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D'EON DE BEAUMONT

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THE CHEVALIER D'EON 1770

From the Portrait by Huquier

**D'EON DE BEAUMONT
HIS LIFE AND TIMES**

COMPILED CHIEFLY FROM UNPUBLISHED
PAPERS AND LETTERS BY OCTAVE HOMBERG
AND FERNAND JOUSSELIN AND NOW TRANS-
LATED INTO ENGLISH BY ALFRED RIEU

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PREFACE

AFTER the death of the Chevalier d'Eon in London in extreme poverty in the year 1810, a mass of his unpublished papers and letters, which he had carefully preserved all his life, fell into the hands of one of his creditors, and lay neglected for nearly a hundred years in an English bookseller's shop. There it was that the authors of this book were fortunate enough to discover them by chance at a sale.

These private documents, in addition to the state papers in the archives of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and the municipal records of his native town of Tonnerre, enable his biographers to follow the career of the Chevalier with particularity, and to set at rest what was for so long a vexed question, the mystery of his sex. It was a deliberate step, the assumption of femininity, by which to regain a waning popularity. After a brilliant military and diplomatic career, as well as repeated employment in the secret service of Louis XV., his ill-judged conduct in London covered him with disgrace at Versailles. Some fresh action was demanded to

reinstated himself in public notice, and as rumour persistently named him a woman he felt the time had come to play the part. As the result of long negotiation he was permitted to return to France. There he became the heroine of the hour, and the ingenuity of his personification induced belief in the Chevalière not only in Louis XVI. and his ministers, but also—a more difficult matter—in the friends of his youth.

These unpublished papers are of further value, for they include correspondence with many notable people of d'Eon's day, and serve to reflect not only his own personality but those prominent in a society which differed in its striking contrasts from that of any other historical period.

D'EON DE BEAUMONT HIS LIFE AND TIMES

I

FROM TONNERRE TO ST. PETERSBURG

“**I**F you want to know what I am, Monsieur le Duc, I tell you frankly that I am of use only for thinking, imagining, questioning, reflecting, comparing, reading, writing, or to run from east to west, from north to south, to fight over hill and dale. Had I lived in the time of Alexander or of Don Quixote, I should certainly have been Parmenion or Sancho Panza. Taken out of my element I will squander the entire revenue of France in the course of a twelvemonth without committing a single folly, and afterwards present you with an able treatise on economy.”

Such was the portrait the Chevalier d'Eon sketched of himself for the Duc de Praslin, at the height of the crisis which shaped his destiny; and it is exact enough. To show all he could do, to fulfil his destiny to the end, he should have lived in a country and at a period more favourable to adventures than was France in the eighteenth century; strongly organised and firmly established as it was by Louis XIV. Owing to his lack of respect

for this powerful hierarchy and to his efforts to upset its stability for his own ends, d'Eon, who had begun life as a gentleman, ended his days equivocally as an adventurer. In his haste to improve a fortune which was too lagging and parsimonious for his taste, he exceeded the bounds of legitimate ambition. He set aside all restraint in his behaviour, forced and wasted his talent, ruined at one stroke the brilliant prospects to which his courage and intelligence entitled him, and, passing from one adventure to another, concluded by playing for over forty years, with skill and tenacity worthy of a better part, the strangest masquerade on record. He says himself with reference to the people of Tonnerre, his fellow-townsmen: "They are like the flints that are found in their vineyards; the harder they are struck the more fire they give out." This picturesque image admirably illustrates his own history and the epic struggle which he maintained with increasing stubbornness against all who thwarted his ambition.

Nevertheless, his character is an interesting one, and well repays study. Throughout the calculated extravagance of his adventures, d'Eon's indomitable energy persists, and the scandal caused by his conduct a century and a half ago should not blind us to his genuine services. There is a sustained interest in following d'Eon into many countries from Russia to England, and into many surroundings from the court of the Empress Elizabeth or the camp of Marshal de Broglie to the palace of Versailles and the shops of London, wherever, in fact, the Chevalier's adventures led him for a period of more than sixty years; at one time as a diplomatist, again

as a dragoon, or, as Latour represents him in one of his charming pastels, as a woman.

