Lettres, Mémoires et Négociations," but in the same warning strain concerning the secret papers. He no longer spoke of taking money, it is true, but he had heard, he said, that "the English ministers had been deliberating upon the means to be employed for arresting him and handing him over to France." However, "several members of the Opposition sent daily to see whether he were safe, and at the first attempt at violence against him the French embassy and all it contained would be torn to pieces by what is known in England as 'the mob.'" And he concluded by saying: "If I

am once taken, and the King affords no relief, I shall no longer consider myself bound to keep the secret, but shall be obliged, thus driven to extremities, to justify my conduct."

This second letter completed the first one, and was well calculated to make Louis XV. feel uncomfortable. D'Eon on the one hand threatened to sell his secret papers to the English Opposition if he remained free, and on the other hand he declared that he would make full revelations if he were arrested. For three months the Well-Beloved had been dilly-dallying with regard to Broglie's proposal that a conciliatory envoy should be sent to D'Eon. Further delay in approaching him was calculated to ruin everything; and even if no positive arrangement were entered into, it was at least advisable that someone should be sent to London to beguile him with promises and fine words for the purpose of gaining time. It happened at this juncture that, at the suggestion of the Duke de Choiseul, who was anxious to conciliate the army, both Marshal and Count de Broglie were suddenly recalled from exile. The King was thus able to secure the immediate advice of his secret counsellor; and, early in April, the Chevalier de Nort, one of Broglie's secretaries, set out for London with full instructions from his master and Tercier. The Duke de Praslin, about the same time, despatched an agent of his own to England with orders "to take D'Eon alive above everything," it being

the minister's desire to shut the Chevalier up in the Bastille.

Here for a moment one may turn aside to point out how the King's worries concerning D'Eon serve to explain a curious little point in French history. At the end of March, 1764, the Marchioness de Pompadour was dying; on April 15, just as the Chevalier de Nort had set out for England, she expired. The King, we are told, gave no signs of being affected by her death. As the hearse carrying her remains set out from the palace of Versailles amid the pouring rain, his Majesty simply remarked: "The Marchioness won't have fine weather for her journey." Various surmises have been indulged in to account for the indifference which the Well-Beloved displayed at the demise of his favourite. Many writers have taken it as an example of the natural callousness of a *fainéant* king, though the notion that such a perpetual intriguer as Louis was a *fainéant* is absurd. The real explanation—amply corroborated by the secret correspondence—is that the King was so alarmed concerning D'Eon and his precious papers, so apprehensive of revelations which might lead, at an extremely inauspicious moment for France, to war with Great Britain, that he could give his mind to nothing else.

D'Eon had informed Tercier that he would wait for "reparation" until Easter Sunday, and no longer; and when on Good Friday

morning he saw M. de Nort enter his rooms in Brewer Street, he doubtless imagined that he had won the fight, and would be able to dictate his own conditions. He already knew of the recall of the Broglies and the death of Madame de Pompadour, and fancied that quite a court revolution had taken place at Versailles, whereas in reality Choiseul's power remained unshaken. And Choiseul, skilled in all the arts of deception, stood behind Praslin, who was indeed little more than a tool in his cousin's hands. D'Eon, singularly enough, seems to have been ignorant of this, for he would often write to Choiseul and complain to him of Praslin; and Choiseul, who always had fair words on his lips and trickery in his heart, would write back sympathizing with the Chevalier and suggesting that he should return to France, where he (Choiseul) would give him employment in the army. Fortunately for D'Eon he did not accept this proposal, for Choiseul can have had no other object than to draw him over to France with the object of satisfying Praslin's rancour. Knowing as we do what were the relations between Choiseul and Praslin, it is quite certain that one word from the former to the latter would have sufficed to rid D'Eon of all persecution. That word, however, was never spoken; so it is evident that the kind language which Choiseul used in writing to D'Eon was merely intended as a lure.

However, D'Eon received M. de Nort with

a smiling face, and so pleased was he with the special envoy's fine words and a small sum of money sent to him by Tercier at the King's command, that, neglecting to read an important missive from the Count de Broglie delivered to him at the same time, he at once sat down to write a letter of fulsome gratitude to Louis XV. But his delight was of brief duration, for when he turned to peruse Broglie's letter he found that he was simply required to surrender all the papers he held in exchange for a sum of money (amount not specified), whilst no provision whatever was made for his future.

He forthwith pointed out to M. de Nort that he could not surrender his papers on these terms, and added that he was compelled to keep them for a time in any case, since Guerchy, on the strength of the language used in the introduction to the "Lettres, Mémoires et Négociations," had now instituted proceedings against him for libel, and he (D'Eon) could not part with any document that was of a nature to justify the statements made in his book.

M. de Nort reported this answer to the Count de Broglie, who endeavoured to solve the difficulty by soliciting the King to instruct Guerchy to relinquish the proceedings he had taken. But Louis XV. would not adopt this course, and indeed a cessation of proceedings on Guerchy's part would have been construed by everybody in England as an admission that D'Eon's assertions concerning him were true.

Meantime, the Chevalier, on his side becoming bolder and bolder, informed M. de Nort that nothing in the world would induce him to surrender the papers so long as Count de Guerchy should remain ambassador in England. It is asserted that D'Eon was at this period offered £40,000 for his papers by the leaders of the English Opposition,[1] who were still busily agitating the country respecting the Treaty of Paris; and if this be true, one can well understand his persistence in his pretensions.

Not content with prosecuting D'Eon for libel, Guerchy had given Goudard, his favourite literary hack, a score of guineas to write a reply to the "Lettres, Mémoires et Négociations," and Goudard having penned a furious diatribe against the Chevalier, received a sound caning from him one afternoon in the Green Park. Meanwhile fresh efforts were being made to kidnap D'Eon, and send him over to France on board a merchant vessel; and we find Guerchy writing to Praslin to ask him if he would prefer to have the Chevalier taken "before the trial for libel or afterwards."[2] D'Eon on his side wrote to Lords Mansfield, Bute, and Temple, calling their attention to the designs on his person, and soliciting their advice. They do not appear to have answered him, however. Pitt—the elder

[1] Telfer, p. 152.
[2] Affaires Etrangères—Guerchy. June 23, 1764.

one, of course—to whom he also wrote, responded in French (execrable French, by the way) to the effect that in such delicate circumstances he could only "lament a situation concerning which it was not possible for him to offer any opinion"—a truly diplomatic reply!

To a friend in Paris the Chevalier about this time sent some account of the precautions which he had taken for his personal safety. He mentioned that he had spies of his own about town, who had frightened the two leaders of the kidnapping party so effectually that they no longer dared to show themselves. "We have sham fights every day," added D'Eon, "and at night-time we make reconnaissances at 'Renela' (Ranelagh) or at 'Phaksal' (Vauxhall). I am always at the head of my little force."[1] Walpole mentions having seen the "poor lunatic" (as he calls the Chevalier) at the opera, when "he looked as if he had come from Bedlam." He was armed to the teeth, and threatened that if any people attempted to lay hands on him he would either shoot them dead or shoot himself. "And I believe him quite capable of carrying out his threat," wrote Walpole, who at this period was remarkably friendly with Guerchy, "an agreeable man," who was "civil and good-natured," who "pleased much," and "although no clerk" was "far from being contemptible."

[1] Gaillardet, "Pièces Justificatives," No. 6. The spelling of Vauxhall is quite a record in "English as she is wrote."

Whatever Walpole may have thought of Guerchy, with others the ambassador was most unpopular. This no doubt was mainly due to his position as the representative of a power which the *vox populi* so loudly accused of having bribed English statesmen, and also, in some measure, to his persecution of D'Eon. On George III.'s birthday (June 4, 1764) a strange scene took place at the French embassy. Three constables who presented themselves there for the purpose of arresting one of Guerchy's equerries for threatening to take a woman's life and fire a house, were assaulted by the ambassador's servants, whilst his excellency in person declared that the constables were violating his privileges and angrily tore up the warrants they presented. Later on, when Guerchy went out, he was insulted in the streets, and the embassy was attacked and a number of windows were broken by a party of Wilkites. According to D'Eon, Guerchy accused him of having excited the mob on this occasion, "because," says the Chevalier, "the people rather liked me, and publicly drank my health and that of Wilkes."

Towards the end of June D'Eon received notice that the charge of libel preferred against him by the Count de Guerchy would come on for hearing in the Court of King's Bench on July 9; whereupon he made an affidavit asking that the case might be postponed till next term, in order that he might produce four material

witnesses, who, he asserted, had been expelled the country by order of the French ambassador. This application was refused, however, "to the great astonishment of the public," says D'Eon, "and the indignation of all the barristers present." Accordingly, on July 9, the trial came on before Lord Chief Justice Mansfield, but the Chevalier did not enter an appearance. From a letter he wrote to a friend it appears that he had decided to absent himself, as in the time allowed him it was impossible for his counsel, who knew little or nothing of French, to master the six hundred pages of the incriminated "Lettres, Mémoires et Négociations." The case was none the less proceeded with, and D'Eon was found guilty, but the Lord Chief Justice had to postpone sentence, as the delinquent was not before him.

The Chevalier had disappeared from Brewer Street, and his whereabouts could not be ascertained. For a time it seemed doubtful to the public whether he were really in hiding, or whether he had not at last been kidnapped by Guerchy's foreign hirelings.



X.

JULY, 1764—JUNE, 1765.

Vergy accuses Guerchy of having plotted D'Eon's Death—The Chevalier in Hiding—His Reconciliation with Vergy—Improbability of the Charges against Guerchy—D'Eon challenges and denounces the Ambassador—King Louis adopts a neutral Policy—Scandalous Result of a Letter to Lord Mansfield—Broglie's Plans frustrated—Arrest of his Secretary and D'Eon's Valet in France—A strange Farce at the Bastille—Broglie's Proposals to D'Eon—The Chevalier's "Disinterestedness"—Indictment of Count de Guerchy—A true Bill against him—Depositions in the Case—The Conduct of the Grand Jury explained—George III. grants a "nolle prosequi"—Termination of this scandalous Affair.

IN the midst of his contentions with D'Eon, the Count de Guerchy had found himself confronted by another foe, that same shady character, Treyssac de Vergy, with whom D'Eon had at one moment been so anxious to fight a duel. For a short period Vergy had been in the pay of Guerchy, who had employed him to write some lampoons on D'Eon; but having

been arrested for debt at the instance of his landlord, and all his appeals for succour having been disregarded by the ambassador, he resolved to turn against the latter, and whilst lying in gaol (Dec., 1763) he wrote for publication a "Lettre aux Français," in which Guerchy's proceedings towards D'Eon were virulently denounced.

Vergy was a disreputable individual, and in the course which he now adopted was certainly actuated less by a wish to befriend the innocent and punish the guilty than by a desire to extort money from the ambassador, to whom he sent some extracts from his "Lettre aux Français" whilst it was being prepared for press, with the intimation that it would soon be published unless eighty guineas were handed to his messenger, a petty attorney named Grojan. Guerchy, making a great show of indignation, brought the matter before Lord Halifax, who suggested that Vergy might be prosecuted for attempting to extort money by threats. However, whilst the affair was being inquired into by the law officers of the crown, Vergy, through the assistance of some friends, obtained his release from prison, and persevering in his new course, began to pester the Duke de Choiseul with letters in which he formally accused the French ambassador of having plotted D'Eon's death. Subsequently, moreover, he made depositions upon oath before two justices of the King's Bench, asserting

that Guerchy had first tried to poison the Chevalier by causing opium to be given him in his wine while he was dining at the embassy on October 28, 1763, and that he had further solicited him (Vergy) to waylay and assassinate D'Eon.

These depositions naturally created a stir in London drawing-rooms, clubs, and coffee-houses, and, D'Eon having disappeared, the public may well have imagined that the murderous designs attributed to Guerchy had at last proved successful. But such was not the case. The Chevalier was simply hiding. For several weeks, it appears,[1] he secreted himself in the house of an elderly French procuress, named Dufour, who subsequently asserted that he had worn female attire whilst lodging with her—a circumstance which many people would explain by the surmise that he thus disguised himself the better to escape detection, but which, as will shortly be shown, gave rise to other suppositions of a very singular description.[2] How long D'Eon remained with La Dufour, and how long he continued wearing feminine attire, one cannot say. Certain it is, however, that after disappearing at the beginning of July he was discovered by Vergy during the ensuing September, where, we are

[1] Archives des Affaires Etrangères.

[2] It was, we believe, partly to justify his behaviour at this time that D'Eon concocted the letter of Oct. 4, 1763 (*ante*, p. 153).

not told, but at all events he was again wearing the garments of the male sex.

D'Eon was naturally surprised to see Vergy, who, presenting himself *ex abrupto*, declared, with apparent frankness, that he had come to confess his faults and make atonement. Having given some account of his parentage and his earlier years, describing himself as an advocate of the Bordeaux parliament, and relating that after squandering his own and his wife's fortune he had tried his hand at literature, and had secured the patronage of the profligate Count d'Argental, a great friend of the Duke de Praslin, he went on to say that Argental had endeavoured to obtain him employment as secretary to the Count de Guerchy, and that the matter had been virtually arranged on the understanding that he (Vergy) should serve the ambassador "as readily with his sword as with his pen." He had thereupon started for England, with instructions "to assist in encompassing the ruin of D'Eon, and through him of both the Marshal and Count de Broglie. He was to spread reports injurious to the Chevalier's reputation, to pick a quarrel with him, if possible, and to write a pamphlet to his prejudice." He asserted, however, that he had only undertaken these duties because he was literally starving and had no other means of earning a living. "At five-and-twenty," he said to D'Eon, "the stomach is an integral part of the conscience, with a deliberative voice in

the internal tribunal, and when to its sharp cry the bowels add a hollow groan of their own, the united voices of both organs generally exercise a preponderant influence on the mind."

Nevertheless, according to Vergy's assertions, upon Guerchy's arrival in London he had been seized with qualms of conscience, and had intended to warn D'Eon of what threatened him, for which reason indeed he had remarked on meeting him at the embassy: "You do not know the fate that awaits you in France." Had the Chevalier then said but one encouraging conciliatory word to him he would have confessed everything. Unfortunately, however, events had taken another course.

Vergy seems to have said nothing about the libellous pamphlet which, in spite of his conscientious scruples, he had written against D'Eon at Guerchy's bidding; or about the information which he had formerly laid against him at Bow Street for a contemplated breach of the peace. He doubtless found it more convenient to pass over these trifling matters, and proceeded to relate that Guerchy had, in the first instance, tried to poison D'Eon, and, having failed in that attempt, had offered him (Vergy) "a purse with one hand and a dagger with the other," in the hope that he would consent to waylay and assassinate the Chevalier. Then, after giving some account of his arrest for debt, Vergy concluded by saying: "The ambassador has dared to summon you before

the law-courts. Make any use you please of the disclosures I have now made to you. I am at your service. I will admit my own faults, and prove your innocence in London, Paris, or Versailles. . . . Happy indeed shall I be to make reparation by some little good for a part of the injury I have done you."

D'Eon readily embraced this offer; but it must be pointed out that Vergy could adduce no evidence of value in support of his statements, which, by themselves, were certainly not entitled to much credit. The Chevalier himself had previously recorded in print[1] that Vergy was known to the Paris police as a sharper, that he had been prosecuted for swindling by a Parisian bookseller named Robin, and had further been turned out of the houses of those whom he asserted to be his protectors—the Count d'Argental and the Maréchale de Villeroy. A sober-minded person would therefore have thought twice before placing any reliance on the word of such a man, however profuse his offers of help and his protestations of repentance; but D'Eon was not a sober-minded person, he was all fire and fury, eager above all things to avenge himself on Guerchy, by whom he had been virtually ruined. It must be acknowledged, also, that Guerchy had undoubtedly endeavoured to kidnap the Chevalier, and in those days French

[1] "A Letter to His Excellency C. L. F. Regnier, Count de Guerchy," London, 1763.

officials did not hesitate at such trifles as a man's life when they had the orders of those in power to rid them of any compromising or dangerous individual.

But certainly neither Louis XV. nor Praslin had ever ordered D'Eon's murder. D'Eon himself would have scouted any such assumption with regard to the King; and as for Praslin, we know that he desired above all things to take D'Eon alive in order that he might extort from him full particulars of his intrigues; for the Chevalier's papers, couched in cipher or figurative language, would be of little use to him unless he should also have the Chevalier's person under lock and key.

If Guerchy, therefore, had really plotted to take D'Eon's life it must have been on his own account; but great as was his resentment against the Chevalier, it was certainly not of such a character as to prompt him to commit murder. Moreover, the ambassador was accused of having tried to poison D'Eon prior to the publication of those "Lettres, Mémoires et Négociations" which had so incensed him—prior to the decisive rupture when, although there was a violent quarrel between them, Guerchy at all events yet had hopes that he should prevail on D'Eon to surrender his papers and return quietly to France. If Guerchy was guilty, therefore, of the charges brought against him, he must have been actuated by sheer wickedness, and there is

nothing whatever to indicate that such was the case.[1] Besides, his instructions from Praslin were to get D'Eon over to France alive, either by persuasion or force; and it is difficult to imagine that he should have allowed his private resentment to carry him away so far as to act in direct opposition to his orders.

With reference to the alleged attempt at poisoning, it is no doubt correct that D'Eon was taken ill after dining at the embassy on October 28, 1763, but he himself admits that Monin complained to him of similar, though less violent symptoms. He acknowledges also that Guerchy told him that the Marquis de Blosset and Count d'Allonville had felt unwell, and this having been said in the presence of those gentlemen, and without any protest on their part, may be assumed to be accurate. Otherwise they and Monin, whom D'Eon in his letters calls his "old friend," must have been in league with Guerchy to take the Chevalier's life. Guerchy, it will be remembered, was not present at the dinner in question; and, according to D'Eon's first account, it was

[1] D'Eon, in one of his numerous effusions, tries to prove that Guerchy was naturally wicked because an ancestor of his was sentenced to death (but pardoned) for rebellion in the reign of Charles VIII. He repeatedly stated, moreover, that Guerchy's father, an officer of mousquetaires, had killed a man in a night brawl in Paris, and had only been saved from the scaffold by the intercession of Madame de Maintenon. We have searched many records, but have failed to find any trace of this affair.

the ambassador's physician who drugged the wine, with the object of sending him to sleep, in order that he might be kidnapped. When, however, the breach between the Chevalier and the ambassador had become irreparable, we find the drugging suddenly changed into poisoning, and Guerchy's butler formally implicated in the charge on the strength of Vergy's unsupported assertions.

As D'Eon had noised his illness abroad, there is nothing surprising in Vergy coming to him and saying, "You were poisoned." Vergy, for his own purposes, no doubt, wished to excite D'Eon against Guerchy, and adopted the tactics best suited to that end. The story of the purse and the dagger was related with the same design. On the other hand, the trite but true axiom that the wish is often father to the thought will be found exemplified in D'Eon's case. He wished for an opportunity to crush Guerchy, and conceiving that a favourable one was now offered him, he availed himself of it.

It may well be asked, however, whether some of the objections which have here been raised did not occur to his own mind. It seems impossible that he can really have believed in Vergy's extraordinary allegations. At all events, the course he first adopted in the matter is strongly suggestive of disbelief. In countries where the so-called "code of honour" prevails a man does not willingly fight a duel with an individual whom he knows or conscientiously

believes to be a swindler or an assassin. Yet D'Eon, though he remained in hiding, sent a challenge to the enemy whom he accused of trying to murder him, proposing that they should settle their differences "by force of arms, as became two soldiers." But Guerchy objected to draw swords with a "fencing-master;" whereupon the Chevalier suggested a combat on horseback with firearms—which proposal the ambassador also declined, saying "D'Eon must be a fool to suppose that a general would agree to fight a mere captain of dragoons."

This rejoinder so nettled the Chevalier that his next step was to send a copy of Vergy's statements to the Duke de Choiseul, and another to the Count de Broglie, to whom he also forwarded a pressing appeal for funds. D'Eon, be it noted, was now in extreme penury, and according to his own account had but a crust of bread to offer to his new ally, Vergy. "Do not desert me, as you seem to be doing," he wrote to Broglie. "You send me no money, whereas I am struggling in your behalf. Send me sufficient money to enable me to fight your battles and mine, unless you wish to be crushed beneath the weight of injustice. I have expended £1,200 in carrying on my war, and you send me nothing. It is abominable, and allow me to say I should never have believed it."[1]

At the same time the Chevalier wrote to the Archbishop of Langres, to whom he says he

[1] Affaires Etrangères.

was well known, begging that prelate to intercede on his behalf with the Dauphin, in order that the latter might induce the King to render him justice; and he further applied to Marshal de Broglie, who, indignant at being addressed by a man whom he considered "a rebel," returned his letter unanswered, and acquainted Choiseul with what he called D'Eon's audacity. On the strength of some of Vergy's assertions D'Eon seems to have been very anxious to mix the marshal up in his affairs at this juncture; but the stern old soldier, a firm disciplinarian in political as well as military affairs, was determined to have nothing to do with them.

The Count, his brother, was both unable and unwilling to treat the Chevalier in this haughty style; still he does not appear to have forwarded him any money at this period. He simply wrote that he could not in future submit to the King any letters containing allusions to the Chevalier's quarrels with Guerchy; and, to D'Eon's great surprise, we are told, the word "approuvé" in the King's handwriting appeared on the margin of this missive. The Chevalier seems to have been sorely perplexed concerning the neutral policy which Louis XV. now adopted; but it should be mentioned that after the libel proceedings Guerchy had betaken himself to France on leave, when he probably found an opportunity to acquaint the King personally with his own version of his disputes with D'Eon.

The Chevalier no doubt now considered himself abandoned, and, in his anger, he resolved to press his point against Guerchy regardless of the consequences. He still remained in concealment, and people were yet wondering what had become of him, when Vergy presented himself before the judges of the King's Bench and swore the depositions already referred to. Guerchy seems to have been horrified rather than alarmed by the accusations brought against him. "I thought," he wrote in a despatch to the Duke de Praslin, "that M. d'Eon had given the full measure of his rascality, but his past behaviour in no wise approaches what he has now concocted, which indeed makes one shudder with horror."

About this time (November, 1764) an abusive anonymous letter was addressed to Lord Mansfield, upbraiding him for his conduct in the libel action against D'Eon; and, this letter being attributed to the Chevalier, a warrant was issued for his arrest, whereupon a party of police officers broke into the house of the Rev. Dr. Eddowes in Scotland Yard, where D'Eon was supposed to be concealed. He was not there, however, and the only result of the search was to alarm Dr. Eddowes (an aged invalid) so severely that he died shortly afterwards. The affair caused quite a scandal. The Chevalier's cousin, D'Eon de Mouloize, wrote to the Duke of York, the Duke of Cumberland, Lord Egmont, the Lord Chancellor, and others, denouncing the conduct of the officers, and

complaining that they had declared they held a warrant to take D'Eon "dead or alive." On his side, the Chevalier, from his mysterious retreat, penned indignant missives to Bute, Halifax, Sandwich, Grenville, and Mansfield, to the last of whom he protested that he had no knowledge whatever of the alleged anonymous letter.

Guerchy at this juncture sought to bring Vergy to book for attempting to extort money from him in connection with the "Lettre aux Français," but the law officers of the crown, who had been considering the matter for some time past, were obliged to inform the ambassador that his affidavits did not suffice, and that the proceedings would have to be abandoned. In point of fact, the affair had been so cunningly contrived by Vergy and his attorney, Grojan, that, beyond the ambassador's own statements, there was no evidence to place before a jury.

The scene of this narrative must now be shifted from England to France. Whilst the Chevalier in his hiding-place was concerting measures for the prosecution of Guerchy, the Count de Broglie, by no means so callous as his last brief note might lead one to suppose, was striving to devise some means of putting an end to the scandal. It was agreed that he himself should go to England, and he was making his preparations, and merely waiting for the King to arrange matters with Praslin, when a curious incident interfered with the scheme.[1]

[1] Broglie, vol. ii. p. 182 *et seq.*

On January 10, 1765, D'Eon's valet, Hugonnet, who had long been travelling to and fro with his master's correspondence, was arrested at Calais by the French police and found to be in possession of despatches in the handwriting of one of Broglie's secretaries, a certain Drouet. Hugonnet was at once removed to Paris; Drouet also was arrested after his papers had been seized; and both were lodged in the Bastille by M. de Sartines, Lieutenant-general of Police.[1]

Choiseul and Praslin now imagined that they were on the eve of a great discovery. True courtiers, however, experienced in all the arts of intrigue, they realized that it would be the height of folly to expose their royal master and compel him to confess his secret scheming. Their sole aim was to crush and ruin the agents of various degrees whom he employed, the presumptuous creatures who preferred to obey the orders of their sovereign rather than those of his ministers. By affecting a belief that these agents acted purely on their own account without any semblance of royal sanction, Choiseul and Praslin conceived that they would enable the King to disavow his

[1] Sartines was not a mere officer of police, as stated by the Duke de Broglie and Captain Telfer. Appointed Lieutenant-criminel in 1755, he became Lieutenant-general in 1759, five years previous to the events we are recording; and the status of the Lieutenant-general was as high as that of the Prefect of police of the present day.

instruments, and at the same time compel him to punish them.

On learning the arrest of Drouet and Hugonnet, Louis XV. trembled lest his precious secret should be discovered, and resorted to the tactics which he had previously employed with Guerchy. Sending for M. de Sartines, he confided in him; and afterwards informed Tercier and Broglie of what he had done. After some little difficulty, caused by Sartines' timidity, it was arranged that the Lieutenant-general and Tercier should inspect Drouet's papers, and abstract all which were likely to compromise either the King or those who were in the royal confidence. This was done; and to make sure of the discretion of the two prisoners, Tercier interviewed them at the Bastille, the Well-Beloved privately instructing M. de Jumilhac, governor of the fortress, to allow this interview, although it was contrary to all established rules.

Everyone being well primed (Sartines himself was provided by Broglie with a list of the questions which he was to ask the prisoners), and all the compromising papers having been got out of the way, or altered by effacing certain words, and inserting others in their place, Drouet and Hugonnet were summoned before the Lieutenant-general to be interrogated. Praslin, who was present, soon realized that he had been fooled. The letter from Drouet seized on Hugonnet's person was

now found to be addressed, not to the Chevalier D'Eon, but to his cousin, D'Eon de Mouloize, and was interpreted as a mere private communication urging Mouloize to prevail on the Chevalier to obey the orders which had been given him so repeatedly, and to return to France. Some allusions in the missive to "the advocate" and his "assessor"[1] were construed as applying to certain of D'Eon's personal friends. Briefly, the whole affair came to nothing, though Hugonnet was arbitrarily detained at the Bastille for over a twelvemonth. Drouet was more fortunate, for he secured his release by threatening to reveal everything if he were kept in durance.

This business so thoroughly alarmed Count de Broglie that, to prevent any such complications arising again, and to put an end to the whole D'Eon scandal, he once more wrote to Louis XV. offering to start for London at once and obtain the papers which the Chevalier held. D'Eon had repeatedly expressed his willingness to hand these papers over to the Count, and the latter proposed that in exchange for them the Chevalier should be granted an annual pension of 12,000 livres, the payment of which he, Broglie, would guarantee by a mortgage on his own estates. The Count, faithful servant though he was, knew well enough that his royal master would disavow him if ever the scheme for invading England

[1] See *ante*, p. 146.

should be discovered by Choiseul and Praslin, and then at the very least the Bastille would become his home. Accordingly, though he was by no means a wealthy man, he made this proposal, and, incredible as it may seem, Louis XV. agreed to it. D'Eon was written to, and accepted the offer in principle, but declared that a mortgage on the Count's estates would not be sufficient: he must also have one on the estates of the Countess de Broglie, which were more extensive than those of her husband. And yet we find some of the Chevalier's biographers coolly asserting that he was one of the most disinterested people in the world!

Meanwhile, Louis XV., ever irresolute and at a loss when vigorous action was necessary, could not bring himself to speak to his ministers of Broglie's projected journey to England. There was doubtless some little difficulty in the matter, as, since the Hugonnet-Drouet affair, the Count had become a more suspicious personage than ever in the eyes of Choiseul and Praslin. Still, the King was an absolute monarch, and had merely to give his orders to be obeyed. The misfortune was that he did not want to give an order; he preferred an excuse, and whilst he was trying to invent one the weeks slipped by and D'Eon's proceedings against Guerchy followed their course.

The Chevalier had by no means neglected his vengeance whilst corresponding with the Count de Broglie about pensions and mortgages.

Guerchy was indicted on February 12, 1765, and on March 1 the grand jury of Middlesex, assembled at Hicks's Hall, returned a true bill against him. The charge recited that the Count, being a man of a cruel mind and disposition, without the fear of God before his eyes, had, at the instigation of the Devil, wickedly, illegally, and maliciously solicited Pierre Henri Treyssac de Vergy to kill and murder Charles Geneviève d'Eon de Beaumont "against the peace of our Lord the King, his crown, and dignity."

The depositions placed before the grand jury were six in number.[1] First came those of D'Eon and Vergy; then those of Jacques Dupré, Richard Kirwan, Jacques Braillard, and Louis Lapeyre, all members of the French colony in London. The last four depositions, however, although paraded with a good deal of fuss, proved simply this: that Vergy was acquainted with Guerchy and was in the habit of going to the French embassy. Neither Dupré nor Kirwan, nor Braillard nor Lapeyre knew anything of any murderous design on

[1] Certified translations of the various documents connected with the case will be found in the following pamphlets: "Pièces Authentiques pour servir au procès criminel intenté contre le Comte de Guerchy, etc.," Londres, 1765, and "Dernière Lettre du Chevalier d'Eon à M. le Comte de Guerchy, etc.," Londres, 1767. Both of these pamphlets are in the British Museum, but the former one, by far the more important of the two, does not appear to have been consulted by any previous biographer of D'Eon.

the part of the ambassador beyond what their friend Vergy himself had been pleased to tell them. Vergy's own deposition was an interminable rigmarole, full of verbiage and innuendoes, relating or pretending to relate all the circumstances of his acquaintance with Guerchy, and reiterating his totally unsupported assertion that Guerchy had solicited him to kill D'Eon. As for the Chevalier's deposition, this mainly dealt with the alleged attempt at poisoning, but threw no additional light on the subject.

Beyond the above statements, the only document put in that had any bearing on the case was a note which ran as follows: "The Count de Guerchy begs M. de Vergy to call upon him to-day at about three o'clock, as he wishes to speak to him.—October 31, 1763." Vergy, according to his own account, obeyed this summons, and it was then that the ambassador asked him to murder D'Eon. The note, however, like the depositions of the four witnesses, simply proved that Guerchy and Vergy were acquainted.

It is remarkable that only the ambassador was indicted, and that no formal charge was preferred against either his physician or his butler, although D'Eon accused the former of having supplied the opium which had been administered to him, and the latter of having poured it into his wine. However, the attempted poisoning, though noised all over

London, and freely referred to in the depositions, was not mentioned in the indictment, and the sole charge upon which it was proposed to try the ambassador was that of soliciting Vergy to despatch D'Eon.

It is probable that the grand jury, in bringing in a true bill, were influenced by facts and circumstances apart from the specific charge they had to examine. The feud between M. de Guerchy and the Chevalier was matter of common notoriety, and the efforts which had undoubtedly been made to kidnap the latter were calculated to convey to English minds a very bad impression of the accused. Then, too, the grand jury knew nothing of the real character of Vergy, the principal accuser, whom they doubtless imagined to be a person of some position and standing, as he was referred to in all the documents as being both a French nobleman and an advocate of the Parliament of Bordeaux. One must remember, also, the popular prejudices of the time. The charges of bribery in connection with the Peace of Paris had long been repeated here, there, and everywhere. Far from allaying the popular animosity against France, time, seconded by the efforts of agitators, had only increased it. The Wilkites, too, were lording it in London, and D'Eon was freely compared to the popular idol and styled a victim of tyranny. All these circumstances went against Guerchy, and serve to explain the course which the grand jury adopted.

It is to be regretted, however, that a more impartial view was not taken. Nowadays, when the trial of any prisoner on a criminal charge is prefaced by an exhaustive magisterial inquiry, the finding of a true bill may be little more than a formality; but in those times such was not the case, and before arraigning a foreign ambassador on a charge of plotting murder the evidence against him should have been most carefully scrutinized and sifted.

However, although a true bill had been found, there was a difficulty in placing Guerchy on his trial, for, by the law of nations, ambassadors are exempted from the ordinary processes of law which obtain in the countries where they reside. Guerchy himself refused to accept the jurisdiction of any English tribunal, and his Court became highly indignant, and protested against the treatment meted out to him.

At last, when the case had been carried from the Sessions to the King's Bench, the English ministry, at the ambassador's request, expressed its willingness to issue a *nolle prosequi* forbidding further proceedings. It was necessary, however, that due entry should be made of this *nolle prosequi*, and Guerchy was therefore summoned to show cause in its favour and D'Eon to show cause against it.

From this point it becomes difficult to follow the case in all its phases, as the references to it in the newspapers of the time are very brief.

Another memorable *cause célèbre* was just then occupying a large share of public attention. Lord Byron,[1] who, some months previously, had killed Mr. Chaworth in what may be called an impromptu duel at a tavern in Pall Mall, was being tried for his life; and to the majority of English people his case must have been more interesting than D'Eon's charges against his ambassador. However, it appears that Guerchy was summoned no fewer than six times before he would consent to appoint counsel to attend at Lincoln's Inn before the Attorney and Solicitor-General, to whom an order of reference, with regard to the *nolle prosequi*, had been made. The matter was argued on April 30, and subsequently the Attorney-General, Sir Fletcher Norton,[2] refused to certify to the King in favour of the *nolle prosequi*. It is difficult to penetrate the reasons of his refusal. Some of D'Eon's biographers would have one believe that Sir Fletcher considered Guerchy to be guilty; but, as the charge rested on such flimsy evidence, this, on the part of a man of legal training, is extremely improbable. It is far more likely that, in accordance with the views of other legal authorities both of that time and this, Sir Fletcher questioned the right of the crown to stay proceedings in a charge of inciting to murder, even though the accused were a foreign ambassador invested with so-called diplomatic privileges, and

[1] Grand-uncle of the poet.
[2] Afterwards the first Lord Grantley.

that he accordingly refused to be a party to the proposed transaction. This view of the matter derives probability from the circumstance that Sir Fletcher Norton, if somewhat eccentric, repeatedly distinguished himself by his opposition to the alleged encroachments of the crown, and, by his unswerving constitutionalism, rendered himself almost a bugbear to George III. and his Court.

It has also been contended that he was influenced by a sudden outcry that the ministry was conniving at a miscarriage of justice. This outcry was largely due to the flight of Guerchy's butler, one Chazal by name, who fled to France, abandoning a young wife to whom he had but recently been married. This was certainly at first sight a suspicious circumstance, well calculated to confirm the popular belief in Guerchy's guilt; though as a matter of fact the ambassador was not indicted for the alleged poisoning, which was the only attempt in which Chazal was said to have assisted. However, according to his master's account, the butler simply absconded in consequence of the threats proffered against him by D'Eon's partisans among the French colony in London—threats which had virtually frightened him out of his wits; and, everything considered, this explanation may be correct.

Nothing more was ever done in the case. No entry having been made of the *nolle prosequi*, the indictment against Guerchy remained

undischarged; but D'Eon did not press his point further, and the days and weeks went by without his taking any further proceedings. Possibly, in his ignorance of our complicated legal machinery, he misconstrued the advantage he had gained. At all events, either by ignorance or design, he repeatedly asserted in pamphlets which he subsequently issued that Guerchy had been *proved* guilty of plotting to take his life. A true bill may of course be presumption of a man's guilt, but it is no proof of it, as D'Eon would have had his readers to imagine. Another point which he insisted upon in his various effusions was that he had broken the haughty spirit of his antagonist by forcing him to bow to the law; for he, the French Ambassador, had been compelled to appear by counsel before the English attorney-general! This advantage D'Eon magnified into a mighty triumph.

However, not only did he neglect to take any further steps in the case, but it soon became impossible for him to do so. Six weeks after the *nolle prosequi* proceedings, on June 13, 1765, the Chevalier was outlawed by judgment of the coroners for Middlesex. He had brought this on himself by not surrendering to receive sentence in the ambassador's libel proceedings; and, as the declaration of outlawry was apparently never cancelled, one may here have the explanation why, in after years, D'Eon failed to recover money owing to him in England.

As for Guerchy, although he was not put upon his trial, he found himself in a most unpleasant position. As soon as the flight of his butler became known he was attacked in the streets, and only escaped lynch law by hiding his decorations and passing himself off as a mere secretary of the French embassy. Even then he was followed to his residence by a gang of Wilkite roughs, who, being unable to enter the courtyard, relieved their feelings by breaking nearly every window of the house and its adjoining chapel. For some days the embassy officials scarcely dared to set foot in the streets, and Guerchy, as soon as he could complete his preparations, hurried over to France on leave.



XI.

JUNE, 1765—MAY, 1774.

D'Eon again entrusted with the Secret Correspondence in England—He is accused of wearing Female Attire—Guerchy's Disappointments and Death—By surrendering an important Document D'Eon obtains a Pension—His Reports on English Affairs—The Musgrave Scandal—Louis XV. believes D'Eon to be Mad—"Smoked Tongues endowed with Ciceronian Eloquence"—D'Eon surrenders more Documents and writes thirteen volumes of Essays—His friend, Earl Ferrers—Wealthy Ladies offer D'Eon their hand—Rumours that he is a Woman—Betting and gambling Manias of the Period—Policies of Insurance on D'Eon's Sex—Princess Dashkoff in London—D'Eon as a Bearded Lady—Stanislas Poniatowski offers him a Refuge—Amazement of Louis XV. and Broglie on learning that he is a Woman—Negotiations for his Return to France—Worries of Louis XV.—The Royal Secret discovered—Death of the Well-Beloved.

GREAT had been the sensation at Versailles when the news arrived there of the indictment of the Count de Guerchy. Having resorted to extremities in this case, D'Eon might well adopt a similar course with regard to the King's secret. It is not surprising, therefore, that Louis XV. should have finally decided to follow the

conciliatory policy proposed by Broglie. The latter wrote to D'Eon that, if he would forget the past and desist in future from all allusions to Guerchy and his lawsuits, he would prevail on the King not only to carry out the proposals respecting a pension, but also to entrust him once more with the secret correspondence in London. It was not the Count's intention, however, to confide any business of great importance to D'Eon, but simply to employ him to report upon public opinion in England and the schemes and endeavours of the opposition party, with sundry members of which he was acquainted.

The offer was made to the Chevalier with the object of soothing him by flattering his vanity; and following upon Broglie's letter there came, according to D'Eon, an autograph note from Louis XV., saying that he approved of the Chevalier "resuming and continuing the secret correspondence." These gracious words calmed and refreshed D'Eon, who now began to supply Broglie with periodical reports of what was happening around him. He spent the summer at Byfleet in Surrey with his friend Humphrey Cotes, brother of the Alderman of that name, and himself a prominent Wilkite and pamphleteer with extensive political connections, and consequently well versed in the intrigues of the time. It is probable that the Chevalier extracted plenty of information from his friend, and, with or without the latter's knowledge, made Broglie acquainted with it.

Early in the autumn, Madame Dufour, the woman of questionable character with whom D'Eon had lodged for a time, went over to France, and obtaining an audience of the Duke de Praslin, informed him that the Chevalier had been accustomed to dress as a female whilst staying with her. She also asserted that he had then been corresponding with both Marshal and Count de Broglie; and Praslin, eager to ruin the latter, would have thoroughly investigated the affair had it not been for M. de Sartines, the Lieutenant-general of police, who declared that La Dufour was "a dirty creature" unworthy of belief, and that he would take no action in the matter unless he had the King's express commands. Praslin shrank from appealing to Louis XV., and so the matter was eventually allowed to drop.

About this time Guerchy returned to London, looking, it appears, very sad and weary. Horace Walpole, who had become intimate with him, tells us that he had hoped to win the title of duke when first appointed to the London embassy, but by this time he must have realized the vanity of his anticipations. He does not appear to have interfered any further with D'Eon, who, in acknowledgment of his reports on English affairs, received from time to time various gracious messages from the Well-Beloved. On one occasion, for instance, he was informed that "his Majesty was well pleased with him," and on another that he was "an

instrument useful to his country." Praslin meanwhile seems to have had a covert hope that Great Britain might yet be induced to surrender the Chevalier, and late in 1765 he sounded the Duke of Richmond on the subject. However, the French minister was no longer backed up by Guerchy, who had no doubt learnt from the King that he now proposed to try persuasive tactics to bring about a settlement with D'Eon.

When the latter had been sufficiently stroked and patted, calmed as it were by flattery and promises, King Louis ventured on a further step. In June, 1766, Guerchy left England ostensibly "on leave," but in reality never to return,[1] and was succeeded—not as Ambassador but as Minister Plenipotentiary—by an old diplomatist, M. Durand, long of the secret service, and the real author of the project for the invasion of our shores. Durand and D'Eon were already well acquainted, and the former was soon able to come to terms with the Chevalier respecting one of the secret papers he held, namely, the royal autograph letter of June 3, 1763, by which D'Eon had been instructed to act with Tercier and Broglie in planning the contemplated invasion. This letter

[1] Count de Guerchy died in Paris in September, 1767. His end is said to have been hastened by the worries and disappointments of his English embassy, but according to Horace Walpole the immediate cause of his death was a complaint which he had contracted prior to marriage and had neglected.

the Well-Beloved was most anxious to recover, since it proved his complicity with his secret agents, and D'Eon handed it over to Durand, who found it, he states, in his receipt, "in good condition, folded in a parchment cover, addressed to his Majesty, and enclosed and cemented within a brick adapted for the purpose." This brick, it appears, had been removed from the wall of D'Eon's wine-cellar, and afterwards replaced there, no one but the Chevalier knowing what it contained.

In exchange for the royal missive Durand presented the Chevalier with the following engagement: "As a reward for the services rendered to me by M. d'Eon in Russia, in my armies, and in executing other commissions which I have given to him, I am pleased to bestow on him a yearly pension of 12,000 livres, which I will cause to be paid to him punctually, by instalments every six months, and in whatever country he may be—excepting that he should reside with my enemies in time of war; and this until I may think proper to appoint him to some post with emoluments larger than the present allowance.

Versailles, April 1, 1766. Louis."

D'Eon received this document from Durand in July, and Durand supplied him at the time with a written guarantee that it was really in the King's handwriting. As the Chevalier (according to his own account) was already remarkably well acquainted with his royal master's

penmanship—indeed, had just surrendered an important autograph letter—it is not easy to understand why he required this certificate. Perhaps he had been struck by the date appended to the royal promise—that of All Fools' Day—and wondered whether he were being tricked.

Beyond the one letter we have mentioned, D'Eon did not surrender a single official or secret document to Durand. Some time previously he had confided his papers for safe keeping to Humphrey Cotes; and when Count de Broglie mildly hinted that in return for the pension which he (Broglie) had negotiated, he should like to recover the documents calculated to compromise him, D'Eon's sole reply was an inquiry respecting the mortgage which Broglie had promised him as a guarantee that the aforesaid pension would be paid. From whatever point one looks at this rejoinder it must be conceded that the "disinterested" Chevalier was fast becoming a cautious man of business.

Some few of the reports on English affairs which he forwarded to Broglie for Louis XV., and which for prudential reasons were occasionally signed "William Wolff," are in existence. He is found writing upon the impression produced by the repeal of the Stamp Act, reporting a debate in the "House," and asserting that Pitt's gout was merely pretence —"a political, periodical gout,—so much *char-*

latannerie," he calls it,—from which one may infer that he had all a Frenchman's hatred of the great statesman. He also ridicules George III.'s parsimony, remarking that "his Majesty never has any kind of supplies by him, but sends out for six bottles of wine at a time, and for one bottle of rum, with which to brew some punch"—a story which completes, as it were, Horace Walpole's tittle-tattle about the Queen's hairdresser waiting on their Majesties at table, and the four pounds of beef, never more nor less, which were allowed every day for the royal soup. Despite of his own and his wife's parsimony, however, George III., as is well known, was always up to his neck in debt, a circumstance which D'Eon ascribes to his having followed Lord Bute's advice respecting the purchase of votes in Parliament. In 1766 the Chevalier estimated the Civil List debts at half a million sterling, and he was by no means badly informed, for three years later Parliament voted exactly that amount for the discharge of the royal liabilities.[1]

Respecting Lord Bute, D'Eon wrote to Broglie that "there never existed a more cunning rascal," and he further told the Count that George III.'s favourite was secretly attached to the Stuarts, and really aimed at

[1] Another £600,000 had to be supplied in 1777, when, with the object of guarding against all such arrears in future, Parliament increased the royal allowance from £800,000 to £900,000 per annum.

upsetting his Hanoverian patron. This fanciful story was actually credited by Broglie, and D'Eon was instructed to inquire, with great circumspection, what prospect there might be of a restoration of the Stuarts, and whether it would be dangerous to sound Lord Bute as to his secret intentions. D'Eon then had to back out of his original assertions by saying that men and things were not yet sufficiently matured, and that it would be better to watch and wait.

In the autumn of 1766 the controversy respecting the Peace of Paris, and an announcement that the Chevalier was prepared to impeach three persons by name for selling that peace to France, drew from him an indignant contradiction addressed to the "St. James's Chronicle." Nevertheless, the reports of bribery continued to circulate, being sedulously encouraged by a certain Dr. Musgrave, who asserted that Sir Charles Young, Mr. Fitzherbert, and other M.P.'s had told him that D'Eon had made overtures to them in the summer of 1764,[1] declaring his readiness to denounce various persons for taking bribes from France. Later on, in 1770, the growing intensity of the popular clamour—fanned by Lord Chatham's emphatic language in the House of Peers, where on one occasion he solemnly declared that "this country was sold at the late Peace"—forced Parliament to take cognizance of the matter; however, the House

[1] See *ante*, pp. 177, 183.

of Commons, many of whose members lived on bribery and corruption, and did not like such subjects to be aired publicly, pronounced Dr. Musgrave's allegations to be in the highest degree "frivolous, and unworthy of credit, and such as could not afford any reasonable foundation for prosecuting an inquiry."

The doctor had asserted, among other things, that if D'Eon had been persecuted by Count de Guerchy, and so many efforts had been made to seize his papers, it was solely because these papers contained proof of the bribery in question. That D'Eon could have thrown much light on the matter there can be no doubt. However, in all his public communications he invariably declared that there had been no bribery whatever. In an open letter to Dr. Musgrave he ridiculed the whole business, asserting that he had never made overtures to anybody, and that if money had passed in connection with the treaty, it had been given rather by England to France, than by France to England. And yet, whilst the Chevalier was circulating this public statement, he was secretly writing to Broglie and soliciting and obtaining Louis XV.'s approval of the course he had adopted; and this circumstance makes the whole affair suspicious.

Early in 1767 we find D'Eon revealing to the Prince de Masserano, Spanish ambassador in London, an alleged discovery he has made that Great Britain intends to send expeditions

to Mexico and Peru, and this discovery he also imparts to Count de Broglie, who has some correspondence about it with Louis XV. The latter, however, writes to his "pocket vizier":[1] "You know that D'Eon is a madman, and perhaps a dangerous one. . . . Certainly in England he is recognized as such, and cannot be of any use to the English, except to afford them some amusement, and enable them to make fun of M. de Guerchy. I do not know what instructions M. de Fuentes [Spanish ambassador in France] has received, or expects to receive, concerning him. At all events, all that I promised him must be performed, but nothing more. I have a deadly hatred to madmen." Louis remembered Damiens.

From this note one may surmise that D'Eon had solicited some reward for his so-called discovery, and that the King was not disposed to grant him anything beyond the stipulated pension. According to D'Eon this pension was always in arrear, but Broglie maintained that the Chevalier was ever dunning him with bills for "expenses" and requests for remittances "on account."

When Wilkes returned to England at the dissolution of Parliament in March, 1768, and was elected a member for Middlesex, D'Eon, through his friend Cotes, became personally acquainted with the popular agitator, and sent

[1] Broglie was now sole head of the Secret Service, Tercier having died in January, 1767.

him on his birthday a dozen smoked tongues, which he would have liked to endow, he said, "with the eloquence of Cicero and the nicety of speech of Voltaire, in order that they might laud him worthily on the anniversary of his birth, which in the future would ever be regarded as that of English liberty."[1] Writing to Broglie about this time, the Chevalier asserted that Wilkes and the English Liberals were bent upon overthrowing the House of Hanover—he had the information, he said, from Wilkes himself—and he was anxious to join in the intrigue, but Louis XV. would have none of it. He returned the Chevalier's note to Broglie, after writing on the margin: "D'Eon must not be employed anywhere."[2]

From time to time efforts were still made to recover the papers which the Chevalier had confided to Humphrey Cotes, and in May, 1768, the Baron de Breteuil came to London and negotiated with D'Eon for the surrender of certain documents—possibly some of those connected with the invasion scheme, for Choiseul himself now wished to effect a descent on our shores, and the secret plans of Broglie and La Rozière were being officially utilized and perfected. A certain Colonel Grant of Blairfindy recommended Deal as a landing-place, and the Baron de Béville, after surveying various roads to London, suggested that the invading force should cross the Medway at Tunbridge,

[1] Telfer, p. 206. [2] Broglie, vol. ii. p. 552.

and march on the capital by way of Sevenoaks, Bromley, and Lewisham.[1] D'Eon does not appear to have had any knowledge of these reports; indeed, although he corresponded regularly with Broglie, he was no longer kept informed of the more important of the royal designs. Some of his biographers have asserted the contrary, but can adduce nothing in support of their contention except the Chevalier's own bombastic statements.

For some years D'Eon occupied himself in writing a number of essays on political, administrative, and financial subjects, and these he ultimately issued in thirteen volumes, under the title of "Les Loisirs du Chevalier d'Eon."[2] His London abode was now in Petty France, Westminster, and during the summer he mainly resided at Staunton Harold, in Leicestershire, the seat of Washington, Earl Ferrers, to whom,

[1] The Earl of Chatham's private MSS. Lord Mahon tells us that a number of documents bearing on Louis XV.'s secret schemes were discovered among Lord Chatham's papers after his death, but there was nothing to show how they had come into his possession.

[2] He dedicated this work to Choiseul, whom he imagined to be his friend, and to whom, on his fall from power in 1770, he wrote a respectful letter of sympathy. But Choiseul, though he had many opportunities to assist D'Eon, never once did so; and the Chevalier's illusions respecting him would supply proof, were it wanted, of the extraordinary manner in which Louis XV.'s famous minister acquired the gratitude and sympathy of even those whom he intrigued to destroy. It is certain that Praslin would never have acted as he did towards D'Eon had he not been privately assured of his cousin Choiseul's support.

in or about 1770, he confided the custody of his papers. This Lord Ferrers had succeeded to the title after the execution of his brother Laurence, who, although insane, was sentenced to death for shooting his land-steward, and hanged in his wedding suit at Tyburn, the scaffold and gallows being draped with black baize for the occasion. D'Eon's friend, Washington, Earl Ferrers, had long served in the navy, and had risen to the rank of Vice-Admiral of the Blue. In 1761 he was elected a member of the Royal Society for his accurate observations of the transit of Venus over the sun, and in his later years he occupied himself largely with scientific problems of a mathematical nature. Fanny Burney, who occasionally met him, tells us in her diary that he was very ugly, but extremely well-bred, gentle, unassuming, sensible, and pleasing. It was no doubt the society of this studious nobleman that inclined D'Eon to seek solace in literature. At Staunton Harold, we are told, he would work for fifteen hours a day, and refuse to receive visitors excepting on Sundays.[1]

Although prolix, the Chevalier was not an unpleasant writer. He excelled in introducing witty remarks into essays and despatches on the driest subjects. His conversational powers also were of no mean order. He possessed a large fund of anecdote and was very expert at repartee, and his voice, soft and feminine,

[1] Telfer.

would have been perfect but for that *accent du terroir* of which the born Burgundian can seldom rid himself. His manners in society, we are told, were very engaging, and, as a man who has been persecuted is always an object of interest to the fair sex, he might no doubt have married advantageously. One who knew him well at the period we are now dealing with (1769-1770) informed John Taylor, the author of "Monsieur Tonson," that "several ladies of good family and with large fortunes had made overtures to the Chevalier at their country seats where he visited; but that upon all such occasions he had immediately left the house." [1]

It was inferred by some that he adopted this course because he was altogether unable to respond to the overtures thus made to him, being, in fact, not a man but a woman. The report which La Dufour had carried to Paris had come back to London greatly amplified. To use a familiar quotation, all who repeated it

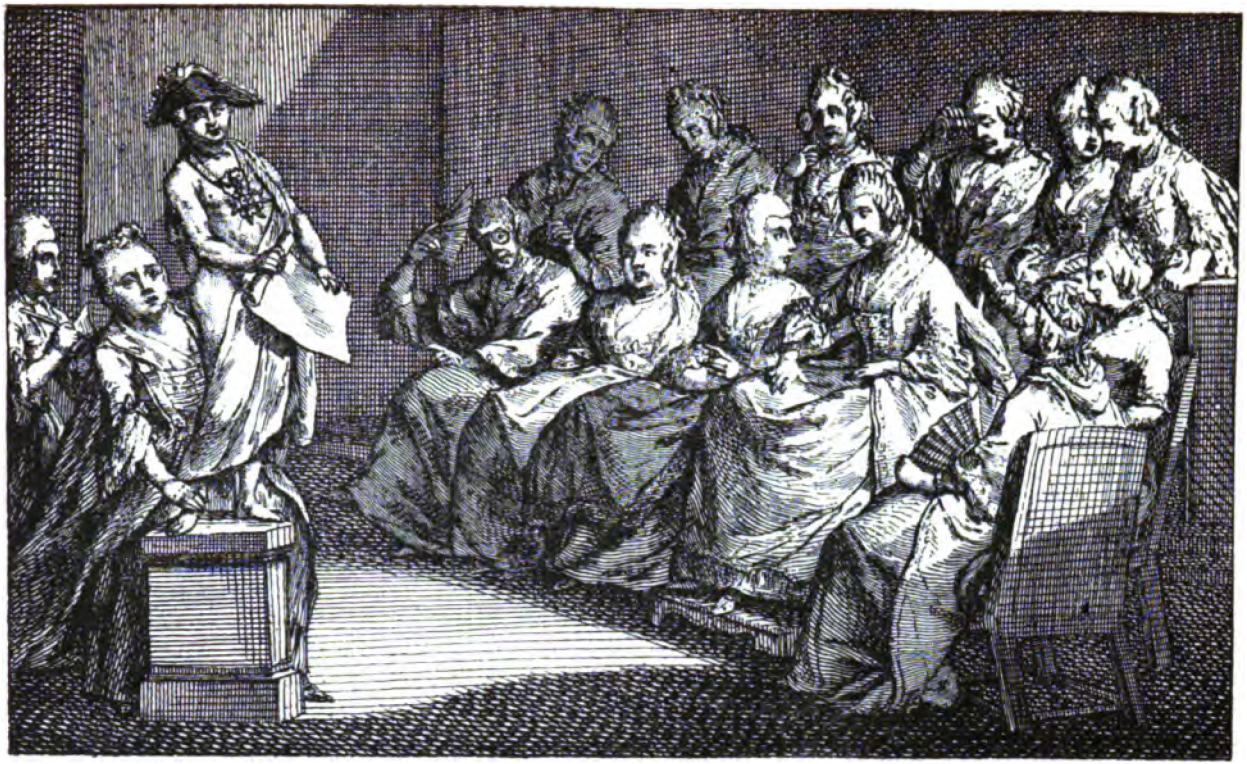
> "added something new,
> While they who heard it made enlargement too;
> In every ear it spread, on every tongue it grew."

Goudard, one of the scurrilous pamphleteers in Guerchy's employ, had already, in 1764, cast doubts upon the Chevalier's sex, and now the Count du Châtelet, who succeeded Durand as French envoy in England, expressed his

[1] Telfer, p. 210.

positive conviction that D'Eon was a female. The truth of this assertion seemed the more probable on account of the chaste life which the Chevalier led in an age of almost universal licence. That the matter should have become the subject of general conversation and speculation is not surprising. In those days in great houses the chaplain was expected to retire after dinner at the same time as the ladies, when the most indelicate subjects would be freely broached by the gentlemen whilst they sat over their "Florence" and their "Portugal." Moreover, the ladies themselves were too often lacking in moral refinement.

D'Eon's sex having gradually become a topic of discussion, it was only natural that it should furnish a motive for wagering. All disputed matters, or, indeed, anything in any degree doubtful, then supplied an occasion for bets. Books used to lie on a table at White's Club expressly for the purpose of entering wagers, records of which on almost every conceivable subject will be found in such of them as still exist—bets on marriages, births, and deaths, on a man's eating and drinking powers, his weight, height, or girth, the duration of a ministry, the chances of an election, the likelihood of peace or war, victory or defeat, the probability of a rascal being punished, the possibility of an earthquake, and the length of time that a plunger might take to run through his fortune. Here, too, was laid that amusing



THE TRIAL OF THE CHEVALIER D'EON BY A JURY OF MATRONS.

[*From a caricature of the period.*

wager that the first baronet to be hanged would be Sir William Burdett, and also the somewhat indelicate one that a certain young bride of high rank would give birth to a live child long before another who had been married some three months previously. One day, as Horace Walpole tells us, in an anecdote so well known as scarcely to bear repetition, a man dropped down in a fit at the door of White's, whereupon bets were eagerly made as to whether he were dead or not, and when a surgeon was going to bleed the poor fellow in the hope of restoring him, "the wagerers for his death interposed, and said it would affect the fairness of the bets."

Matters were much the same at other clubs and coffee-houses—at Almack's, which took the *pas* of White's, and where the young bloods of the age lost their five, ten, and fifteen thousand pounds of an evening—at Brook's, from which Mr. Thynne retired in disgust at having only won twelve thousand guineas "during the last two months"—at the new Thatched House Tavern, the headquarters of the Dilettanti Society, where the nominal qualification was to have visited Italy, and the real one to be perpetually intoxicated. Indeed, the passion for gambling pervaded all classes of society. State lotteries then flourished as a source of the national revenue, yielding their £260,000 nett profit per annum; great ladies, following their husbands' example, would win or lose several

thousand guineas at a single sitting at loo; and every few months or so some young sprig of nobility had to sell a portion of his lands, or fell his ancient trees, to discharge his debts of honour. As Lord Lyttleton put it, many a fine old English oak was in those days shaken down by the rattle of a dice-box at White's. Then, too, among the popular classes there was heavy and wellnigh universal wagering on all sorts of occasions—as when a gentleman engaged to jump dressed into water seven feet deep, and there entirely unclothe himself without sinking, or when a lady undertook to ride a thousand miles in a thousand hours, or a donkey was backed to walk a tenth part of that distance within the compass of a sidereal day. Such being the natural inclination, it followed, virtually as a matter of course, that the rumours respecting D'Eon's sex should give rise to gambling. All who had any knowledge of him were plied with questions by would-be wagerers; and early in 1770 some speculators actually began to issue gambling "policies of insurance on the sex of Monsieur le Chevalier d'Eon!"

About this time the Princess Dashkoff arrived on a visit to England, and though she led a somewhat retired life during her stay in London, "remaining," so her memoirs say, "mainly in the society of Mrs. Morgan and the Countess Pouschkin, abstaining from going to Court, and making but few acquaintances," still she

may well have been questioned about D'Eon, as the latter indeed alleges. Walpole, who met the Princess one evening at Northumberland House, and who describes her as being



THE CHEVALIER D'EON IN HIS UNIFORM.

not at all ugly for a Tartar, and as having a pleasing smile, a pretty voice, but "a very Catiline fierceness" in her eyes, certainly makes no allusion to her in connection with the Chevalier. However, we can well believe, as is asserted, that the strange reports of D'Eon

which were spreading through London came to her ears, and she not unlikely mentioned that at St. Petersburg he had acquired the reputation of leading the chaste life of a young girl. That she cannot have made the precise statement which the partisans of the Lia de Beaumont legend attribute to her, has been previously shown.[1] Whatever she did say, however, was doubtless enlarged upon, and served to confirm the growing suspicion that D'Eon was a woman. And not merely a woman, but a bearded one—a fit subject, in fact, for the show of some Barnum of the time; for a contemporary observer tells us that, at this period, the Chevalier had a rather effeminate countenance, blue eyes, small features, and a pale complexion with a dark beard! We also learn that he wore a wig and cue, that he invariably appeared in the uniform of an officer of dragoons—red, with pea-green lapels—that he was about five feet seven inches in height, and of a somewhat stoutish build.[2]

D'Eon himself expressed great indignation at the reports in circulation, caned two or three of the insurance speculators, and threatened several others. Thereupon some of the wagerers evinced a disposition to kidnap him,[3] and early

[1] See *ante*, p. 51 *et seq.*

[2] Henry Angelo's "Reminiscences," etc., London, 1828, vol. ii. p. 53.

[3] Kidnapping was much practised in those days. Youths were constantly being seized and sold to the captains of merchantmen trading with America, and at the end of their

in May, 1771, by the advice of friends, he hurriedly left London. His disappearance gave rise to all sorts of conjectures. Some people thought that he had been carried off to France and lodged in the Bastille, while others imagined that he was dead. In reality, however, he was simply travelling through the North of England and part of Scotland, observing men and things; and six weeks later he was back in town again, when, finding that the "insurance" mania was still in full force, he made an affidavit testifying that he was in no wise concerned in the policies that were being effected, and would never enter into negotiations with anybody to judicially prove his sex.

This, however, only added fuel to the flames. Had D'Eon formally declared himself to be either man or woman the wagering might possibly have ceased, but his reserve seemed to increase the mystery, and so the gambling went on with more ardour than ever. In spite of his indignant protests, it is quite possible—given the great vanity and rampant craving for notoriety which had sprung up within him of recent

voyage found themselves again disposed of for a series of years to planters in Pennsylvania, Virginia, and other North American colonies, where their condition of bondage has been feelingly related in the familiar "Adventures of an Unfortunate Young Nobleman." Moreover, the East India Company, with the object of recruiting its forces, maintained organized parties of kidnappers and dépôts in various parts of London; and in addition there were the official pressgangs, which carried off men and boys for the royal navy.

years—that he was secretly pleased to find himself a subject of conversation from one to the other end of London, and was consequently unwilling to say or do anything calculated to put an end to all the chatter. Although large sums were offered to him to reveal the truth, he steadfastly declined every proposal, and this at a time when he was hard pressed for money, his pension, according to his own account, never being paid to him with any degree of regularity.

Early in 1772 Stanislas Poniatowski, King of Poland, who had known the Chevalier at St. Petersburg, offered him an asylum and employment at Warsaw, but Louis XV., to whom the matter was referred through Broglie, summarily refused his consent. D'Eon would have lost his pension had he gone to Warsaw contrary to the decision of his royal master, and so he was forced to remain in England, where Louis XV. doubtless considered a better watch could be kept upon his person and the papers which he still retained. The royal refusal, as it happened, proved of no particular disadvantage to D'Eon, for Stanislas's kingdom at this time was on the very eve of dismemberment.

Broglie's secretary, Drouet, who came to England with Louis XV.'s reply on the subject, carried back with him to Tercier a report that the Chevalier was indeed a female.[1] Both

[1] A letter from Broglie to Louis XV. under date May, 1772, giving detailed particulars derived from Drouet, but

Broglie and the King were greatly surprised to learn this—as is evident from their correspondence, which conclusively disposes of all assertions that either of them had previously supposed D'Eon to be a woman. Broglie's astonishment was naturally the greater, since the Chevalier, writing to him in the previous year with reference to the insurance policies, had with a great show of frankness declared he was a man, but of a most dispassionate temperament, for which reason his friends in their innocence, and his enemies in their malice, had conceived that he was a female.[1]

What with financial and other worries, having ceded, he says, all his remaining patrimony to his mother, and having pensioned his old nurse, afflicted too with nostalgia, a malady as prevalent among the French as among the Swiss, D'Eon now longed to return to his own country, and negotiations with that object were opened with the Duke d'Aiguillon, who in 1770 had become Choiseul's successor as chief minister. However, D'Eon's applications received little attention, owing no doubt to the important events of the time. The first partition of Poland was carried out, and Louis XV. had barely recovered from this discomfiture when the indiscreet conduct of Colonel, afterwards General Dumouriez, and

quite unfit for publication, is in the Archives des Affaires Etrangères.

[1] Affaires Etrangères.—D'Eon to Broglie (under cover to M. Koppfing, banker), May 7, 1771.

other confidential agents once more placed the royal secret in jeopardy. Another farce now had to be acted at the Bastille, with the connivance of M. de Sartines, in order that the precious secret—known by this time to so many people that, to employ a French expression, it was verily the *secret de Polichinelle*—might not be publicly revealed. The King was wellnigh distracted, and, being in constant dread of the indiscretions of his secret agents, felt by no means inclined to allow D'Eon, who had so constantly threatened revelations, to return in peace to France. Then, too, Broglie, who might have been inclined to help the Chevalier in the matter, again fell into disgrace, and was exiled anew to his estates. Soon afterwards, moreover, fresh alarms beset the King, for Madame Dubarry proved even more inquisitive than Madame de Pompadour, and was ever prying and spying into her royal lover's private affairs.

At last, from a totally unexpected source, Louis XV., to his utter amazement, obtained positive proof that most, if not all, of his private schemes were discovered. This proof was supplied to him by a personage endowed with but little perspicuity—the notorious Cardinal de Rohan, who subsequently figured so prominently in the great Diamond Necklace scandal. Rohan at the period now being referred to was French Ambassador at Vienna, and the story of his discovery as chronicled in the memoirs of his secretary, Abbé Georgel, is a strangely melodramatic one.

"On returning one evening to the French Embassy at Vienna," says the Abbé, "the porter gave me a note carefully sealed up and addressed to me. I read in it as follows: 'Be to-night between eleven and twelve at a particular place on the ramparts, and you will be informed of matters of the very highest importance.' An anonymous note of this tenor, sent so mysteriously, and the unseasonable hour appointed, might have appeared to some persons altogether dangerous and suspicious. But I was not aware that I had any enemies, and desirous not to have to reproach myself with having missed an opportunity of furthering the King's interests such as might never occur again, I resolved to attend at the appointed place. But I took some prudential precautions by placing within a certain distance, where they could not be seen, two persons upon whom I could rely, in order that they might come to my assistance upon a preconcerted signal. At the meeting-place I found a man wrapped in a cloak and masked. He placed some papers in my hands, and in a low, feigned voice, said to me: 'You have my confidence. I will therefore contribute to the success of Monsieur le Prince de Rohan's embassy. These papers will inform you of the very essential services which it is in my power to render you. If you approve of them, come again to-morrow to—another place which he mentioned—and bring me a thousand ducats.' Upon my return to the French Embassy I

hastened to examine the papers confided to me. Their contents gave me the most agreeable surprise. I saw that we had it in our power to procure twice a week copies of all the discoveries made by the secret cabinet [Cabinet Noir] of Vienna, which was the best served in Europe. This cabinet possessed in the highest degree the art of rapidly deciphering the despatches of the foreign ambassadors and of the governments with which they corresponded. By the deciphering of many of our own despatches, and those of our Court to us—even those written in the newest and most complicated ciphers—I became convinced that this cabinet had managed to intercept and copy the despatches of several European Courts, through the treachery and audacity of the frontier superintendents and postmasters, bribed for that purpose."

Georgel then relates that, after convincing himself of the authenticity of the documents handed to him, he laid them before the Prince de Rohan, who recognized all the importance of the discovery. "On the following night," continues the Abbé, "I met the masked man and gave him the thousand ducats, when he handed to me other papers of increasing interest, and throughout my stay at Vienna he faithfully kept to his promises. Our meetings took place twice a week, and always about midnight." [1]

[1] "Mémoires pour servir à l'Histoire des Evénements de la fin du XVIII[e] Siècle," by Abbé Georgel, vol. i. pp. 269, 270.

The documents which thus came into the Prince de Rohan's possession comprised not only copies of official despatches, but also copies of the Count de Broglie's most secret memoranda, and of reports from the secret agents at Stockholm, St. Petersburg, Berlin, and elsewhere. Further, the ambassador discovered that the work of interception was principally carried on at Liége, Brussels, Frankfort, and Ratisbon, where copies of all foreign despatches were taken and forwarded to what was styled the "Cabinet of Decipherers," a secret department of the Imperial postal service, managed by Baron Peckler.[1] According to Georgel, as soon as an old secretary of the French embassy had transcribed the papers communicated by the masked man, the latter received them back, and the new copies were sent on to Versailles by a courier extraordinary, "who was ordered not to go to bed on his way, and to carry the special packet of secret despatches about his person to the very end of his journey." So far as the official correspondence was concerned, the discoveries made by Rohan were communicated to the Duke d'Aiguillon; but the copies of the secret papers were forwarded to the King direct. Georgel himself is not explicit on this point, but it is abundantly proved by documents now in the Archives of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs — documents which largely

[1] "Mémoires historiques et politiques du règne de Louis XVI.," by Abbé Soulavie, vol. iii. p. 277 *et seq.*

corroborate the Abbé's narrative, though they contain no reference to any masked stranger wrapped in a cloak.

The astonishment of Louis XV. on receiving these copies of the reports of his secret agents may well be imagined. That Rohan was playing no trick upon him was proved by the arrival of subsequent batches of similar documents; and it soon became evident that Maria Theresa and Kaunitz were kept fully informed of the most private thoughts and intentions of the King of France. On the other hand, however, through the Austrian ambassador at Versailles, who like the rest of his fraternity had a whole host of traitorous officials in his pay, the Court of Vienna got scent of what was going on. Thereupon "Kaunitz, suspecting that the treachery was perpetrated in his office, had the locks of his cabinet changed, and made a point of intrusting all the more important despatches to none but his private secretary. He even went the length of having one of his clerks, of whom he entertained some suspicion, drowned in the Danube; but all was of no avail—the masked man, according to Abbé Georgel, redoubled his zeal at each succeeding interview."[1]

With the secret discovered—which such pains had been taken to keep concealed—it was fitting that the Well-Beloved himself should disappear. Early in 1774 an epidemic

[1] "The Story of the Diamond Necklace," by Henry Vizetelly. 3rd Edition, revised. London, 1880, p. 70.

of smallpox penetrated into the palace of Versailles, infecting, we are told, forty or fifty of its inmates. On April 28, as the King returned from hunting, he experienced the first symptoms of the malady, which soon prostrated him; and twelve days later, the Duke de Villequier, first gentleman of the chamber, stepped on to the balcony overlooking the marble court of the palace and pronounced the traditional words: "The King is dead!" Then, after breaking his wand of office, he took a new one, and cried aloud: "Long live the King!"

In Georgel's words, the Well-Beloved had "made the *amende honorable* to God;" and the sceptre of France and Navarre had passed into the feeble hands of Louis XVI.



XII.

MAY, 1774—OCTOBER, 1775.

The Secret Agents are pensioned off—Captain de Prunevaux negotiates with D'Eon—The Chevalier's extravagant Demands—Vergy's deathbed Deposition—Captain de Pommereul tries to bring D'Eon to reason—An Offer of Marriage for the Chevalier—Theveneau de Morande and his Libels—The spurious Memoirs of Madame Dubarry—D'Eon meets Beaumarchais, who espouses his Cause—His Papers held by Earl Ferrers for £5,333—The Iron Chest and its Key—D'Eon owns that he is a Woman!—Consequences of this Confession—D'Eon still bitter against the Guerchys—How Beaumarchais paid Earl Ferrers, and how he found himself tricked—The Secret Papers hidden under the Floor.

LOUIS XV.'s death placed Broglie in a position of some perplexity. However, after a little hesitation, he forwarded full explanations concerning the secret diplomacy to his new sovereign. The young King, who was by no means disposed to follow the mysterious and tortuous courses of his predecessor, at once decided to pension off the agents who for many years had been aiding and abetting the royal intrigues. Broglie's

duties came to an end, and he obtained permission to return to Court, where he placed himself in communication with the Count de Vergennes, who succeeded the Duke d'Aiguillon as Foreign Secretary, and who, curiously enough, had himself been one of the secret agents ever since 1755, when appointed ambassador at Constantinople. It was easy to satisfy most of those who had been mixed up in Louis XV.'s private foreign correspondence. General Mokranowski, who had played a prominent part in supporting French interests in Poland, secured 20,000 livres per annum; while La Rozière, Durand, and others were each awarded pensions of 6,000 livres, and Drouet obtained one of 1,100 as compensation for his brief sojourn in the Bastille. At last D'Eon alone remained to be dealt with, and this was a matter of some difficulty.

He forwarded an appeal to Broglie, setting forth his various official and secret services, but the Count in a lengthy memoir had already urged upon the King the necessity of coming to terms with him. Broglie had moreover mentioned in this memoir that the Chevalier was in reality a female—a revelation which must have somewhat shocked Louis XVI., who, whatever his faults, was certainly a pattern of propriety.

Possibly the King had his doubts respecting the truth of Broglie's assertion; at all events, he did not at first insist upon D'Eon assuming the

garments of the female sex in return for any allowance which might be granted to him. In fact, Captain the Marquis de Prunevaux—a friend of Vergennes and a relative of the Duke de Nivernais—who was despatched to London to open negotiations, took with him a letter from Broglie promising the Chevalier an annuity of 12,000 livres, the restoration of his military rank, the withdrawal of all charges pending against him, and a safe conduct to return to France, provided that he would surrender all the secret and official documents he held, and pledge his word of honour never to rake up his contentions with Guerchy and Praslin and to avoid all places where he might be liable to meet the Countess de Guerchy and her children.

With these proposals Prunevaux arrived in London in September, 1774, and found D'Eon in anything but a conciliatory mood. The Chevalier demanded an inquiry in order that he might be absolved from all the imputations levelled against him by Guerchy and Praslin; a temporary re-establishment in his post of minister plenipotentiary, and payment of a sum of £13,933 in discharge of all salaries and indemnities due to him during the past twenty-one years. In the above amount were included, first, "a sum of £1,000 which the King of England was in the habit of according, on their departure, to all foreign ministers with whom he was satisfied, and which M. de

is said to have amounted to £75,000. The first action, however—brought by a surgeon named Hayes against a broker and underwriter of the name of Jacques—was only to recover 700 guineas. Jacques, it appeared, had received premiums of 15 guineas per cent., for each of which he stood engaged to return 100 guineas provided it were proved that D'Eon was actually a woman. The trial resulted at first in a verdict for the plaintiff, who produced as one witness a surgeon named Le Goux, who swore that "of his certain knowledge D'Eon was a woman, as he had attended her in sickness and had examined her person." This statement was corroborated in the witness box by Théveneau de Morande, who with unblushing effrontery asserted himself to be well acquainted with the fact that D'Eon was of the female sex. However, the jury's verdict was set aside on the defendant pleading an Act of Parliament which provided that "no insurance should be valid unless the person insuring could prove an antecedent interest in the person or thing insured." This of course destroyed the hopes of all the policy-holders. D'Eon had vainly requested a postponement of this trial until her return from France, and as she "had abstained from taking any part in the proceedings, it was bruited about that such discretion was to be rewarded with a bonus of £20,000."[1] The rumour, however, was entirely false.

[1] Telfer, pp. 285-7.

At this juncture the Chevalière was busy negotiating with her creditors in order to obtain their sanction to her departure from England. It will be recollected that Beaumarchais had paid Earl Ferrers a sum of £4,625 on account of the debt alleged to be due to him, Ferrers having lent himself to this imposition, ostensibly with the object of obliging D'Eon, but not without an eye to his own advantage. His Lordship was a poor man for a peer, his estates being largely encumbered, and his pet hobby was the rebuilding of Staunton Harold after his own designs. To this purpose and to other schemes, such as the working of a lead-mine and a lime-pit, he devoted £3,000 of the money obtained from Beaumarchais, employing the balance to discharge a few of D'Eon's more pressing liabilities, and advancing her from time to time a hundred guineas or so for her immediate requirements. D'Eon, however, began pressing for the bulk of the money, and eventually the Earl was obliged to confess that he had used it for his own purposes.

One may well imagine the Chevalière's feelings at such unexpected news. In this respect, also, she had hoped to trick Beaumarchais, but found herself tricked instead. To Earl Ferrers' credit, it may be mentioned, he readily offered his bond for the money; and on being attacked very seriously with gout in the lungs, and fearing he might die, he executed the document

an abatement of the indemnity demanded. D'Eon expressed his willingness to accept about £10,000 in satisfaction of his claims, and praised himself for his moderation, "gold being but a means, and not the object of lofty souls." However, £10,000 was more than the French government was inclined to give, and Pommereul betook himself back to Versailles, after favouring D'Eon, whom he fully believed to be a woman, with a declaration of love and an offer of marriage! The Chevalier, it may be noted, was at this time over forty-six years of age; and it is difficult to imagine that Pommereul was captivated by the charms of a bearded old maid addicted to tobacco and conviviality. It is far more likely that he expected his government would end by paying D'Eon a considerable indemnity, and, being poor, had the money rather than the wife in his mind when he made his matrimonial offer.

has some little importance, for Captain de Pommereul, whatever his behaviour with regard to D'Eon, became not only a distinguished officer but an able military historian, whose works are still consulted. Born at Fougères in 1745, François René Jean de Pommereul entered the artillery service when very young, but did not rise to any considerable rank till the downfall of the monarchy, when he became a general of division. Subsequently he entered the civil service, was appointed prefect of various departments, and under Napoleon I. rose to be a Councillor of State and director-general of the French press. He died in 1823. Among his numerous writings, the most important are probably his "History of Corsica" (1779) and his "Campaign of General Buonaparte in Italy" (1797).

In order that the reader may the better understand what followed, it is advisable that we should now slightly retrace our steps. At this period of the eighteenth century a particularly notorious member of the French colony in London was a certain Charles Theveneau, who called himself the Chevalier de Morande, and was the son of a notary of Arnay-le-Duc in Burgundy. Theveneau, or Morande, to give him the name by which he is more generally known, had long led a disreputable life. For a short time he had served in the Beauffremont Dragoons, but his principal source of subsistence had been the levying of blackmail on some of the semi-historical Magdalens of the period. On one occasion he had been sent to prison for stealing a gold snuff-box from a Paris brothel. He claimed to be a man of letters, and it is certain that he possessed a genuine literary gift, of which he availed himself to attack, both in prose and verse, a large number of more or less notable personages. An ode directed against M. de St. Florentin, the great dispenser of *lettres-de-cachet*, compelled him in 1769 to flee from Paris, and after betaking himself in turn to Liége, Brussels, and Ostend, he ultimately came to London. Here, in 1771, he issued, at the price of a guinea a copy, a production called the "Gazetier Cuirassé," a collection of odious and obscene anecdotes, in which Louis XV., Madame Dubarry, Chancellor Maupéou,

the Dukes de Praslin, de La Vrillière, d'Aiguillon, and de La Vauguyon, the Marquis de Villette, the Abbé Terray, and others, freely figured. This scurrilous publication proved very successful from a pecuniary point of view, and, what is more, it brought Morande into great notoriety. Thus encouraged, he resolved to look to the art of libel for a permanent livelihood. But his next move was really a disastrous one, for having penned a ribald diatribe against the Count de Lauraguais, who had come over to London, he received a severe thrashing from that high-spirited if eccentric nobleman, and was further cited before the King's Bench, when it was only by tendering the most abject apologies that he saved himself from the pillory. Morande then realized that he must content himself with assailing the absent, and with the object of extorting as large a sum of money as possible he resolved that the next victim of his venomous pen should be none other than the royal favourite, Madame Dubarry. And he decided that he would not merely dish up a few more or less lying anecdotes about "Cotillon III.," as he had done in the "Gazetier Cuirassé," but would devote an entire volume to her, relate her history from her birth onwards, and entitle it "Mémoires secrets d'une Femme Publique, avec gravures."[1]

[1] "Theveneau de Morande," by Paul Robiquet, Paris, 1882.

When Morande's design became known at Versailles, the favourite and those who upheld her were in consternation. The affair reached the ears of Louis XV., who at once consulted Count de Broglie. Under date July 6, 1773, Broglie wrote to D'Eon for information, and D'Eon replied that he was acquainted with Morande, who, claiming to be a fellow-Burgundian and a family friend, had sought his society on arriving in London. For the rest, it appeared that Morande, being in need of cash, was prepared to suppress his projected libel provided he were paid a sum of 800 guineas. On August 26, however, Broglie again wrote to D'Eon, telling him to suspend all negotiations and to content himself with keeping an eye on Morande and his writings. Count Dubarry, it appeared, was making other arrangements, with a view to suppressing, not only the intended lampoon, but the lampooner himself. Through the Count, a certain M. de Champreux, a retired officer, had offered to abduct Morande, provided a vessel, four men, and 1,600 livres were placed at his disposal. In the event of success Champreux was to receive as his reward a sum of 4,000 livres and a captain's brevet.

Strange as it may seem, this proposal was actually debated at the royal council. However, preference was given to a suggestion to send a party of the best Paris police spies to London. These men arrived there towards

the close of the year, and made various attempts to kidnap Morande; but he, who had been warned of their intentions, completely hoodwinked them, contriving, in fact, to borrow money from some of them, and afterwards addressing an indignant letter of protest to the London newspapers, in which he stigmatized the attempt to abduct him as an "abominable outrage to British hospitality." Meantime, a great many copies of the pretended memoirs of Madame Dubarry were printed, and Morande impudently wrote to Chancellor Maupéou and the favourite announcing their approaching issue.

There now stepped upon the scene one of the wittiest and most adroit intriguers of that or any age. Pierre Augustin Caron de Beaumarchais, clockmaker, dramatic author, merchant, secret agent, and what not besides, had gone into hiding in consequence of the judgment of the Paris Parliament in his lawsuit with Counsellor Goezmann. La Borde, Louis XV.'s valet-de-chambre, who had furnished him with an asylum, acquainted him with the Morande business, and, anxious to gain the royal support in his troubles, he offered his services, which were accepted. Repairing to London in March, 1774, under the name of Ronac—an anagram of Caron—he succeeded in negotiating with Morande, who for the suppression of the obnoxious memoirs received, according to Dutens, 32,000 livres in

cash and a pension of 4,000, half of the latter being reversible on his wife. M. de Loménie,



PIERRE AUGUSTIN CARON DE BEAUMARCHAIS.

however, states that the only payment was one of 20,000 livres, that is, virtually, the amount already agreed upon with D'Eon.

It seems that the negotiations were not completed until the very moment when the copies of the libel were ready for customers, a number of them being actually packed in cases addressed to booksellers at Amsterdam, Rouen, Paris, Brussels, etc. All were conveyed, however, to the suburbs of London, where Beaumarchais' friend and biographer, Gudin, saw them consumed in a lime or brick-kiln. Then the pair returned to France, and on landing at Calais learned that Louis XV. was dead.

This prevented Beaumarchais from reaping any particular advantage from his endeavours. However, his success in the matter led to his being sent back to England to negotiate the suppression of a pamphlet on the "Rights of the Spanish Branch of the House of Bourbon to the Throne of France;" and again in April, 1775, he returned thither to deal with a variety of scurrilous publications—libellous caricatures, sundry writings of a certain Vignoles, an apostate Premontré monk whom D'Eon employed as his legal adviser, and a work on French manners and morals by a woman named Campagnol, who called herself Madame de Vernancourt.

And now it was that Beaumarchais came in contact with D'Eon. He had already tried to see him on the occasion of his first trip, but had failed. There are conflicting accounts of the manner in which the pair eventually came

together—one version being that D'Eon, at the end of his tether, sorely distressed by the failure of his attempts with Pommereul and Prunevaux, sought out Beaumarchais and entreated his mediation; whilst the other, D'Eon's account of the affair, is that Morande brought Beaumarchais to his house. At all events they became acquainted; and D'Eon is probably correct when he says that they were mutually influenced "by a curiosity natural to all extraordinary animals to meet one another." There is no independent testimony to show whether the Chevalier's assertion—that Beaumarchais, ever disposed to fish in troubled waters, at once offered him his services—is true; but, on the other hand, Beaumarchais' contention that it was D'Eon, "a poor, lonely, impoverished old maid," who besought his assistance, is equally unsupported. In either case, Beaumarchais speedily interested himself in his new friend's affairs, and D'Eon on his side admits that "like a drowning man he clung to Caron's boat as he might to a red-hot bar of iron."

It is, moreover, at least certain that the Chevalier, having failed to negotiate with Prunevaux and Pommereul, now virtually despaired of effecting any satisfactory arrangement with the French Court; and Louis XV. being dead, and long years having elapsed since the scheme for invading England had been first devised, he was less able to bluster and threaten; for he must have realized that the papers he

held had, through lapse of time, lost much of their importance and value. This, by the way, was the private opinion of both Louis XVI. and M. de Vergennes.

However, Beaumarchais, having interested himself in the matter, began by appealing to the King and his minister by letter, and afterwards repaired to Versailles in person. In the course of a few months, while the negotiations were progressing, he made several such journeys to France—partially in connection with the affairs of the American colonists, in which he was concerning himself, but largely for the purpose of reporting what he had achieved in the D'Eon business, and of obtaining further instructions on it. All the details of the affair are set forth in the interminable letters which he exchanged with the Chevalier—letters in which we see each of these accomplished schemers sedulously striving to outwit the other. At last D'Eon, finding that he could not obtain the large pecuniary indemnity which he had originally demanded, artfully declared that he owed Lord Ferrers £5,333—the amount of several loans made to him—and that his Lordship held all his papers as security for this money, which must of necessity be refunded before the documents could be restored. Beaumarchais, however, who may well have doubted the truth of this assertion, was not inclined to move in the matter without some proof of the Chevalier's *bona fides;* and

ultimately the latter handed him a key, which, he said, opened an iron chest containing the papers. This key was triumphantly carried to Versailles by Beaumarchais, who thereupon secured full powers to treat with D'Eon.

Passages in some of the letters written by the Chevalier indicate that he had confessed to his new friend, almost at the outset, that he was in reality a woman; and Beaumarchais expatiated on this circumstance in his communications to the French government. Morande also expressed his conviction that D'Eon was of the female sex, and Gudin, who Boswell-like again accompanied his illustrious friend Beaumarchais to London, relates that he "met that interesting woman, Mademoiselle d'Eon, at a dinner given by Lord Mayor Wilkes, when, bursting into tears, she owned to me that she was a female, and showed me her legs covered with the scars of wounds which she had received when, her horse having been shot dead under her, a squadron of cavalry passed over her body, and she was left lying on the field, supposed to be dead."[1]

D'Eon's assertion that he was a woman led to important results, affecting both himself and others. In the first place, it prevented him from insisting any further on his claim to be reinstated as French Minister Plenipotentiary

[1] Gudin's "Mémoires sur Beaumarchais," published by M. Tourneux, Paris, 1884. The wounds referred to were probably received by D'Eon at Ultrop. See *ante*, p. 117.

in London, and, secondly, it caused the French government to insist upon his assuming a woman's garments. It was also calculated to prevent a recurrence of any scandal with the Guerchy family. The late ambassador's son, a promising young fellow, who subsequently sat in the States-General and distinguished himself by his knowledge of economic questions, had repeatedly expressed his desire to avenge his father's wrongs by fighting the individual who had traduced him. But if this individual were a woman, all danger of a duel would disappear; for, however ready D'Eon might be to fight, the young Count could not without risk of ridicule send a challenge to an old maid!

It has been contended that it was this fear of a revival of the Guerchy scandal alone which induced the French government, indifferent as to whether D'Eon were really man or woman, to insist on his assuming female attire. After the Chevalier's own assurances on the subject, Louis XVI. himself doubtless believed him to be a female; indeed, the young King's character altogether precludes the supposition that he knowingly lent himself to any masquerading. But with regard to his ministers the point is somewhat doubtful; for on August 26, 1775, we find Vergennes writing to Beaumarchais: "M. d'Eon's enemies are on the watch, and will not easily forgive him all that he has said about them. If he should come here—however well-conducted and circumspect he may prove—

they may ascribe to him remarks contrary to the silence which the King requires of him; and denegations and justifications are always embarrassing and odious to well-meaning people. *If M. d'Eon would disguise himself* (*se travestir*), *everything would be settled*,[1] but this is a proposal that he alone can make. However, concern for his own peace should induce him to avoid a residence in France, and necessarily in Paris, for some years."

From this letter certain of D'Eon's biographers argue that Vergennes did not believe the Chevalier to be a woman, and only suggested that he should don female attire to avert a scandal with the Guerchys. Otherwise, it is urged, the minister would not have talked of the Chevalier "disguising himself." However, M. de Loménie—who as a master of the French language and a member of the Academy Dictionary committee is entitled to be heard with respect on the subject—has pointed out that the word used by Vergennes, "travestir," may be taken in various senses, and no doubt simply meant that D'Eon should dress as a woman, without implying that he would be masquerading by doing so. Such other letters as we have from Vergennes to Beaumarchais certainly indicate a full belief in D'Eon's femininity, whilst as for Beaumarchais, despite all his acumen, he was evidently convinced that D'Eon was not only a woman, but was also deeply in love with him!

[1] The italics are our own.

On the other hand, whatever may have been Vergennes' *belief* in the matter, it may be granted that, in insisting upon the Chevalier's assumption of female attire, he was mainly desirous of averting any further scandal with the Guerchys. That D'Eon was bent upon embroiling himself with the latter by raking up the old charges is shown by the following declaration, intended for the King, which he handed to Beaumarchais:

"I declare upon my honour that I have several very secret and very important matters to confide to his Majesty, and that they are of such a nature that I will only communicate them to his Majesty in person. I further declare to his Majesty, on my honour and all that is most sacred in this world and the next, that M. le Comte de Guerchy did really have me poisoned at his table on October 28, 1763; that he paid a certain Treyssac de Vergy and others, whom I will name, [first] to murder me, and subsequently to carry off my person and papers; and that I am in a position to prove these facts in the most complete manner, not only before the King's Council, but before whatever tribunal his Majesty may be pleased to appoint.

"THE CHEVALIER D'EON.[1]

"London, July 14, 1775."

It would seem that this declaration never reached Louis XVI., for we find the Chevalier subsequently reproaching Beaumarchais for

[1] Gaillardet, p. 417.

having failed to deliver it to the King; however, there is every probability that it was shown or sent to M. de Vergennes, and influenced him in the course he took. In writing to the minister, Beaumarchais constantly alludes to D'Eon's hatred of the Guerchys—a hatred which time apparently had been powerless to allay. In a letter dated October 7, we find Beaumarchais declaring: "Written promises of good behaviour are not of sufficient force to restrain one whose brain flares up at the mere mention of the name of Guerchy; a positive declaration of sex and an engagement to live for ever after in female attire is the only curb that can prevent a scandal and misfortunes. I insisted upon this, and have succeeded." However, it will presently be seen that D'Eon did everything he could to avoid carrying out this part of the arrangement. No doubt he had confessed that he was a woman solely with the object of enlisting Beaumarchais' sympathy and support, and never anticipating that he would be compelled to discard the attire which he had worn all his life.[1]

[1] In various letters to Beaumarchais, and also in his MS. memoirs in the Archives des Affaires Etrangères, D'Eon asserts that already at the time when he was negotiating for his return to France under Louis XV. (the Duke d'Aiguillon then being foreign minister), he was informed that he would not be allowed to return unless in woman's clothes. However, there is not a scrap of evidence to be found in support of this assertion, which was undoubtedly made by D'Eon in furtherance of his contention that Louis XV. well knew him to be a woman and had employed him as such in his earlier years.

But we must now go back a little. The iron chest containing D'Eon's papers, which Earl Ferrers was supposed to hold as security for loans to the amount of £5,333, was deposited at his Lordship's residence in Upper Seymour Street, Portman Square. Beaumarchais, who had agreed with Vergennes that he would settle the whole affair "on the cheap," disposed of a credit to the amount of £6,000; and, as D'Eon claimed altogether more than double that amount, it was necessary for the author of "Le Barbier de Seville" to bring all his powers of finessing into play. He continued promising and postponing the payment of the amount due to Lord Ferrers until his Lordship, who had waited some time in London, at last went off to Staunton Harold, whither Beaumarchais had to follow him. The artful Caron set out with D'Eon, Gudin, and the Count de Bourbon-Busset, who was then in England, and the journey proved a very pleasant one. The party went out of their way to visit Birmingham and to make a descent into a coal-mine, and complacently admired the beauties of the Midlands as they then were. Gudin took a particular interest in the stretches of "country covered with flocks and herds without keepers or dogs, as in the golden age." "I said to the people," he writes, "'I knew very well that you had no wolves to devour your flocks, but I also find that you have no monks to swindle you out of them, no farmers-general to fleece them for you, no

sub-delegates to loot them, nor intendants to make levies on them.'"[1] How different to the descriptions of rural France which Arthur Young penned a few years subsequently!

Reaching Staunton Harold at last, the party lived like fighting-cocks at Lord Ferrers' expense, Beaumarchais meantime delighting his host and his fellow-guests with the super-abundance of his wit and vivacity, but saying never a word with reference to pecuniary matters. At last, however, when the time for departure came, and the coach was waiting at the door, he turned to Lord Ferrers—as to the landlord of an inn—and carelessly remarked: "Oh! by the way, we have a little account to settle." Then he discovered (what he had been well aware of all along) that he had not sufficient money with him to discharge the whole of Lord Ferrers' claim. However, he handed his Lordship £4,625, and gave his bills for the balance, promising to take them up on his return to London—which of course he never did.

As soon as he was back in the metropolis he went to Morande, a brother of whom was now in his employ, and confided to him the duty of going to Upper Seymour Street and removing the iron chest containing the Chevalier's papers. Earl Ferrers' authorization to this effect had probably been obtained. However, the removal of the chest took place without D'Eon knowing of it; and possibly Beaumarchais had some

[1] Gudin, p. 177.

idea of leaving the poor "demoiselle" in the lurch after securing possession of the documents. Hurrying to Versailles, he there interviewed Vergennes, who ordered him to make an inventory of the papers, but added that this ought to be done in D'Eon's presence. Beaumarchais complied with the minister's instructions, but on opening the chest he found, to his amazement, that it did not contain a scrap of D'Eon's secret correspondence with the Count de Broglie. In lieu thereof he only discovered some of the official documents which the Chevalier, in his wrath at being superseded, had abstracted from the embassy prior to Guerchy's arrival in England. Among them were a copy of the family compact of the House of Bourbon, with the secret conventions attached thereto, the embassy correspondence whilst Nivernais and D'Eon had been in office, and various despatches, letters, instructions, and memoranda from the Dukes de Choiseul and Praslin and the English Foreign Secretaries.

Certainly these papers were important, and yet Beaumarchais was sadly disappointed. He wished to secure the private correspondence of Broglie and Louis XV., the documents concerning the invasion scheme and other matters, and he bitterly complained that D'Eon had tricked him.

The Chevalier laughed, but urged that the documents which his friend had secured were well worth the money paid to Lord Ferrers,

since they comprised all the papers relating to the Peace of Paris; and certainly there was weight in D'Eon's contention if it be true that the English Opposition had again and again offered a much larger sum than £5,000 for authentic information concerning the charges of bribery preferred against prominent statesmen. However, D'Eon confessed that the more precious papers were not in the chest; and, taking Beaumarchais to his apartments in Brewer Street, he removed a board from the floor of his bedroom, and produced five cardboard letter-cases of quarto size, each of which was sealed up and directed: "Secret papers to be given to the King only." Then, the cases having been opened, D'Eon drew up a list of the documents they contained, whilst Beaumarchais affixed his initials to each sheet as he hastily perused it.

Before the Chevalier finally surrendered these papers a very elaborate covenant was agreed upon by him and Beaumarchais, and of this some account must now be given.



XIII.

October, 1775—August, 1777.

Singular Covenant between D'Eon and Beaumarchais—D'Eon's impudent Interpolations—He or She?—D'Eon ordered to resume the Attire of *her* Sex—Narrow Escape of the Secret Papers—Revival of the Gambling Policies—D'Eon's Declaration in the Newspapers and Threat to renounce the World—Quarrel between Beaumarchais and D'Eon—Their Correspondence and rumoured Marriage—Madame de Courcelle and D'Eon's Sex—Exposure of Beaumarchais and Morande—The Breach complete—D'Eon bound over to keep the Peace—A Note from Miss Wilkes—D'Eon's Tergiversations—The Sex Policies in the Court of King's Bench—Having appeared in London in Female Garb, D'Eon journeys to France as a Dragoon—Her ambiguous Manifesto.

THE compact between D'Eon and Beaumarchais had been long in preparation, and was modified over and over again before the contracting parties affixed their signatures to it. In a copy or draft of this document preserved in the Archives des Affaires Etrangères, Beaumarchais is merely credited with having the key of the iron chest in his possession, but it is virtually certain that

he also secured the chest's contents before actually signing the covenant. In the latter D'Eon was formally described as a woman. Clauses I. and II. provided for the surrender of all the official and secret papers; Clause III. stipulated that D'Eon was to abstain from all steps likely to revive the Guerchy scandal, and Clause IV. was equivalent to a confession of sex. Here, on the margin of the document, the Chevalier had impudently written that the sex of "the said Demoiselle d'Eon had been proved by witnesses, physicians, surgeons, midwives, and legal documents." This assertion, which was grossly false, was cancelled by Beaumarchais, who ran his pen through it; still, it should not be lost sight of, for it indicates D'Eon's willingness at this stage of the transaction to go even beyond what was asked of him. Clause IV., it should be added, required the Chevalier to assume the garments of the female sex, on which condition Beaumarchais agreed to deliver up a royal safe-conduct empowering D'Eon to return to France, and embodying a promise that the yearly pension of 12,000 livres granted by Louis XV. should be converted into an annuity of the same amount. Moreover, Beaumarchais covenanted that he would procure and hand to D'Eon an official deed on parchment reciting the donation of the said annuity; and it was placed on record, first, that a sum of money equivalent to the capital of this annuity had been provided

and expended by D'Eon out of his own pocket "in furthering the designs of the late King," and, secondly, that he had with the same object disbursed additional sums, of which Beaumarchais undertook to obtain repayment for the purpose of liquidating D'Eon's debts in England.

It is here necessary to drop the title of Chevalier and all masculine pronouns in writing of D'Eon. The ex-dragoon, ex-doctor of laws, ex-censor royal, and ex-minister plenipotentiary confesses to being a woman, and as such must be described. D'Eon then, on *her* side, covenanted that she would publicly declare her sex and wear female attire, "which she had already worn," she asserted, "upon several occasions known to his Majesty"—words, however, which Beaumarchais, no believer in their truth, cancelled with a stroke of the pen. On the other hand, D'Eon solicited permission to resume the habiliments of the male sex, if, after trying to accustom herself to female garb in any convent she might select, she should find it impossible to endure the embarrassment of wearing it.

She also promised to relinquish all proceedings to the prejudice of the late Count de Guerchy and his heirs, and to give up all papers, but begged permission to retain Louis XV.'s autograph letter granting her a pension of 12,000 livres, and Durand's receipt for the compromising secret order of July, 1763;

together with the cross of St. Louis, which she had "gained at the peril of her life in sieges, combats, and battles." This cross she desired to wear upon her female attire. Further, she solicited a sum of money for the purchase of a feminine outfit, and begged that the King, as a special mark of his favour, would satisfy himself every six months of both her existence and her place of residence, in order to prevent her enemies from attempting anything to the prejudice of her honour, liberty, person, and life.

Beaumarchais, on his part, consented to leave the documents specified and the cross of St. Louis in D'Eon's possession, but set forth that the request for permission to wear the cross must be submitted to the King. For the purchase of a female outfit he offered the sum of two thousand crowns, on the express condition, however, that D'Eon should not bring away with her from London any masculine garments or weapons, excepting one complete suit of the uniform of the regiment in which she had formerly served, with the helmet, sabre, pistols, musket, and bayonet of a dragoon's equipment, these objects to be preserved by her "as souvenirs of her past life, in the same way as are preserved the relics of loved ones now no more!" All other weapons and garments of the male sex were to be handed over to Beaumarchais in London, there to be sold by him, and the proceeds of the sale to be disposed of as his Majesty might direct.

Although this covenant was dated October 5, 1775—in compliment to D'Eon, whose birthday that was—the contracting parties did not exchange signatures till November 4.[1] In the interval Beaumarchais repaired to France, whence he returned with two royal warrants, one of which embodied a safe-conduct for D'Eon's return to France, and guaranteed her the stipulated allowance of 12,000 livres; whilst the other ordered her to resume immediately the garments of her sex, never again to lay them aside, but authorized her to wear the cross of St. Louis on her female attire. Both warrants, curiously enough, bore the same date as Beaumarchais' original authorization to treat with D'Eon—*i.e.*, August 25, 1775—and were, no doubt, purposely antedated in order that they might appear to be spontaneous productions, and not the outcome of the much-discussed covenant. It is virtually certain that the warrants were handed to D'Eon at the time when she signed the covenant, and yet six weeks after that document, according to her account, had been disposed of, we find Beaumarchais sending Louis XVI. a long memorandum from Paris respecting the Chevalière's affairs and his own intrigues with the American colonists, and the King writing on the margin that D'Eon's masculine garments must be sold, that she may be allowed 2,000 crowns for her outfit as proposed, and that she

[1] Gaillardet, p. 248.

may wear the cross of St. Louis in the provinces, but not elsewhere.

At this time Beaumarchais had already conveyed the Chevalière's papers to France, and she tells us that on going on board the packet at Dover he nearly lost the despatch-box containing the Broglie correspondence and "invasion" documents, which a sailor threw after him at the risk of its falling into the water. D'Eon had promised to keep very quiet during Beaumarchais' absence; but she did not adhere to this engagement. Rumours of the negotiations had been spread abroad, presumably by Morande, and there was now a notable revival of the gambling transactions respecting the Chevalière's sex. Numerous "policies" were effected, and wagerers offered to lay seven to four that D'Eon was a woman. All this provoked the Chevalière into sending a paragraph to the newspapers, in which it was hinted that sundry high and mighty personages of the French Court were interested in the policies on the writer's sex, which the writer declined to reveal publicly until all this wagering should be at an end. Further, there was an unnecessary and indiscreet allusion to a great act of justice which had just been done the writer by Louis XVI., and which would shortly be made public. This paragraph, it should be mentioned, was written as though by a man, and was signed "Chevalier d'Eon."

A few weeks later, D'Eon, who was ill in

bed again, took up the pen to inform Count de Broglie that it was time to undeceive him, and that she was indeed a woman. She sent the Count a copy of her covenant with Beaumarchais, and declared that since she could no longer serve under his orders or those of his brother, the Marshal, she intended to renounce the world. From a document in the Tonnerre Library we learn that on the same day as she wrote to Broglie the Chevalière sent to a "French *seigneur*," whom she does not name, a copy of the declaration for Louis XVI. which Beaumarchais had failed to deliver; but the *seigneur* in question, "though holding a post of confidence near the King's person," replied to her that he did not dare to deliver this declaration, which, it will be remembered, formally re-affirmed the truth of the Chevalière's charges against Guerchy.[1]

Beaumarchais knew nothing of D'Eon's indiscreet action in this matter; but when, on returning to London on December 29, he learnt from the Morandes that D'Eon had written to the English newspapers, he became quite incensed, and in the Chevalière's presence

[1] In the Chevalière's safe-conduct the following passage occurs, showing that the French Court was determined there should be no revival of the Guerchy scandal: "His Majesty being also resolved that the unfortunate quarrels which burst out but too violently to the scandal of Europe shall for ever be buried in forgetfulness, imposes for the future, on this subject, absolute silence upon both the said Demoiselle d'Eon de Beaumont and all others of his officers and subjects."

described her paragraph as "badly worded, stupid, senseless, and impertinent." Thereupon, it appears, D'Eon put on her hat and went off, saying, in very unfeminine fashion, that the negotiations and all such negotiators as Beaumarchais might, for whatever she cared, go to a warm and nameless place. The very next day she betook herself to Staunton Harold, and a remarkable correspondence ensued between her and Beaumarchais, who was anxious for her return to London, in order that she might confess herself a woman and assume female garb. As D'Eon was already aware, Beaumarchais greatly desired to dabble in the policy gambling, and in demanding that she should acknowledge herself to be a woman he not merely wished to satisfy the French Court, but also with her help to win a large sum of money.

The letters which the pair exchanged while the Chevalière was at Lord Ferrers' were of great length, one of D'Eon's extending to eight-and-thirty pages. In this effusion complaint, abuse, sarcasm, invective, wit, coquetry, and demands for money followed one after the other. Beaumarchais had, in a first epistle, mentioned that certain of D'Eon's papers, specified in the inventory, had not been found with the others when the whole mass of documents was re-examined at Versailles; and D'Eon now retorted that she had purposely retained some of the papers as defensive

weapons. Then she demanded her female outfit, and railed at the paltry sum (250 guineas) which was to be expended on it—asserting that any "petty merchant in the City" blessed with daughters gave each of them three times as large a *trousseau*, and that her own masculine wardrobe and weapons, which were to be surrendered in exchange, were worth double the amount that Beaumarchais proposed to lay out. Numerous passages in this letter and a subsequent one indicate beyond doubt that D'Eon quite dreaded the assumption of female attire. She talks of her "dear masculine garments," and inquires what services she can possibly render to the King should she assume a woman's clothes. Then, however, she suddenly affects a tender interest in Beaumarchais: "I repeat," she writes, "what Rosina says in 'Le Barbier de Seville,' 'You are made to be loved!'" And again: "Ah! why did I not remember that men are only fit to deceive women. . . . At first I simply thought that I was doing justice to your merits, admiring your talents and your generosity, but I no doubt already loved you. But the feeling was so novel to me, and I was a long way from believing that love could spring into being in the midst of distress and pain!"

That Beaumarchais really believed her to be in love with him is certain; and in Paris, indeed, it was currently reported that they

were about to marry. A certain Madame de Courcelle, a Burgundian *grande dame* who had long lived in London (her husband, an officer, would appear to have been a prisoner of war), wrote to D'Eon from Paris, whither she had returned at this period, and expressed her surprise that he should contemplate marriage with Beaumarchais. She had always known him as a man, said she, and had intended him for her daughter Constance, so she could not understand how it was that he had now become a woman, particularly as she had lately seen his old tutor, Abbé Marcenay, who asserted that he had been a boy in the days when he was in his charge.[1] However, she no longer chaffed D'Eon to the same degree after an interview which she had with the Chevalier O'Gorman (D'Eon's brother-in-law), who possibly gave her some private information concerning this sudden change in her friend's sex. O'Gorman came to London at the time of the "covenant" negotiations, and seems at first to have helped Beaumarchais in his efforts to pacify the Chevalière, but ultimately the author of "Le Barbier" calls him a rogue.

D'Eon's great grievance against Beaumarchais was that he had only paid a portion of her debts, and she demanded a sum of £9,308, to make up a total of £13,933, which was exactly the amount claimed by her at the time of the

[1] D'Eon MSS. in the Tonnerre Library. See *ante*, p. 33.

negotiations with Prunevaux. She would not, she said, surrender the papers which she still held until she received what was legitimately due to her. This of course led to an absolute breach between herself and Beaumarchais, who declined to let her have any more money until she should have clothed herself in the garments of her sex. The whole transaction was now becoming inexpressibly sordid. D'Eon's one object was to get as much money as she conveniently could out of Beaumarchais; and Beaumarchais' great desire was to reap a fortune from D'Eon's change of sex. He and the Morandes, it appears, had offered D'Eon 8,000 louis d'or and a share in all the profits of the venture if she would submit herself to a jury authorized to pronounce upon her sex; but to this she would not consent, in some measure, no doubt, from motives of delicacy, and also possibly because she was well aware that the inquiry would prove her guilty of duplicity towards Louis XVI. and his ministers, and that not only her safe-conduct, but her pension as well, might be cancelled. On the other hand, however, she did not hesitate to make an exposure of Beaumarchais' attempted trafficking; and in May, 1776, drew up and circulated a declaration, attested by three members of the French colony in London, which, after detailing various circumstances of the affair, asserted that Morande and Beaumarchais had only abandoned their schemes in consequence of

some eminent English lawyers expressing the opinion that even if the policies should turn out to be in their favour, the law would not enforce payment on the part of the underwriters.

The breach with Beaumarchais being complete, D'Eon wrote to M. de Vergennes, denouncing "dear Caron's" treatment of her in terms at once violent and amusing. In this letter and in other documents she freely taunted Beaumarchais with his "sordid avarice," and declared that "Bon Marché" was the name he should have borne. At this juncture, it is asserted, as all his efforts to negotiate further with D'Eon had failed, the author of "Le Barbier" instigated Morande to write a pamphlet against the Chevalière; and Morande, having sent a copy of his effusion to D'Eon, received in exchange a challenge to fight. As Morande, however, declined a duel with a woman, the Chevalier O'Gorman offered to take D'Eon's place, but the police were warned of the projected encounter, and in the end both the Chevalière and O'Gorman were bound over to keep the peace. D'Eon then sought to prosecute Morande for libel, but when it was found that she herself had written some libellous letters to him, the rule which she had at first obtained was at once discharged.

Meantime the Chevalière's position in London, whither she had returned from Staunton Harold, was becoming, to say the least, a most

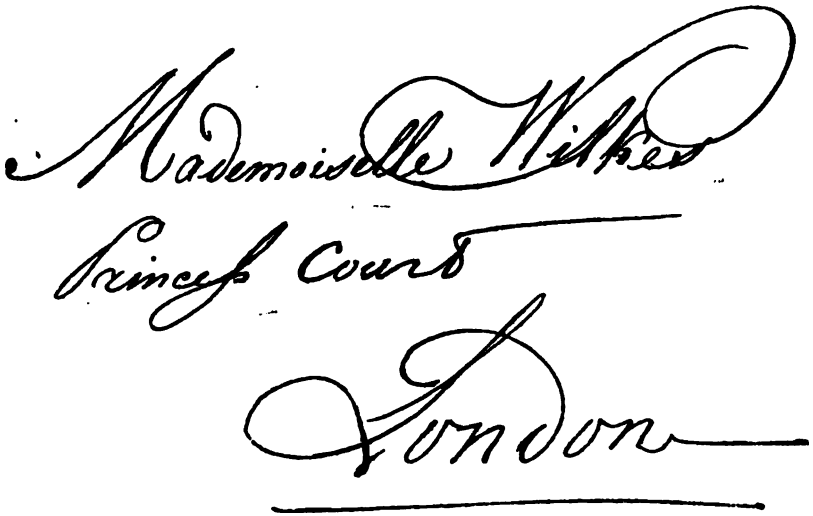
unpleasant one. She still wore a man's clothes, and lived in much the same style as formerly; but public curiosity concerning her was greatly on the increase, and she was in constant fear of being kidnapped by some of the policy-holders or other wagerers. One day, young Miss Wilkes, who, although educated in a French convent, was as inquisitive as other people, forwarded to her father's friend an artless little note in French, to the following effect:

"Miss Wilkes presents her compliments to Monsieur le Chevalier d'Eon, and is anxious to know if he really be a woman, as everybody asserts, or a man. It would be very kind of Monsieur le Chevalier d'Eon to communicate the truth to Miss Wilkes, who begs him with all her heart to do so. It will be still more kind of him if he will come and dine with her and her papa, to-day or to-morrow, or, in fact, as soon as ever he can."[1]

For months and months we see D'Eon vainly endeavouring to escape the assumption of female attire, and even opening fresh negotiations on the subject with Vergennes. He, however, signified to her through Beaumarchais that it was a matter of indifference to the French Court

[1] The original note is in the Tonnerre Library, but the publishers are fortunately enabled to give here a facsimile of one of the Chevalière's own letters, in reply to one from Miss Wilkes respecting the sale of the old manuscripts which she (D'Eon) had collected.

whether she remained in England or came to France, but in the latter case she must appear in the character of her sex and lead "a quiet, virtuous and circumspect life such as she should never have departed from." The royal warrant ordering her to dress as a woman stated that "she was to resume immediately the garments of her sex, never again to lay them aside;" and after this passage D'Eon now wished the minister to insert the following words—"as had been required of her in the reign of the late King;" but Vergennes scouted the notion, and hinted that Louis XVI. might not be inclined to overlook her accusation that his late Majesty had countenanced her indecent masquerading in masculine habiliments! In the cove-



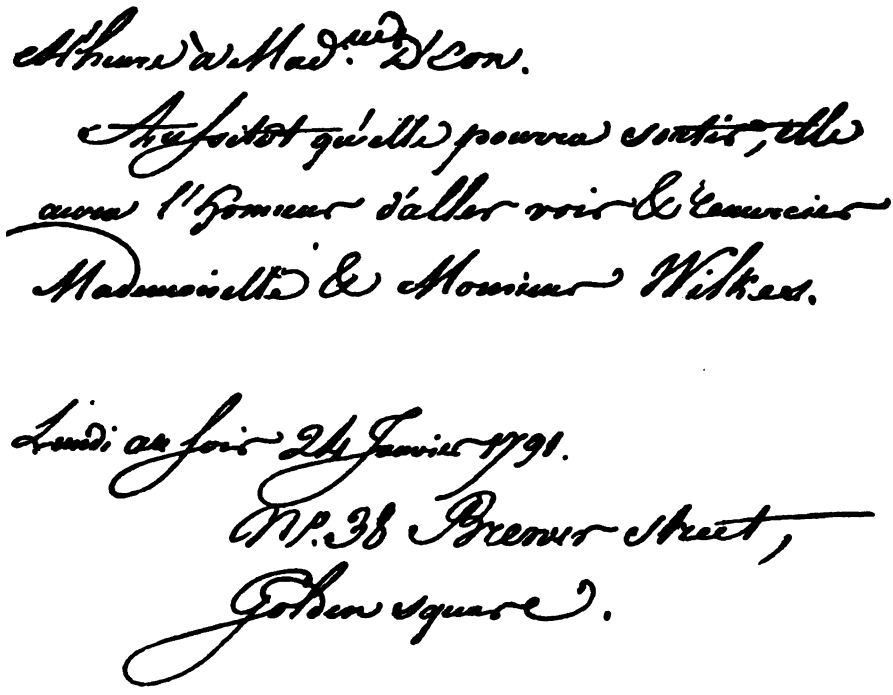
SUPERSCRIPTION OF A LETTER FROM D'EON TO MISS WILKES.

Mad.lle D'Eon étoit à la campagne quand on
a apporté chez elle hier la lettre de
Mademoiselle Wilkes.

Elle a l'honneur de lui faire mille
remercimens pour l'intérêt qu'elle veut bien
prendre non seulement à sa santé, mais encore à la
vente de ses anciens manuscrits.

Elle soumet flatter, sous les auspices de
Mademoiselle Wilkes, de faire la connoissance
de M. Asbl, qu'elle ne connoit que de réputation.
Si ce Mon.r veut prendre la peine d'inspecter
les manuscrits de M.lle D'Eon, elle aura
l'honneur de l'attendre Mercredi prochain 26
courant depuis une heure jusqu'à deux. Si
ce jour là ne pouvoit convenir à M.r Asbl
il est prié de fixer lui-même un autre jour

LETTER OF D'EON TO MISS WILKES.



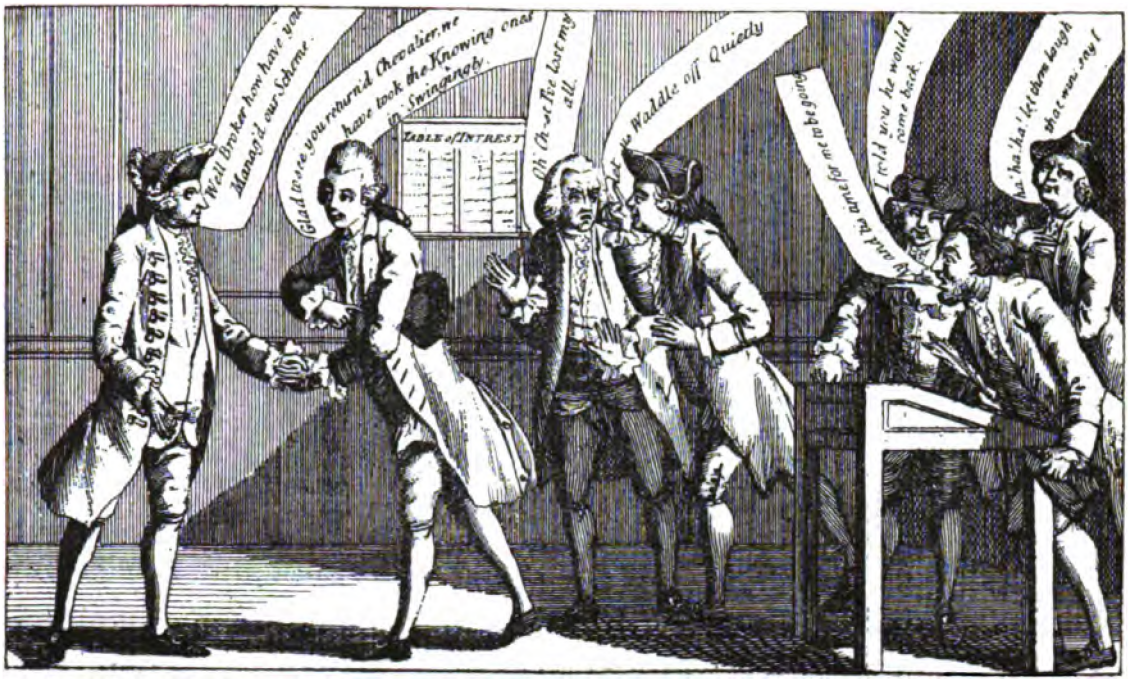
nant with Beaumarchais, it will be remembered, D'Eon had tried to insert a sentence implying that she had previously worn *female* garb on various occasions known to Louis XV.; and now she seemed anxious to saddle the Well-Beloved with the responsibility for her assumption of *male* attire—a somewhat contradictory course.

However, there was no help for the Chevalière; it was necessary that she should carry out her engagements, or renounce all hope of returning to France. Moreover, Beaumarchais had already hinted that energetic measures,

such as the cancelling of her annuity, would be adopted if she failed to execute her covenant. She was caught, indeed, in her own trap; she had thought to fool the wily Caron, and had been fooled by him, and could not retrace her steps without incurring the risk of being deprived of all resources. A sudden exposure, such as she was threatened with by the kidnapping parties, might have led to the same result, and so she at last made up her mind to leave England, at all events for a time. When she had communicated her intentions to Vergennes on January 1, 1777, the minister promised her the protection of the government, and added that if, after a trial, she should not feel at home in France, she would be at perfect liberty to go elsewhere—a consummation which he doubtless greatly desired.

The rumours of D'Eon's intended departure caused quite a panic among the London wagerers. At Easter proceedings were commenced against various underwriters in the City for the amounts which they had guaranteed. We are told that "upwards of £120,000 had been underwritten at various times, but rather than 'risk a heat over the Bacon course at Westminster Hall' several eminent merchants forfeited sixty and even seventy per cent. in order to have their names cancelled from the policies they had underwritten."[1] Some of the claims were very large; that of a certain M. Panchaud of Paris

[1] Telfer, p. 284.



CHEVALIER D'EON RETURNED, OR THE STOCKBROKERS OUTWITTED. [*See note, p.* 287.

is said to have amounted to £75,000. The first action, however—brought by a surgeon named Hayes against a broker and underwriter of the name of Jacques—was only to recover 700 guineas. Jacques, it appeared, had received premiums of 15 guineas per cent., for each of which he stood engaged to return 100 guineas provided it were proved that D'Eon was actually a woman. The trial resulted at first in a verdict for the plaintiff, who produced as one witness a surgeon named Le Goux, who swore that "of his certain knowledge D'Eon was a woman, as he had attended her in sickness and had examined her person." This statement was corroborated in the witness box by Théveneau de Morande, who with unblushing effrontery asserted himself to be well acquainted with the fact that D'Eon was of the female sex. However, the jury's verdict was set aside on the defendant pleading an Act of Parliament which provided that "no insurance should be valid unless the person insuring could prove an antecedent interest in the person or thing insured." This of course destroyed the hopes of all the policy-holders. D'Eon had vainly requested a postponement of this trial until her return from France, and as she "had abstained from taking any part in the proceedings, it was bruited about that such discretion was to be rewarded with a bonus of £20,000."[1] The rumour, however, was entirely false.

[1] Telfer, pp. 285-7.

At this juncture the Chevalière was busy negotiating with her creditors in order to obtain their sanction to her departure from England. It will be recollected that Beaumarchais had paid Earl Ferrers a sum of £4,625 on account of the debt alleged to be due to him, Ferrers having lent himself to this imposition, ostensibly with the object of obliging D'Eon, but not without an eye to his own advantage. His Lordship was a poor man for a peer, his estates being largely encumbered, and his pet hobby was the rebuilding of Staunton Harold after his own designs. To this purpose and to other schemes, such as the working of a lead-mine and a lime-pit, he devoted £3,000 of the money obtained from Beaumarchais, employing the balance to discharge a few of D'Eon's more pressing liabilities, and advancing her from time to time a hundred guineas or so for her immediate requirements. D'Eon, however, began pressing for the bulk of the money, and eventually the Earl was obliged to confess that he had used it for his own purposes.

One may well imagine the Chevalière's feelings at such unexpected news. In this respect, also, she had hoped to trick Beaumarchais, but found herself tricked instead. To Earl Ferrers' credit, it may be mentioned, he readily offered his bond for the money; and on being attacked very seriously with gout in the lungs, and fearing he might die, he executed the document

without waiting for D'Eon's assent, and handed it to his secretary that it might be forwarded to her. It bore interest at five per cent., and was payable at the expiration of five years, beginning December 26, 1775.[1] D'Eon was constrained to accept it, having no alternative in the matter, for a public exposure of the imposition practised on Beaumarchais would have resulted to her own disadvantage. Again, in this instance, if the French Court had learnt the truth, it would probably have withdrawn the Chevalière's annuity.

On the other hand, by failing to receive these £3,000 D'Eon was placed in a position of great difficulty with her creditors. And here it may be pointed out that the Chevalière seems to have been somewhat unthrifty, as for several years she had been receiving a pension of 12,000 livres, or, at the then rate of exchange, about 500 guineas per annum. The remittances appear to have been somewhat irregular; still, the money always came at last, and in those days 500 guineas a year was a fair income. It is true that at one period D'Eon had expended large sums on lawsuits, the printing of books and pamphlets, and the hire of spies and bodyguards, in addition to assisting Vergy and several others, and these matters had necessitated the borrowing of money. Then, too, D'Eon, whose cellar was usually stocked with high-class burgundies and champagnes, had a weakness for

[1] Telfer, pp. 313-16.

conviviality and good living, and delighted in entertaining friends and acquaintances at breakfast and dinner. This of course was a source of considerable expense, and when one adds thereto a desire to shine in the society of people of high position and a passion for collecting rare books and manuscripts, one can understand how it was that both as Chevalier and Chevalière D'Eon was always in financial difficulties.

It is stated that D'Eon appeared in London for the first time as a woman on August 6, 1777,[1] being dressed in an elegant sack with a headdress adorned with diamonds. On the morrow she entertained several friends at dinner in Brewer Street, among them being Bach, Abel, Cramer, and the two Angelos, father and son. The last, then a child, has left in his "Reminiscences" an account of his introduction to D'Eon, whom he found, to his surprise, to be "a lusty dame," without the least beard, dressed in black silk with a "headdress in rosed toupet and laced cap, a diamond necklace, long stays, and an old-fashioned stomacher." On being led to the lady by his father, young Angelo received from her a kiss on either cheek *à la Française*. The dinner served on this occasion was virtually a farewell banquet, for D'Eon was now about to return to France. At this juncture she transferred Earl Ferrers' bond to Mr. John Duval, one of the jewellers to the English crown, who had repeatedly

[1] Telfer, p. 287.

made her advances of money. For some of her other creditors she made provision by authorizing her landlord to sell her "large and valuable stock of wines" for their benefit. Her other effects, clothes, weapons, furniture, and a library of eight thousand volumes and two hundred manuscripts, were to remain in the landlord's charge; and anticipating, no doubt, that she would not stay long in France, her rooms were to be kept for her, she agreeing to pay twenty shillings per week as rent.

It was on August 13 that she took her departure for France, but contrary to general anticipation she did not set out in female attire. A post-chaise and four drew up outside the house in Brewer Street, and she emerged "suitably attended," and arrayed in her red and green dragoon uniform, with the cross of St. Louis glinting on her breast. A couple of days later several London newspapers published a manifesto she had left behind, stating that she quitted her dear England with grief in consequence of the scandals occasioned by the policy wagering. She defied anyone to prove that she had ever been interested in the policies to the value of a shilling, and reiterated her previous declarations that she would never consent to a "judicial manifestation" of her sex. Curiously enough, in spite of her recent assumption of female attire, she even now created a doubt as to whether she were man or woman, for she signed herself "Chevalier

d'Eon," and alluded in the manifesto to the sex "she was accused to be of." In presence of this contradictory behaviour one can well understand the continued perplexity of the English wagerers.[1]

[1] The caricature of "Chevalier D'Eon returned, or the Stockbrokers outwitted," which will be found on p. 281, probably dates from the time of D'Eon's return from Staunton Harold (p. 275). This drawing supplies proof of the prevailing opinion that D'Eon was secretly interested in the sex-wagerings.

XIV.

August, 1777—November, 1785.

The Chevalière reduced to her own Resources—Her old Friends and Protectors—Charles Gravier, Count de Vergennes—D'Eon and Marie Antoinette—Her alleged Private Audience with Louis XVI.—Madame Campan's Assertions about her—She is pressed to assume Female Attire—Her Outfit and her Trip to Tonnerre—She is presented at Court in Petticoats—Curiosity of the Parisians—Spurious Demoiselles D'Eon—The Chevalière again embroiled with Beaumarchais—More Actions to recover Policies in London—D'Eon and Voltaire—The Chevalière falls ill and solicits Permission to resume Masculine Garb—War between France and Great Britain—D'Eon anxious to serve—She retires to various Convents and seeks to return to England—Arrested for wearing her Uniform, she is lodged in the Castle of Dijon—She again dons her Skirts and retires to Tonnerre—Her Barber, Bouquin—Louis XV.'s Snuff-box in Pawn—The Chevalière entertains Prince Henry of Prussia—She obtains Leave to return to London.

DURING her journey from Calais to Versailles the Chevalière's thoughts cannot have been particularly bright, for there was little prospect of her obtaining any favours from Louis XVI. and the new Court, and in any requests which

she might have to make she would have to depend solely upon her own powers of persuasion. Time had brought about many changes at Paris and Versailles, and there was no influential old friend or protector to whom the Chevalière could now turn for advice and support. Tercier, we know, was no more. The Marquis de l'Hôpital also had long been dead, like the Chevalier Douglas, who, afflicted with paralysis, appears to have dragged out his last years in seclusion at Bourges. Fréron, moreover, who had extolled D'Eon's literary abilities, had passed away in April, 1776, followed a few months later by the Prince de Conti, who died impoverished and perverted to scepticism. "There go the two most useless officers of my household," he remarked, pointing to his treasurer and his chaplain, a day or two before his death, which he met, says Pidansat de Mairobert, with the fortitude, presence of mind, and gaiety that had distinguished him all his life. "The prince was very witty," wrote Marie Antoinette, when informing her mother of his demise, "but he was dangerous by his continual intrigues." Foiled in all his ambitious schemes, Conti had been consoling himself during his later years by supporting the Paris Parliament in its struggle against the royal authority; and had he even been alive when D'Eon returned to France, he could have done nothing for her, having long since lost all influence at Court.

Turning to such of her whilom protectors as yet remained, we find that the Chevalière had irremediably embroiled herself with the Duke de Nivernais, first by publishing his correspondence with Praslin, and subsequently by ascribing to him, without the slightest reason, the rejection of the demands which she had made through Prunevaux. As for Count de Broglie, he had long since heard quite enough of D'Eon, and now that his letters had been rescued he saw no reason to keep up the connection. Moreover, at the time of the Chevalière's arrival in France, he appears to have been making a private inspection of the Norman and Breton coasts in anticipation of a war with England, for the Court of Versailles was inclining more and more to the idea of supporting the American colonists in their struggle for independence. Baron de Breteuil, too, whom D'Eon had so ably assisted at St. Petersburg, and who was destined to play an important part in public affairs, had not yet become Minister of Justice and the Royal Household. At the period which we have now reached he was serving as French Ambassador at Vienna.

D'Eon was therefore reduced to her own resources. Still clad in her dragoon uniform, she presented herself before the Count de Vergennes, who, whilst receiving her politely, immediately told her that she must assume female attire. This was the very thing the

Chevalière was most anxious to avoid, but, no matter how forcibly she pleaded, the minister's invariable reply was that the covenant must be carried into effect. In days gone by D'Eon had found it comparatively easy to influence an old voluptuary like L'Hôpital, or a poetaster like Nivernais; she had, moreover, gained her ends with Praslin as long as she had flattered him; but Charles Gravier, Count de Vergennes, the last great politician of the *ancien régime*, was a different man from any of these. M. de Maurepas ranked above him in the ministry, but Louis XVI. had soon realized that Vergennes was the man to trust, although his antecedents were not altogether favourable. Vergennes, we know, acquitted himself with ability of his share in the war against Great Britain in support of the American colonies, and was the only minister who gave the King any sensible advice on the subject of the Diamond Necklace scandal. In course of time Louis XVI. became extremely attached to him, and on hearing of his death in February, 1787, overcame for the day his all-absorbing passion for the chase, saying to the courtiers around him: "There will be no hunt, gentlemen. I have lost the only friend on whom I could rely; indeed, the only minister who never deceived me."

At the interview which Vergennes had with D'Eon, on the latter's arrival at Versailles, he arranged that the Chevalière should stay for

a time with M. Genest, chief clerk at the Foreign Office, whom she had previously known in a much less important position. Genest's two daughters, Madame Campan and Mademoiselle Adélaïde Genest, belonged to the royal household, the former at this period being second, and the latter third *femme-de-chambre* to Marie Antoinette. Through one or the other of them the Queen heard of D'Eon's arrival, and sent Genest orders to bring the Chevalière to her. Before doing so, however, Genest spoke on the subject to Vergennes, who, after instructing him to accompany D'Eon to the Queen's apartments, sought an interview with Marie Antoinette, with the result that the latter informed Genest that she was sorry to have troubled him—the few words that M. de Vergennes had just said to her "having for ever cured her of her curiosity."[1]

D'Eon therefore was not received by the Queen, but it was currently reported at the time that "the amphibious chevalier" had obtained an audience of Louis XVI., by whom he was extremely well received, and to whom he handed some of the late King's secret correspondence—possibly the papers, mentioned in

[1] Madame Campan's "Mémoires sur la Vie privée de Marie Antoinette," etc., 1822, vol. i. p. 190. From this it has been surmised that Vergennes told the Queen that D'Eon was practising an imposition. But we do not share this opinion. We think it far more likely that the minister spoke of the Guerchy scandal, and hinted that the Chevalière was more or less insane.

the inventory, which Beaumarchais had declared to be missing when the documents were re-examined at Versailles.[1]

Whilst staying with Genest, D'Eon seems to have conversed with him somewhat freely respecting her past life; and Madame Campan, who listened to their talk, and with feminine curiosity, no doubt, plied her father with questions, gathered from what she heard that in years gone by the Chevalière had been reader (*lecteur*, not *lectrice*) to the Czarina Elizabeth. D'Eon no doubt mentioned to Genest that she had been intended for that post; possibly, indeed, she asserted that she had really filled it, for at this period of her career one of her great objects appears to have been to magnify her past services even at the expense of veracity. On the other hand, moreover, whatever Madame Campan may have heard, she was in no position to check D'Eon's assertions. She was most certainly never made acquainted with the ins-and-outs of Louis XV.'s secret diplomacy; and her father, only a petty *employé* at the time of the old Russian business, had little or no knowledge of it. He was not in the King's secret, like Tercier, then his superior; and so Madame

[1] "Correspondance Secrète sur Louis XVI.," etc., published by M. de Lescure, Paris, 1866, vol. i. pp. 91-4. It is presumed that this correspondence, which is in the Imperial Library at St. Petersburg, whither it was removed from Warsaw in 1795, was addressed to Stanislas Poniatowski by Favier, a secret agent under Louis XV., often employed by Broglie, and subsequently protected by Vergennes.

Campan's statements can only have been based on the uncorroborated and doubtful assertions of D'Eon.

The Queen's *femme-de-chambre*, who, even when writing of her royal mistress, is not always to be relied upon, further tells us that she heard the Chevalière repeat to her father the contents of an autograph letter, in which Louis XV. had commanded her to remain in London despite the official order for her recall. This was the alleged letter of October 4, 1763, beginning: "You have served me as usefully in woman's clothes as in those you now wear. Reassume them at once, and withdraw into the City."[1] It has already been pointed out that this letter must be considered spurious; and Madame Campan's assertions on the subject are in no wise of a nature to modify that view. Her lack of accuracy is strikingly exemplified by her statement that D'Eon still had all the King's letters in her possession; though she does not tell us that she saw them, and this for the best of reasons: the Chevalière had certainly surrendered the greater number of them. Louis XV. seldom wrote to D'Eon with his own hand; his communications were chiefly penned by Tercier and Broglie, and we know that the great bulk of the letters forwarded to D'Eon through these channels had been handed over to Beaumarchais. It is true that the Chevalière still held the royal autograph of

[1] See *ante*, p. 153.

June, 1766, promising her a pension—this being one of the letters which Beaumarchais had allowed her to retain, and very likely she may have flaunted it before Genest as a specimen of the Well-Beloved's communications to her. As for the alleged letter of October, 1763, this she did not produce because it had no existence. It is, we think, fair to assume that, asked in a friendly way for explanations respecting the obscure points in her past career, she invented the whole story about this letter to account for her conduct in remaining in London when originally ordered back to France, and in assuming female garments when subsequently hiding with La Dufour in order to escape sentence for libel. This was not the first time, indeed, that D'Eon had sought to make Louis XV. responsible for her real or spurious metamorphoses. She had essayed, as we know, the same tactics with both Beaumarchais and Vergennes, and, forced by circumstances to continue playing the same part, she now devised this letter of October, 1763, and pretended to repeat it from memory to Genest.

Pressed both by Vergennes and Maurepas to don the attire of her sex, the Chevalière as a last resource pleaded that she had no suitable garments to appear in; and (according to her own account) on this coming to the knowledge of Marie Antoinette, the latter instructed her famous milliner, Mademoiselle Bertin,[1] to

[1] Quoting from Mr. Christie's D'Eon MSS., Captain

prepare "the new woman" an outfit, such as "would have sufficed for any four girls of the royal house of St. Cyr."

Curiously enough, in the Archives des Affaires Etrangères there is a copy of a royal warrant addressed to "Monsieur le Chevalier D'Eon," on August 27, 1777, commanding *him* to lay aside his uniform and reassume the garments of his sex. D'Eon, in acknowledging the receipt of this warrant two days afterwards in a letter also preserved in the same archives, announced that Mademoiselle Bertin had undertaken to prepare the necessary outfit: "I could not appear at Versailles in the few articles of female clothing that remained to me," writes the Chevalière; "I needed new ones, and Mademoiselle Bertin . . . undertakes not only to have them made for me during my absence, but also to turn me into a passably modest and obedient woman. . . . Only my extreme desire to appear irreproachable in the eyes of the King and my protectors, such as Counts de Vergennes and de Maurepas, could impart to me the strength I needed to conquer myself and adopt a mildness of disposition in con-

Telfer calls Mademoiselle Bertin one of Marie Antoinette's "ladies-in-waiting," so grotesque an error that we cannot forbear calling attention to it. Mademoiselle Bertin's name and fame having become historic, Captain Telfer's ignorance concerning her is surprising. The blunder of course was originally D'Eon's own, and shows how little the Chevalière is to be trusted with regard to her remarks on well-known persons of the period.

formity with the new existence *which has been forced upon me.*[1] It would be easier for me to play the part of a lion than that of a lamb, that of a captain of volunteers than that of a gentle and obedient girl. After Providence, the King and his ministers, most of the merit of my miraculous conversion will be due to Mademoiselle Bertin."

In speaking of her absence in this letter, D'Eon referred to a trip she intended making to Tonnerre to see her aged mother, now longing to cast eyes upon the son who was about to return to her as a daughter! They had not met, it appears, for eighteen years, but during this long separation they had constantly corresponded in affectionate terms. On September 2, D'Eon started from Paris, still dressed as a bold dragoon, and her arrival at Tonnerre caused quite a stir there. The authorities and a deputation of married and maiden ladies called upon Madame d'Eon to congratulate her on the wanderer's return and wondrous transformation; the fatted calf was duly killed, and there was three days' feasting, with distributions of bread, meat, and wine to the poor, discharges of firearms, pyrotechnical displays, and other signs of popular rejoicing.

On October 14 we find D'Eon again at Versailles, and, according to a letter which she afterwards wrote for publication, on October

[1] Through her own fault in first pretending to be a woman in order to cajole Beaumarchais.

21, "the feast of St. Ursula, patroness of the 11,000 virgins and martyrs in England," she was arrayed by Mademoiselle Bertin in sumptuous female attire, anointed with perfumes, and adorned with bracelets, a necklace, earrings and rings, in which guise, she asserts, she was solemnly presented at Court. But the Court was away at Fontainebleau at this period, and did not return to Versailles till November 19.[1] It was then that D'Eon was attired as a female, as she herself acknowledges in some of her letters to Vergennes preserved in the French archives—letters which are corroborated by contemporary accounts of her transformation.[2] The story about St. Ursula's day is simply "fudge," designed for effect, and supplies another instance, if one were wanting, of D'Eon's wanton untruthfulness, which renders it imperative for the biographer to check her every word.

Her assumption of female attire appears to have caused a sensation in Paris, and people flocked to the fashionable promenades both of the capital and of Versailles in the hope of seeing her. She now made a remarkable show of piety, and during the first few weeks of her transformation we find her taking the holy

[1] See Marie Antoinette's letters to her mother in Ritter von Arneth's "Maria Theresia und Marie Antoinette," Leipzig, 1866.

[2] M. de Lescure's "Correspondance Secrète," etc., vol. i. p. 115.

communion at the churches of Notre Dame, St. Sulpice, Ste. Geneviève (now the Pantheon), St. Roch, and Ste. Marie de Chaillot.

It has been asserted that after her presentation at Court the Chevalière was "compelled to remain there for two years that she might become moulded into her new condition;"[1] but this would scarcely seem to have been the case, for at the beginning of 1778 she herself asserts that she was living "quietly and alone at Petit Montreuil," a kind of suburb of Versailles, and those contemporary memoir-writers who allude to her merely mention that she came into the town on Sundays to attend mass in the chapel royal. On the other hand, she would seem to have often gone to Paris, and her life can scarcely have been a very retired one if we are to credit a lively narrative of her sayings and doings printed in the "Gentleman's Magazine" at this period. The account took the form of a letter addressed to "Mr. Sylvanus Urban," and some portion of it may well be quoted here.

"D'Eon," says the writer, "owns that this [the female] garb seems very strange to her, and that it will be long before she is used to it; she would gladly have continued to dress like a man if she could. She used at first to laugh at her petticoats, her *cap*, etc., and on one occasion she said, 'It is very hard, after having

[1] Telfer, p. 292.

been a captain, to be degraded to a cornet.'[1] With her new dress she still, however, retains the cross of St. Louis.

"The following incident will show that her manners are far from being prudish. In company with several foreigners who were strangers to her, 'Chevalier,' said a lady, 'to the best of my remembrance, when you were dressed like a man, you had a very handsome leg.' 'Parbleu!' replied D'Eon with vivacity, pulling up her petticoats, 'if you are curious to see it, here it is.' 'If you wanted satisfaction,' said one, 'should you not regret your former situation and your arms?' 'I have already considered that matter,' answered D'Eon, 'and when I quitted my hat and sword, I own it gave me some concern; but I said to myself, What signifies it? I may do as much perhaps with my slipper!' D'Eon is so little reconciled to her new metamorphosis that whenever she is in company with any Knights of St. Louis, and one of them is called 'Mr. Chevalier,' she turns about, thinking that she is meant. She is not yet accustomed to the usual ceremonials established between the sexes; or rather it is obvious that having always, in her former state of life, shown great attention to the ladies, she finds it difficult to restrain it; at

[1] "The spirit of this pun evaporates in English. *Cornet*, in French, signifies a woman's headdress, as well as a subaltern of horse."—*Note by the Editor of the "Gentleman's Magazine"* (A.D. 1778).

table when she sits near them she is always ready to fill their glasses; at coffee, no sooner has a lady emptied her cup, than D'Eon springs from her chair to hand it to the table.

"As to the person and stature of our female hero, Mademoiselle d'Eon (for so she must be styled) has a handsome neck and bosom, and appears to advantage as a woman. Indeed, as she formerly made herself a beard, her chin is furnished with some hairs, which she employs herself with nipping; her complexion is fair; her stature about five feet four inches, so she could not be very tall in uniform.

"Those who have not seen her in a man's dress cannot conceive how she could appear genteel in her former clothes; she wears her heels very low and somewhat large; she has a particular [Burgundian] accent, which is not unbecoming, as her voice is agreeable; she makes her curtsy in a rustic fashion without moving her thighs, but bending her knees forward with great quickness.

"On being advised to put on some rouge, her answer was that she had tried it, but that it would not stick upon her face. Considering her body only as a case, or as the shell of her soul, she despises it, and even pretends sometimes that her neck is troublesome; everything seems strange to her in her new accoutrement, but she is convinced that use will reconcile it."

About this time numerous portraits of the Chevalière were exhibited in Paris, and both

in and out of society people were anxious to get a glimpse of the new Joan of Arc, as she was freely styled. Now and again, too, fictitious Demoiselles d'Eon, wearing the cross of St. Louis, would make their appearance in public—now at the promenade, now at some masquerade, and at times even in fashionable *salons*. A certain Madame de Fourqueux was in this way imposed upon by a painter named Musson, who, after the Duke de Gadagne, ranked as the greatest practical joker in Paris.

It may have been these circumstances and annoyances which after a while induced D'Eon to shut herself up in her residence at Petit Montreuil; however, though she may have concealed herself, she by no means kept quiet, for we find her writing numerous letters and pamphlets against Beaumarchais, with whom she was again at loggerheads. She abused him as vigorously as ever,[1] freely charging him with

[1] On one occasion she wrote of him as follows: "In London I had a beautiful miniature of the Virgin after Correggio. Beaumarchais told me that he greatly admired virgins, so I gave dear Caron mine. I had a picture of Venus after Caraccio; Beaumarchais told me that he also admired Venuses, so I gave dear Caron mine. I had a large and magnificent iron coffer with wonderful locks, in which I kept my correspondence; Beaumarchais told me he was very fond of iron coffers, so I gave dear Caron mine. I had a superb medallion enriched with pearls; Beaumarchais told me he was very fond of medallions and pearls, so I gave dear Caron mine. He promised me another medallion in exchange, but —he never gave me anything. I had a brace of magnificent Turkish carbines; Beaumarchais told me he was very fond

having defrauded her of money which was her due, whilst he replied by reproaching her with base ingratitude. Vergennes at last gave Beaumarchais a certificate of probity, in which it was stated that the author of "Le Barbier" had not even made any charge for his personal expenses, and had never evinced aught but a desire to facilitate Mademoiselle d'Eon's return to her native land.[1] Still the Chevalière did not cease attacking him, and finally Beaumarchais renewed his complaints to Vergennes, when the minister promised to put a stop to the scandal,[2] as he no doubt did, for in February, 1778, the controversy came to a sudden close.

About this time the news reached D'Eon that a verdict for the plaintiff having been given in another of the London policy cases, a motion had been made in the Court of King's Bench for an arrest in judgment, which Lord Mansfield had granted, saying that the jury's decision tended to indecency and to make the courts of justice subservient to the purposes of gamblers and swindlers. As soon

of Turkish carbines, but so am I fond of them, and know how to use them too, so I did not give dear Caron mine."

[1] Beaumarchais appears to have rendered his accounts with regard to D'Eon more than a year before, namely, on January 2, 1777, when he handed over to the minister the balance of the money which he still had in hand. (Archives des Affaires Etrangères.) This is good evidence of his honesty at the time; however, it was perhaps interested honesty, as for the furtherance of his own schemes he had the utmost need of Vergennes' help and protection.

[2] Lescure's "Correspondance Secrète," etc., vol. i. p. 139.

as D'Eon heard of this she again rushed into print, declaring in bombastic style that she had forced England to respect the laws of honour!

It was also in February that year that Voltaire, after prolonged exile, came to Paris, taking up his abode with "Belle et Bonne's" husband, the Marquis de Villette, in the Rue de Beaune. We all know what a sensation was caused by the arrival of the patriarch of Ferney—how at first he walked about the capital wearing a huge black woollen wig surmounted by a furred red cap, how the Parisian ragamuffins ran after him, thinking that he was thus adorned in honour of the carnival, and how he received the high and mighty personages of the time in his nightcap and dressing-gown. Hearing of D'Eon, the great man expressed a desire to see her, and on March 12 we find her betaking herself to the Rue de Beaune. "This celebrated woman," says a contemporary account, "excited as much curiosity as the patriarch whom she had come to visit. All the servants, indeed everybody in the house, assembled to see her pass. She looked, however, in some measure ashamed, casting furtive glances around her, and burying her nose in her muff. Her visit was a brief one."[1] A few days later Voltaire received a portrait of her—a copy of a print issued in

[1] Bachaumont's "Mémoires Secrets," continued by P. de Mairobert, March 13, 1778.

London, in which she was represented as Pallas—and writing to his friend, Count d'Argental, he remarked that the Chevalière's case was a nice problem for history. Since her visit, the shrewd old philosopher seems to have had his doubts of her real sex, for he adds, significantly enough, "some academy will prove the case to be most authentic. D'Eon will be a pucelle d'Orléans who has escaped the stake."

Soon afterwards the Chevalière fell ill with rheumatic gout, which she ascribed to her change of attire and her inability to take proper exercise, for she could not appear abroad in female garb without "all Paris and Versailles running after her." The royal physicians, Latone and Lieutard, attended her, and according to her own account one of them made the remark: "Be easy, dear madam, your's is an incurable complaint, which will disappear as it came." Writing to M. de Sartines in June, the Chevalière declared that her health was still very bad, and she begged him to obtain the permission of M. de Maurepas that she might wear a man's clothes on week days, so that she might take the exercise "indispensable for her existence," and only wear her skirts on Sundays and festivals. "Obtain that permission for me, Monseigneur," she added, "and I will bless you." However, it was not granted.

About the time of Voltaire's arrival in Paris Louis XVI. had signed a treaty of commerce and

amity with the American colonists, whose independence he formally recognized; and war between France and Great Britain speedily ensued. In Paris the current of popular feeling was strongly in favour of the Americans, and some efforts which D'Eon appears to have made to prevent France from engaging in hostilities with England met with no success whatever. Her feelings then underwent a change, for a few months later we find her soliciting permission to serve against England with the army of 50,000 men which Marshal de Broglie and General de Rochambeau were at this stage collecting together. The Marshal, she asserted, had expressed his willingness to take her on his staff if she could only obtain an authorization to wear her uniform; but, however this may have been, the Count de Broglie, to whom she also wrote on the subject, curtly refused to assist her. As for the ministers, determined as they were that she should lead the peaceful life of an old maid, they at once declined to allow her to take service.

Overcome with vexation at finding herself constantly repulsed and humiliated, she retired, about this time presumably, to various convents, such as those of Hautes Bruyères and the Filles de Ste. Marie. In September she came to Versailles, stayed for a time in the Rue de Noailles there, and spent a week at the famous Maison des Demoiselles de St. Cyr. Then, late in October, having just learnt that

Lord Ferrers was dead, she solicited permission to go to England to settle her affairs and look after her library and other property in London; but this request also was refused her,—France and England being still at war.

After this we hear no more of D'Eon for several months; but in February, 1779, she sought permission to serve as a naval volunteer with the fleet assembled at Brest under the orders of Count d'Orvilliers,[1] for failing to annihilate which Admiral Keppel had just been court-martialed.[2] Maurepas, to whom D'Eon's application was addressed, wrote on it, "refer to M. de Vergennes," and Vergennes of course would not give his consent. Thereupon the unfortunate Chevalière, whom one cannot help in some degree pitying, became desperate.

[1] Egerton Collection, British Museum; D'Eon to Maurepas.

[2] Referring to Count d'Orvilliers, Captain Telfer, R.N., blunders strangely. After telling us, truly enough, that a drawn battle was fought between Keppel and Orvilliers off Ushant in July, 1778, he adds that previous to this engagement the French admiral had commanded the combined squadrons of France and Spain, and had ridden master of the Channel for a considerable time. Now Spain did not join in the war till June, 1779, and Orvilliers never commanded the Spanish fleet. He quarrelled with the Spanish admiral, and, sickness arising among the crews, the Franco-Spanish designs on England came to nothing, so that Lord North was able to say in Parliament: "The enemy fitted out a formidable fleet, appeared upon our coasts, talked big, threatened a great deal, did nothing, and then retired. Their immense armaments were paraded to no purpose, and their millions were spent in vain."

She cast her hateful skirts aside and donned her uniform, but her conduct being immediately reported, she was arrested and lodged in the old castle of the Dukes of Burgundy at Dijon. There she remained a prisoner from March to May, 1779. How bitterly must she now have regretted her foolish covenant and subsequent wrangling with Beaumarchais, who had for ever prejudiced those in authority against her!

In September we find her back in Paris, once more attired in female garb; and as she had become "reasonable" again, her annuity of 12,000 livres was confirmed, a deed to that effect being handed to her, in which she was designated as "Charlotte Geneviève Louisa Augusta Andrew Timothy D'Eon, formerly known as the Chevalier d'Eon." This being settled, she was allowed to repair to Tonnerre. The government, no doubt, was tired of keeping her in or near Versailles. D'Eon, who, on her side, abominated being followed about by inquisitive people, was probably of opinion that she would be more comfortable with her mother in her old home, and thither she journeyed, accompanied by her valet Pille, who appears to have been in her service ever since his predecessor Hugonnet had been locked up in the Bastille. Pille was married, and he and his wife were the Chevalière's only servants at this period.

During the years which D'Eon spent at Tonnerre she led no doubt a retired life amid the souvenirs of the past, climbing now and

again the rocky crag on which the Church of St. Peter is perched, and contemplating once more the vine and forest-clad slopes that she had so often gazed upon in childhood, lingering too at times, perchance, beside the tombs of her father and uncles in the hospital chapel, where Louvois and Margaret of Burgundy also lie buried. Occasionally, by the narrow pathway which afterwards served the Duchess d'Angoulême to make her escape from Tonnerre in 1830, she may have descended to the bubbling source known as the Fosse Dionne, whose waters, springing from subterranean depths, feed the Armançon, a couple of hundred yards away. In 1836 there was living at Tonnerre an old man known as Daddy Bouquin, who, in the days when his eyes were clear and his hands steady, had practised the calling of barber; and this gossipy octogenarian was wont to relate that he had shaved the Chevalière regularly every day whilst she resided at Tonnerre. At times, it appears, her purse ran low, possibly because her annuity did not reach her regularly, and she would then hand Bouquin the golden snuff-box, adorned with the portrait of Louis XV. set in a circlet of pearls, which the Well-Beloved himself had presented to her in 1757; and the barber, with this precious souvenir in his pocket, would trudge off to the local *mont-de-piété* for the purpose of raising funds.[1]

[1] Gaillardet, pp. 47, 318.

Whilst the Chevalière was living at Tonnerre the town was visited by two celebrated personages. One of these, Prince Henry of Prussia, brother of Frederick the Great, called upon D'Eon and honoured her with his company at dinner; but the other traveller took good care to give her a wide berth. He was none other than Beaumarchais, who for the nonce had become a timber merchant, and had secured the right of felling many of the ancient trees in the forests of Tonnerre and Péquigny.

In September, 1783, the war between France and Great Britain came to an end, and D'Eon having once more solicited permission to return to London, this was eventually granted her. One account states that she landed in this country in November, 1784,[1] while another represents her as being still in Paris about the middle of 1785.[2] It must therefore have been in November of the last-named year that she arrived in London, attended by a maid, and put up at her old apartments in Brewer Street. Her landlord, not having received any rent for seven years, had previously advertised her library for sale, but she appears to have made arrangements which, for the time at all events, secured her books in her possession.

[1] Gaillardet, p. 322. [2] Telfer, p. 307.

XV.

November, 1785—May, 1810.

D'Eon retains her Skirts in England—Her Difficulties with Lord Ferrers' Bond—Horace Walpole on her Manners and Appearance—She gains an Action against Lord Ferrers, but fails to obtain her Money—She fences with the Chevalier de Saint-Georges before the First Gentleman in Europe, plays chess with Phillidor, and writes a Pamphlet on the Insanity of George III.—The Sale of her Books averted by Public Subscription—Her Jewels sold at Christie's—Her Petition for Leave to return to France—She surrenders some more Diplomatic Papers and is reduced to Poverty—Déjeuner and Assault of Arms at Mrs. Bateman's—The Chevalière's Handwriting and Knowledge of English—She becomes the "Citoyenne Geneviève Déon," is instructed to join Dumouriez, but is unable to leave England—Her Fencing Tours with Mrs. Bateman—She is seriously wounded at Southampton—Her Life with Mrs. Cole—The Chronicle of her last Years—Her Annuity from "Old Q."—Her final Illness and her Death—It is discovered she is a Man—Remarks upon D'Eon's Career—The D'Eon MSS. and Relics at Tonnerre.

AS the Chevalière whilst in France had constantly sought to discard her female garments, it might be imagined that she would have reappeared as a man on reaching England. But she retained her skirts presumably in order not to

forfeit her annuity, which was now her sole resource. On arriving in London she had to devote herself to facing her financial difficulties and save her effects from being sold. Earl Ferrers and Duval the jeweller, to whom she had passed his Lordship's bond, were both dead, and she now opened negotiations with Robert, Earl Ferrers, brother and heir to the late peer. But she soon realized, it appears, that the new earl only wished to gain time and keep her out of her money; and eventually, with the support curiously enough of his Lordship's son, Lord Tamworth, who is said to have supplied her with funds for the purpose, she took proceedings to recover the amount of the bond in the Court of Common Pleas. We know little about her life at this time, but among her best friends appear to have been the Angelos, Wilkes, the elder Sheridan, Hone, of "Every-Day Book" celebrity, Richard Cosway, the Royal Academician, and a certain Colonel Kemys Tynte, of Kavenmally in Monmouthshire.

From Horace Walpole we learn that in January, 1786, he received a note from Mrs. Cosway telling him that D'Eon was indignant that he had taken no notice of her a few evenings previously, when both he and she had been present at one of Mrs. Cosway's entertainments. In consequence of this reproach, at another soirée given shortly afterwards by the Cosways, Walpole made a point of speaking to the Chevalière. Count Ogin-

ski and Wilkes were also there, and Walpole commends to posterity this meeting of the notorious Polish exile, the disreputable English patriot, and the enigmatical French adventuress. Thanks, it appears, to "the flowing bowl," the party proved a rather merry one, but Walpole complains that D'Eon was "loud, noisy, and vulgar"—possibly because she drank too much wine—and further notes that she now talked with a strong Burgundian accent (the result no doubt of her long sojourn at Tonnerre), and had neither muff nor gloves with her. In his eyes her arms at any rate did not appear to have changed their sex, and he remarks that they looked "fitter to carry a chair than to handle a fan."

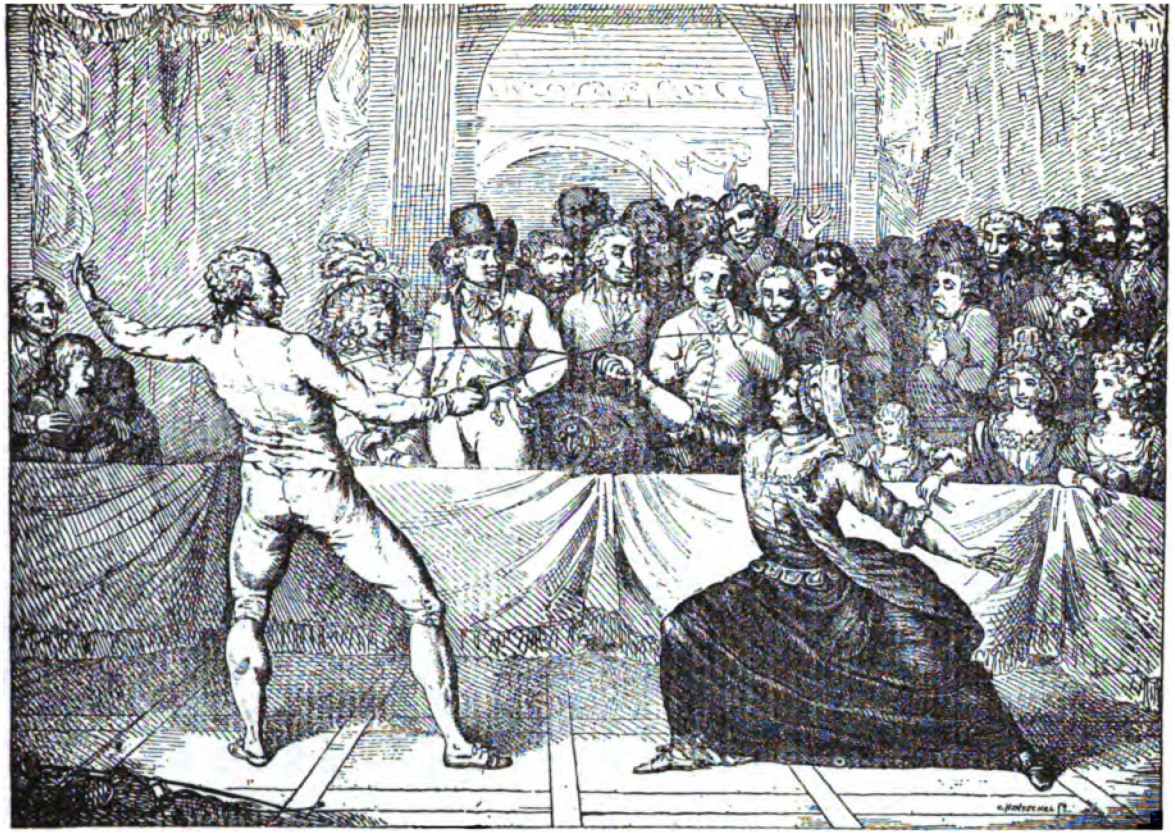
A year later we find the Chevalière gaining her action against Earl Ferrers, but the bond remained unpaid, as his Lordship died in April, 1787. Lord Tamworth then succeeded to the title, and D'Eon no doubt imagined that having befriended her in her contest with his father he would now discharge her claims. But the new Earl, on the principle perhaps that circumstances alter cases, did nothing of the kind; and the Chevalière lacking the means to institute fresh legal proceedings was unable to obtain the money.

About this time the celebrated Chevalier de Saint-Georges,[1] one of the most skilful fencers

[1] Mouſle d'Angerville gives the following account of Saint-Georges in his continuation of Bachaumont, under date May

of the period, had come to England accompanied by Fabien and Delamotte, also well known by their prowess with the foil; and the Prince of Wales, for his own entertainment and that of Mrs. Fitzherbert, was anxious to see them display their skill in an assault-at-arms. It having been arranged that a match should take place at Carlton House, various English fencers of repute were engaged to meet the Frenchmen—including the two Angelos, Nogee, Reda, Rolland, and Goddard. D'Eon also was specially invited, and she and Angelo senior were appointed judges for the occasion. A number of political and fashionable celebrities were present, and the great feature of the afternoon proved to be an assault between Saint-Georges and D'Eon, "who, though encumbered," says a newspaper of the time, "with three petticoats, not only parried all the thrusts of her powerful antagonist, but even touched him by what is termed a *coup de temps*, which all his dexterity could not ward off." On touching Saint-Georges, we are told, the Chevalière was modest enough to attribute her success to his complaisance, but

1, 1779: "M. de Saint-Georges is a mulatto endowed with many gifts by nature; he not only fences but plays the violin in a superior style, and, despite the ugliness of his face, is even a great favourite with women. Owing to his skill as a musician he has been admitted to play before the Queen [Marie Antoinette], and Madame de Montesson wishing to secure him for her fêtes has prevailed on the Duke d'Orléans [her lover] to give him a post in his hunting service."



THE ASSAULT BETWEEN THE CHEVALIÈRE D'EON AND THE CHEVALIER DE SAINT-GEORGES AT CARLTON HOUSE, APRIL 9, 1787 : FROM THE PAINTING BY ROBINEAU.

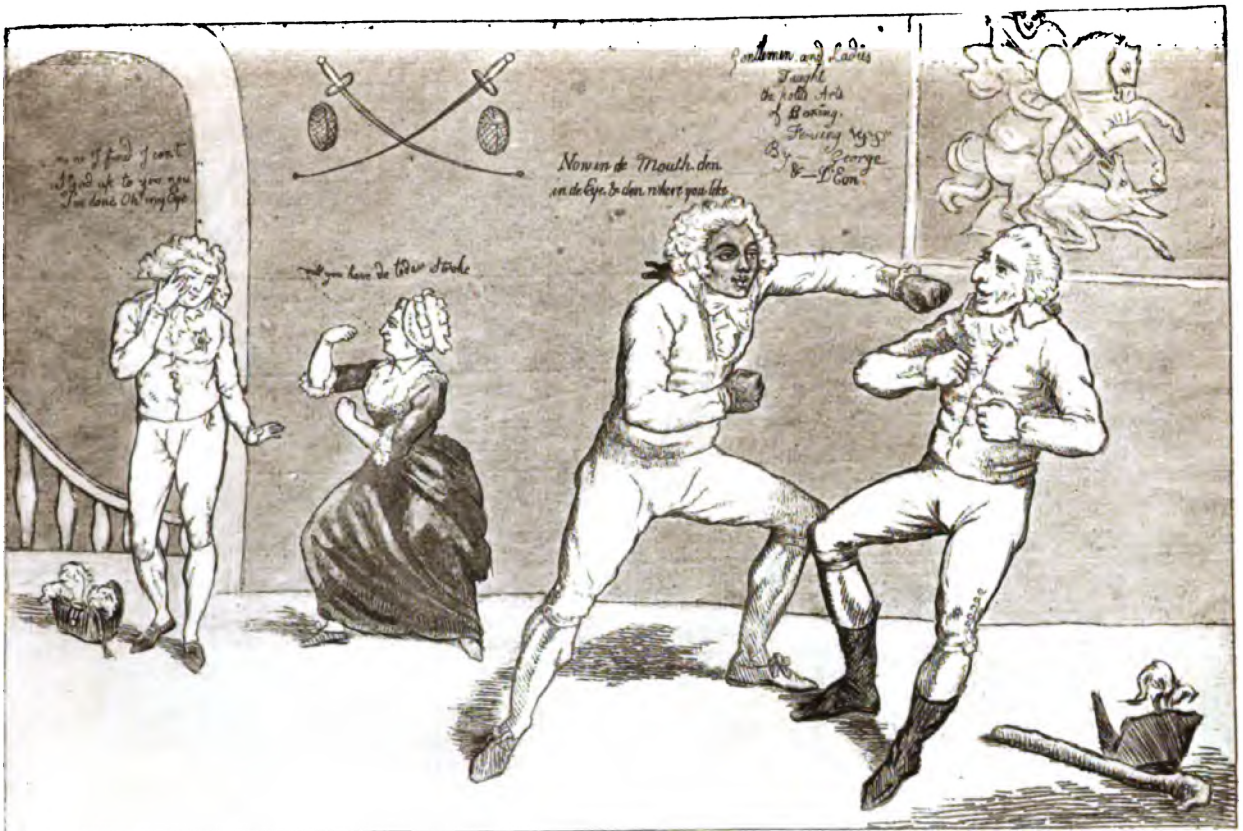
Saint-Georges candidly declared that he had done all in his power to ward against it. D'Eon was then fifty-nine years old, be it noted, whilst Saint-Georges was in his prime.

That D'Eon's encounter with Saint-Georges became for a time the talk of the town there can be no doubt; and possibly some St. James's wit threw out a suggestion that the Chevalière and her mulatto antagonist, instead of confining themselves to fencing, should establish an academy for the propagation of the noble art of self-defence as exemplified by pugilism—that form of fighting being more in accordance with degenerate British tastes. At all events such may well have been the idea that inspired the designer of a contemporary caricature, here reprinted, in which we see Saint-Georges "drawing the claret" of some high and mighty personage whom we have failed to identify; whilst D'Eon, with her "bruisers" up, has half-blinded another distinguished-looking individual with a star upon his breast. From the presence of this badge of rank one can only suppose that the victim of the Chevalière's prowess is his Royal Highness the First Gentleman in Europe. Perhaps, however, the moral which the caricaturist desired to convey was that D'Eon and Saint-Georges, in lieu of wasting their strength and dexterity upon themselves, would have been far better employed in administering to the afore-mentioned personages the castigation which they richly deserved.



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Pubd Oct. 12. 1789.

St GEORGE & THE DRAGON AND MADLLE D'EON "RIPOSTING"

Prince of Wales. Madlle D'Eon. M. St George. Col. G. Hanger.

We are told that the Chevalière also appeared about this time before the Prince of Wales, at the King's Theatre, when she fenced in armour, wearing a casque and plume so as to represent either Minerva or Joan of Arc.[1] She also played against the renowned and "subtle" Phillidor, the conqueror of Jean Jacques and Diderot, at the Chess Club in St. James's Street, but with what result we have failed to discover. From an announcement in the papers of the day, however, it appears that tickets to view the match cost five shillings apiece. In 1788, when George III.'s mind gave way, we find D'Eon issuing a pamphlet "to the English in their sad present circumstances," and then we hear nothing more of her till three years later, when it is announced that all her books, manuscripts, and other effects are to be sold by auction by Mr. Christie "in his Great Room in Pall Mall." The issue of a catalogue, prefaced by a narrative of her misfortunes and the treatment which she had received from the Ferrers family, led, however, to a subscription in the Chevalière's favour, which the Prince of Wales generously headed with a donation of £100. In this way a sum of £465 was raised for her, and the managers of Ranelagh having also given her a benefit "in consideration of her having been deprived of a considerable portion of her fortune by the odious detention of a deposit,"[2] she was able

[1] Telfer, p. 309. [2] *Ibid.*, pp. 311-20.

to defer the sale of her effects, and to jog on till February, 1792, when, however, it became necessary for her to part with most of her jewellery and plate at Christie's. The sale produced £348 17*s.* 7*d.*, which included £155 for one pair of single-drop brilliant earrings and £110 for a diamond cross and chain. The snuff-box presented to the Chevalière by the Czarina Elizabeth only fetched two and a half guineas, however; that given to her by Louis XV. she presumably retained, unless, indeed, it had remained in pawn at Tonnerre.

Having utilized the proceeds of the sale to satisfy some of her more pressing creditors, D'Eon now packed up her remaining effects and petitioned the Legislative Assembly for leave to return to France and join the army. She asserted in her petition that "she had been the sport of nature, of fortune, of war, of peace, of men and women, and of the malice and intrigues of Courts;" she had passed, she said, "from the state of a girl to that of a boy, and from the state of a man to that of a woman, experiencing in turn all the strange vicissitudes of human life." And she wound up by expressing the hope that soon with arms in her hand she would be able "to fly on the wings of liberty and victory to fight and die for the nation, the law, and the King."

We are told that the reading of this petition was received with applause by the Assembly, which referred the Chevalière's application to

its military committee. At this time it appears D'Eon had become intimate with Hirschinger, the French Chargé d'affaires in London, to whom, on February 1 of the same year, she delivered "a valise containing papers of the Court and King,"[1] and Hirschinger seems to have supported her application for permission to return to France. But her creditors would not allow her to leave London, and during the greater part of the year 1792 she had to live from hand to mouth mainly on the hospitality of various friends. At this period, no doubt, owing to the troubled state of France, she had altogether ceased to receive her pension.

With the object of raising money the Chevalière at last decided to exhibit her skill in fencing once more, and made her first appearance, in what proved to be a series of performances, at the house of Mrs. Bateman, a well-known actress and female fencer, with whom she had become very intimate. The assault was prefaced by a *déjeuner*, at which several English and French officers, literary men, and theatrical celebrities were present. Among other facsimiles of D'Eon's handwriting at different periods, one is here given of an invitation to this *déjeuner*, from which some idea may be gained of her knowledge of Eng-

[1] Possibly these were the papers claimed by Beaumarchais as not having been delivered up to him. The information is derived from an entry in D'Eon's own diary for 1792.—D'Eon MSS., British Museum.

lish at the time. The Mr. Sewart to whom the invitation is addressed is the William Seward, "much given to yawning," who was so intimate with the Thrales and figures so prominently in Fanny Burney's "Diary." The son of an eminent brewer of the firm of Calvert and Seward, he is nowadays little remembered, though he wrote some not uninteresting "Anecdotes of Distinguished Persons." He seems to have been on very friendly terms with D'Eon, and, curiously enough, most of the copies of the latter's works now in the British Museum appear to have come from his library.

D'Eon, as another of the facsimiles here given shows, would seem to have become a thorough-going Republican, for she dropped such titles as "Chevalier" and "Chevalière" to style herself "La Citoyenne Geneviève Déon." By a curious coincidence, whilst the fencing-match at Mrs. Bateman's was in progress the French National Convention was voting the death of Louis XVI. D'Eon's antagonists on the occasion were Sir George Kelly and Captain Walmsley, and she appears to have acquitted herself with great credit in both assaults. She scarcely anticipated, however, even at this time, that she would have to take to fencing as a regular source of livelihood, for we find that on the previous day she had once more begun preparations for returning to France, having, she wrote to a friend, received instructions from the Minister of War to join the

1769 Le Chr D'Eon. /.

1790 La Chre D'Eon. /.

La Citoyenne Geneviève

1793 D'Eon. /.

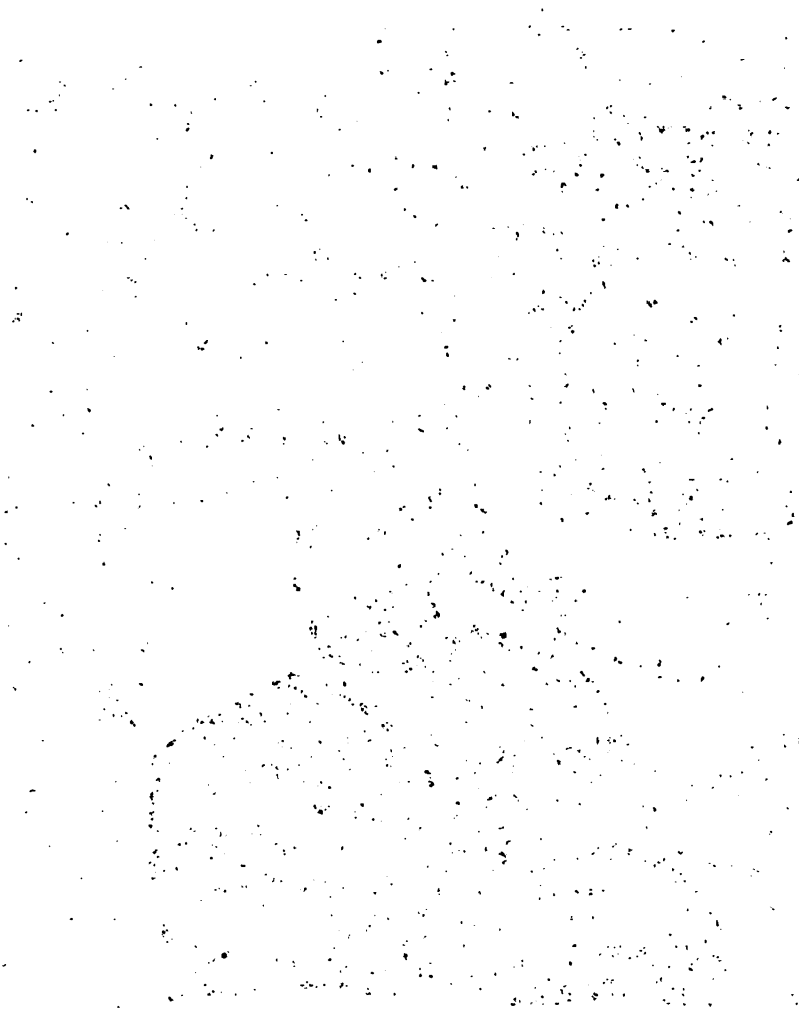
Mlle D'Eon requests the honour
of Mr. Servant and his Company
to a Breakfast at her friend Mrs
Bateman's, No. 1, Carlisle Street
Soho, on Wednesday 16 inst at
12 O'clock 12 January 1793.

FACSIMILES OF D'EON'S HANDWRITING.

army of General Dumouriez.[1] She had arranged to send six cases containing some of her effects across the Channel, and had consigned nine others, containing mainly books and manuscripts, to Mr. Christie. However, she was unable to get away, no doubt for lack of means, and before long we find her fencing in turn at Devonshire House, at the Club d'Armes in Brewer Street, at the Haymarket Theatre, when, we are told, "never since the death of Garrick had the house been so full," at Ranelagh, and at Brighton (before the Prince of Wales), and at Margate, Deal, Dover, and Canterbury. The tour, it appears, had been organized by Mrs. Bateman in connection with her own theatrical performances.

In 1794, D'Eon fenced in public at Ranelagh and at Brighton; in 1795, at Bath, Birmingham, and Worcester; in 1796, at Bath, Oxford, and Southampton, where, on August 26, in receiving a thrust from her adversary, the foil broke off, inflicting a serious wound in the right armpit, which disabled her completely. She was forced to keep her bed for some months in consequence of this accident, and was so feeble upon her return to London that she had to relinquish all hope of continuing to lead an active life. She now resided with a Mrs. Cole, a Frenchwoman

[1] Telfer, p. 323 (D'Eon to M. Beauvais, Jan. 12, 1793). Before long, on April 4, Dumouriez passed over to the enemy.



[illegible] Colonel Piercy.[1] She had arranged to send six cases containing some of her effects across the Channel, and had consigned nine cases, containing mainly books and [illegible] scores, to Mrs Christie. However, she was able to get away, to avoid the Lisle difficulties, and before long we find her residing in turn at Devonshire House, at the Club d'Arras in Bruton Street, at the Haymarket Theatre (where, we are told, "never since the death of Garrick had the house been so full"), at Lansdowne House, and at Carlton House (before the Prince of Wales), and at Margate. Lady Dover, and Lady Salisbury, however, it appears, had been [illegible] in connection with [illegible].

In [illegible] 1795 toured in public at Ranelagh and at Brighton; in 1795, at Bath, Bristol, and Worcester; in 1796, at Bath, Bristol, and Southampton, where, on August 26, in receiving a thrust from her adversary, the foil broke off, inflicting a severe wound in the right temple, which disabled her completely. She was forced to keep her bed for some months, and was [illegible] her future [illegible] could not be hoped to relinquish all hope of continuing to lead an active life. She now resided with a Mrs Cole, a French woman

[1] See pp. 93, 'Chevalier D'Eon,' vol. ii, 17[illegible] on April 4, Monsieur [illegible]



MAD.LLE LA CHEVALIERE D'EON DE BEAUMONT

Fencing at Carlton House, 9th April, 1787.

born in Lorraine, and widow of a "pump-maker to the Royal Navy." According to her own account, her life "was spent in eating, drinking, and sleeping, prayers, writing, and working with Mrs. Cole, repairing linen, gowns, and headdresses."[1]

The chronicle of her last years is but one of frequent illness and deep poverty. In 1799 she was compelled to part with her last jewels; in 1802, at the time of the Peace of Amiens, she obtained a passport to return to France, but was too deeply involved to do so. In fact, from July till November that year she was detained for debt at the house of an officer of the sheriffs for Surrey. Now and again various friends sent her money, and the Duke of Queensberry, "Old Q.," allowed her, says Telfer, an annuity of £50 a year. She had made many efforts to arrive at a settlement with the Ferrers family, but without result, mainly, we are led to infer, because the Ferrers themselves were financially embarrassed.

At last infirmity fell heavily upon her. After attaining her eightieth year, in 1808, she became almost bedridden, and required careful nursing and attention from Mrs. Cole, who, from Telfer's account, would seem to have been devoted to her. The pair now resided at 26, New Milman Street, near the Foundling Hospital. In or about 1809, D'Eon sent for Father Elisée, who had at one time

[1] Telfer, p. 328.

been surgeon to the Fathers of Charity of Grenoble, and having emigrated had secured the handsomely remunerated office of physician to "Old Q." Elisée was indeed a man of remarkable attainments, and after the Restoration became physician to Louis XVIII. He and Dr. Perigalèse did all they could for D'Eon, but she daily grew weaker and weaker, until, on the morning of May 21, 1810, she quietly passed away.

Then there came a surprise. While the Chevalière's remains were being prepared for interment, it was discovered that she was not a woman after all, but a man. Father Elisée was informed of this, and expressed great surprise at the news. However, there was no denying the evidence. The Earl of Yarborough, Sir Sidney Smith, the Hon. Mr. Lyttleton, and others were present at the dissection of the body, which was performed by Mr. Thomas Copeland, surgeon, who certified that D'Eon was indeed of the masculine sex, and of that sex only. However, we are told that the throat was by no means like a man's; that the shoulders were square, the breast remarkably full, the arms, hands, and fingers those of a stout female; the hips very small, and the legs and feet corresponding with the arms.[1]

[1] Telfer. Mr. Copeland's certificate and the explicit attestations of those who viewed the remains will be found in Gaillardet's and Telfer's works. We have not thought it necessary to reproduce them here.

Prior to the funeral the remains were viewed by a number of French *émigrés*, including General the Count de Béhague, who had known D'Eon at the time he was in the dragoons, the Chevalier Degères, who had known him as a *demoiselle*, and the Prince de Conti—son of D'Eon's early protector—who happened to be then in England. As for old Mrs. Cole, with whom D'Eon had lived for many years, she was amazed at the discovery, having always believed her companion to be a woman, and according to an eyewitness she did not recover from the shock for many hours. On May 28, D'Eon's remains were interred at St. Pancras; but when the Midland Railway Company required the ground, some five-and-twenty years ago, the tomb disappeared with many others. However, D'Eon's name figures on the monument erected by the Baroness Burdett-Coutts in memory of those whose ashes formerly rested here.

Our task is done. The speculations which arose respecting D'Eon's sex, the suspicion that he was a woman, undoubtedly originated through his dispassionate temperament, to which there are frequent allusions in his letters to the Count de Broglie and others. It was this frigidity of disposition and the chastity of the life he led that caused the Marquis de l'Hôpital one day to write him a note in which he derisively called him "my dear Lia" and "Ma

belle de Beaumont"—a note which is still in existence, and largely contributed to the legend that D'Eon had lived at the Russian Court in female guise. But the Marquis can only have penned this billet in a spirit of fun. As other letters of his at Tonnerre and in the Archives des Affaires Etrangères prove, he was ever chaffing D'Eon respecting his staid behaviour. Himself an old libertine, he could not understand why his young secretary did not lead the immoral life common to men of fashion at that period.

Then, at a later period, came La Dufour's assertions that D'Eon had dressed as a woman whilst hiding in her house, assertions which were doubtless noised about, and which were followed by Drouet's indecent reports, and possibly by some ambiguous statements made by the Princess Dashkoff. At last the policy gambling was started, and had attained its height when Beaumarchais began to negotiate with D'Eon. Thereupon, the Chevalier, in the first instance possibly for mere amusement, but before long with the object of enlisting the sympathies of Beaumarchais and tricking him, asserted that he *was* a woman—intending, no doubt, simply to play the part so long as it might suit his purposes. But he was caught in his own trap, for Beaumarchais and Vergennes were swift to realize that if D'Eon were taken at his word there could be no question of acceding to his demands for rein-

statement as Minister Plenipotentiary to Great Britain, or for future employment in either the diplomatic or military service. In this way, moreover, there could be no revival of the Guerchy scandal, for the young Count—who, to his mother's alarm, spoke so freely of fighting his father's traducer—could not possibly cross swords with a woman. It seems certain that Madame de Guerchy intervened both with the King and with ministers, and in all likelihood this intervention of hers was decisive. She belonged, it will be remembered, to the House of Harcourt, which was extremely influential, and held important posts at Court.

Thus, having once declared himself to be of the female sex, D'Eon was compelled to pass as a woman during the remainder of his days; first, in order that he might effect a satisfactory financial arrangement with the French government; secondly, after his return to France, in order that he might escape detention in some fortress, as was certain to be his fate if he acknowledged that he had wilfully tricked the King and his ministers, and we know that his mere assumption of his military uniform led to a three months' imprisonment in the castle of Dijon; and, thirdly, on his return to London, the Chevalier was forced to continue practising the deception, in order that he might not imperil the pension or annuity which had become his sole remaining resource. This ceased to be paid him about 1791-2, but it was then too

late for him to retrace his steps and reveal his real sex, for he had passed as a woman for so many years, and had been admitted into the intimacy of so many English ladies, that had he then disclosed the truth the outcry against him would have been universal. Tolerant though the age was with regard to matters of propriety, D'Eon in all likelihood would have lost every friend at the time when he most needed assistance, for we know that he had become virtually penniless. Thus, for the sake of a pittance, he was forced to perpetuate the fraud.

Of course he could not deceive his own mother; and old Bouquin, who had so often shaved him, told M. Gaillardet in 1836 that D'Eon had *never* been able to make the people of Tonnerre believe that he was really a woman. He persuaded them, no doubt, of what was in a measure true, that he wore female attire in obedience to the royal commands; omitting to mention, however, that he himself had asserted his femininity.

There are, it should be noted, two distinct periods in D'Eon's life. In his earlier years, with Douglas, L'Hôpital, and Nivernais, he succeeded remarkably well. They treated him kindly, too kindly possibly, for in a measure they spoilt him. When he had become Minister Plenipotentiary in England, he doubtless asked himself, like Fouquet the financier, to what heights he might not attain. His was indeed

a case of vaulting ambition that o'erleapt itself. To be superseded was alone a hard blow; to discover that he was not to be transferred elsewhere as a plenipotentiary, but was to sink back to mere secretarial rank at his present post, was harder still. And then, too, the successor, on whom he must needs fawn, and whom he must needs obey, was to be the Count de Guerchy, a man supremely vain of his name and lineage, authoritative beyond all measure, and apt to treat inferiors—as D'Eon had known by experience ever since the German war—with the most withering contempt. Before Guerchy even arrived in London, the haughty spirit of his communications, and the charges of extravagance which he preferred, had roused D'Eon's anger, and this the more readily as the Chevalier had hitherto been accustomed to deal with generous, easy-going superiors. And at last, although never really insane, D'Eon doubtless lost his head, for in no other way can one account for the defiant manner in which he acted to the detriment of his purse and future prospects. He was scarcely a good diplomatist when his own interests were concerned; for he did not know how to bend and let the storm pass by, but met it standing, at the risk of being carried off his feet.

We dismiss as unproven and as altogether improbable his own romantic story that Louis XV. was responsible for the course he took on

Guerchy's arrival in London, bade him remain in England in female garb, and authorized him to abstract from the embassy archives the more important documents preserved there. He was in honour bound to retain possession of the secret papers, but of those alone; for having been officially superseded he had no right whatever to the custody of the others. With reference to the charges of attempted murder which he brought against Count de Guerchy, we will concede that he may have believed them to be in some degree true, but it was the belief of a disordered mind, which, if not perilously near the brink of that form of insanity known as persecution mania, was at least surcharged with resentment. To that resentment, and to the perfidious statements of a worthless, thieving adventurer like Vergy, D'Eon listened far too readily. To his conduct in after years some reference has already been made. His intercourse with Beaumarchais was simply a case of diamond cut diamond. Intending to trick "dear Caron," he was tricked himself, with the result that he was not only forced to masquerade as a woman, but failed to secure by far the larger part of the money paid to Earl Ferrers. Granting that the Ferrers family treated him disgracefully, we may ask if he himself behaved honourably with Beaumarchais? In point of fact, both he and Beaumarchais (though the latter did at all events render a proper account to Vergennes) showed

themselves to be destitute of moral scruples. Each wanted to secure money, and sought to obtain it in his own particular way—Beaumarchais, for his part, by means of the objectionable policy gambling. As for D'Eon, it may be fairly assumed that long years of galling disappointment and indebtedness, with the ever-recurring necessity of devising some shift or other in order to jog along, and the frequentation at times of shady members of the foreign colony in London—which a recent French historical work has shown to have been composed at that period of innumerable forgers, thieves, blackmailers, and fraudulent bankrupts—had in certain respects quite perverted him. Talented he still was, witty like Beaumarchais himself, but the "petit D'Eon" of the days of Bernis, L'Hôpital, and Nivernais, the "petit D'Eon" all fervour and hope, with lofty aspirations to gratify in the life opening before him, was no more. To borrow an apt expression from present day slang, it was simply a case of a good man gone wrong.

This is strikingly exemplified by D'Eon's behaviour from a religious point of view. We find that he made a great show of piety during the latter years of his life, but being a man and knowing himself to be one his conduct in entering convents and living among the nuns, to whom he pretended he was a woman, was certainly neither a religious nor an honourable act. And what must we think of his behaviour

in attending mass and taking the holy communion whilst practising this great deception? We cannot, therefore, accept as sincere the religious professions contained in many of his writings, and even in his will and testament, in which he designates himself as a woman. We would rather he had shown the incredulity of an atheist than such hypocrisy. And yet, when occasion required, he would readily inveigh against the Jesuits!

In the Tonnerre Library there is a wonderful collection of letters, literary MSS., private and official documents, left by D'Eon. They form no fewer than thirty parcels, and comprise 10,000 different papers. Add to these the D'Eon MSS. in the French Archives, those possessed by Mr. J. H. B. Christie, and those in the British Museum, with a score of books and pamphlets issued by the Chevalier and his antagonists, and it will be realized what a mass of material is at the disposition of his biographers. The Tonnerre documents were but superficially examined in 1836 by M. Gaillardet, whose intention at the time was to write a romance, not a biography, and since then, until a search was made among them for the purposes of the present work, they would appear to have been scarcely glanced at. There is, we understand, some prospect of these papers being properly classified, as a lady descended from the D'Eon family has bequeathed a house to serve as a D'Eon museum. Among the

objects which will there be displayed are the sword that the Chevalier wore as a captain of dragoons, his military gloves, his slippers, and his work-case, one of his black silk dresses, and several articles of furniture, caskets, and paintings that belonged to him. Nor should one forget a large collection of portraits showing him both in male and female garb, and now at the town library.

The owner of the house where the Chevalier was born preserves there D'Eon's shot-pouch and powder-flash, and several handsome pieces of furniture which belonged to his mother, and were used by him whilst he remained at Tonnerre. The most interesting of the relics here, however, is a half-length portrait of the Chevalier as a woman, executed in oils, unsigned, but dated 1786. In this portrait D'Eon wears a white lace cap, a little gold cross suspended from a ribbon about his neck, and the cross of St. Louis on his breast. The features are very expressive, and the general appearance is that of a person close upon sixty years of age.

THE END.

APPENDIX.

I.—D'Eon and Peter the Great's "Will."

THE so-called "will" of the Czar Peter was first published by Napoleon I. in 1811, when on the eve of his Russian campaign, and the "Moscow Gazette" of that date asserted that it was a forgery due to the inventive pen of the French emperor himself, which assumption has been adopted by more recent writers. However, the Paris "Figaro" of October 16, 1876, published a letter from M. Gaillardet, the author of a biography of the Chevalier d'Eon, which seems to upset altogether the theory that the document originated with Napoleon. M. Gaillardet states that the life of the Chevalier published by Lafortelle with the sanction of the French government in 1779, from notes supplied by D'Eon, who was then alive, records an assertion of the latter, that on his return from Russia in the year 1757, he had placed a copy of a plan of Peter the Great's in the hands of the Abbé de Bernis, Minister for Foreign Affairs; and he also quotes a letter from the Count de Choiseul to D'Eon, dated November 26, 1770, in which the receipt of a paper relating to Peter the Great is acknowledged,

which paper, according to M. Gaillardet, could have been none other than what he calls the "will."

As a matter of fact the document is called by its author—whoever he may have been—a "Plan for Compassing the Supremacy of Russia in Europe," and Peter is supposed to have written it after the battle of Pultova, when Charles XII. of Sweden had fled into Turkey.

To return, however, to D'Eon. Writing in 1778 he lamented in bitter terms the small importance which had been attributed to some such paper by the French government. By that time many of its provisions had been already amply fulfilled: the first partition of Poland had occurred in 1773; a most destructive war, from 1769 to 1774, had been waged by Catherine II. against Turkey, which resulted in Russia obtaining possession of the tract known as New Servia, of which Odessa is now the capital, on the north shore of the Black Sea, and of the forts of Yenikaleh and Kertch in the Crimea, and in Russian merchant vessels being for the first time admitted to the free navigation of the Bosphorus. In 1787 war had again broken out, and Turkey lost the Crimea, the Isle of Taman, and part of Kouban, in the Caucasus. "The projects of Peter the Great," writes the Chevalier d'Eon in 1778, "were considered in 1757 to be so impossible of attainment as to be simply a chimera, and no attention was paid to my representations by the ministers at Versailles. From my bed of sickness [he had broken his leg on his journey from Russia] I wrote urgently to the King, to the Abbé de Bernis, to the Marquis de l'Hôpital, ambassador at St. Petersburg, and to Count de Broglie, ambassador in Poland, to impress upon them that the secret intentions of the Court of St. Petersburg were first to carry out Peter the Great's plan, as soon as the King of Poland, who was then on

his deathbed, should decease, by massing troops all over the country, and securing the election of a king who should be the nominee of Russia, and then to seize and appropriate a part of the country; but on account of my youth no attention was paid to me, and now (in 1778) we see how fatal this negligence has been to the interests of France." "In the face of these authentic documents, which have been in print since 1760 and 1779," exclaims M. Gaillardet, "what becomes of the assertions of the *terrible* M. Ivan Golovine, and of the story of a fraud committed by Napoleon in 1811? The Chevalier d'Eon died in 1810, and the probable explanation of the 'will' having seen the light in 1811 is, that a copy of it had been found amongst his papers at the time of his death."—From an article by O. C. Dalhousie Ross, in "The Gentleman's Magazine," vol. ccxi., No. 1754.

II.—Principal Writings, etc., of the Chevalier D'Eon.

I. Situation de la France par rapport aux finances sous le règne de Louis XIV. et la régence du Duc d'Orléans, 1753. [An essay in part attributed to D'Eon's uncle, Déon de Tissey.]

II. "Mémoire sur la Vie et les Ouvrages de Lenglet-Dufresnoy."—*Année Littéraire*, 1755.

III. Considerations historiques sur les Impots des Egyptiens, des Babyloniens, des Perses, des Grecs, des Romains, et sur les différentes situations de la France, par rapport aux Finances, depuis l'établissement des Francs dans la Gaule jusqu'à présent, Paris, 1758. [Portions of this were translated into English and issued in the "Political Register," 1767-8.]

IV. "Les Espérances d'un bon Patriote."—*Année Littéraire*, 1759.

V. Note remise à son Excellence Monsieur le Comte de Guerchy, London, 1763. [To this Guerchy replied, by Vergy or Goudard, with the "Contre Note."]

VI. Lettres, Mémoires et Négociations particulières du Chevalier d'Eon, Ministre Plenipotentiaire, etc. . . . avec MM. les Ducs de Praslin, de Nivernois, de Sainte-Foy, et Regnier de Guerchy, etc., London, 1764, in three parts. Motto: *Vita sine litteris mors est.*

VII. Pièces relatives aux Lettres, Mémoires et Négociations Particulières . . . contenant La Note, Contre-Note, Lettre à M. le Duc de Nivernois et l'Examen des Lettres, Mémoires, etc., 1764.

VIII. Pièces authentiques pour servir au procès criminel intenté au Tribunal du Roi d'Angleterre par le Chevalier d'Eon de Beaumont . . . contre Claude Louis François Regnier, Comte de Guerchy, etc., London, 1765.

IX. Dernière Lettre du Chevalier d'Eon à M. le Comte de Guerchy, en date du 5 Aout, 1767, avec l'extrait de la procédure, 1767.

X. Les Loisirs du Chevalier d'Eon de Beaumont, ancien Ministre Plenipotentiaire de France, sur divers Sujets importans d'Administration, etc., pendant son sejour en Angleterre, London, 1774, 13 vols. Epigraph: *Eruditis intera prospera ornamentum; inter adversa refugium.*

XI. Recueil des Pièces relatives aux Démêlés entre Mademoiselle d'Eon et M. de Beaumarchais imprimées à Londres, 1778.

XII. Epitre aux Anglois dans leurs tristes Circonstances présentes, London, 1788. [Pamphlet on the insanity of George III.]

XIII. Vade Mecum ou Dictionnaire portatif de la

Créance des Saints-Pères, puisé dans les livres mêmes des Ministres Protestants. [In MS.]

XIV. Mémoires, Documens, Remarques . . . pour servir à la Vie du Comte de Vauban. [In MS.; unfinished.]

XV. Memoirs of his life; dealing principally with his residence in England, 1762-1777. [In MS. in the Archives of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Versailles.]

XVI. La Vie Militaire, etc., de Mlle. d'Eon de Beaumont par de La Fortelle, Paris, 1779. [The materials for this work were certainly supplied by D'Eon himself; indeed, large portions of it would seem to have been written by him.]

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