“Charles - Geneviève-Louis - Auguste-André-Timothée, son of the noble Louis d'Eon de Beaumont, director of the King's demesnes, and of Dame Françoise de Charenton”—so runs the baptismal certificate—was born at Tonnerre, on October 5, 1728. He was of petty noble descent and fairly well connected, and through the situations filled by his kinsmen was sure of finding patrons of high position. His father had three brothers, all of whom were in established positions: one, André-Timothée d'Eon de Tissey, advocate in Parliament and Censor-Royal, was principal secretary to the Duc d'Orléans; another, Jacques d'Eon de Pommard, advocate in Parliament, was one of the confidential secretaries to the Comte d'Argenson, Minister of War; and the third, Michel d'Eon de Germigny, Knight of St. Louis, was one of the twenty-five gentlemen of the King's Scottish Guard.

D'Eon's first years were not marked by any extraordinary or even noteworthy event. He was put out to nurse at Tonnerre, than which nothing could be more commonplace; less so, however, was the gratitude he always retained for this early care. From London, June 1, 1763, he wrote to his old nurse and foster-mother, informing her that he was ensuring her an annual pension of a hundred livres, in recognition of the trouble he had given her. When he was old enough to learn, the care of his education was entrusted to M. Marcenay, the *curé* of the Church of St. Peter. At the age of twelve he was sent to Paris, and completed his studies at the College

Mazarin with distinction. Doctor of Civil and of Canon Law, he was called to the bar of the Parliament, and at the same time entered the service of M. Bertier de Sauvigny as secretary, who was a friend of his family, and intendant of the district of Paris. In 1749 he lost in the course of five days his father and his eldest uncle, the latter of whom he presently succeeded in the post of Censor-Royal. Besides these relatives he had lost other friends who had already shown interest in him, and whose support would have been invaluable—the Duchesse de Penthièvre, Marie d'Este, and the Comte d'Ons-en-Bray, President of the Academy of Science. The losses, however, were not without effect on his career, for he wrote eulogiums in their honour which attracted attention, and were inserted in the newspapers and literary magazines of the time. This testimony of gratitude towards his deceased patrons, the origin of his public reputation, increased the goodwill of the influential people interested in his early years. He was received into the intimacy of old Marshal de Belle-Isle, and frequented the house of the charming Duc de Nivernais, a perfect type of nobleman, whom he met again as ambassador in London at the height of his prosperity. He was also known to the Prince de Conti, who, much engrossed by politics and poetry, was ever in quest either of a rhyme or of a throne, and was equally unfortunate in both. The fascination of his ready wit, the lively and original character of his conversation, his taste for music, and especially for Italian music, together with that genuine talent for the greatly prized art of fencing which had obtained for him the title of Grand

Prévôt, soon made him appreciated and sought after in society. Various serious publications—a historical essay on finance, and also two volumes of political considerations on the administration of ancient and modern nations—attracted the attention of influential people, saved him from all suspicion of frivolity, and won for him the reputation both of an accomplished gentleman and an indefatigable worker, one which followed him throughout his career.

In truth, d'Eon was in search of a career, not being the man to remain long contented with empty social successes. He harassed his patrons, with true Burgundian zeal and tenacity, in order to obtain from them employment in which he might win distinction, and perhaps too the favour and goodwill of the King. Exactly what he wished for happened. The Prince de Conti, who, as his most influential patron, was doubtless the most importuned, could not fail to notice the genius for intrigue, the courage and the adventurous disposition of this "little d'Eon." Seeing in the young man a valuable recruit for the difficult enterprise which was then being planned mysteriously in the King's cabinet, he spoke of his protégé to Louis XV., and d'Eon was chosen to accompany the Chevalier Douglas to Russia, and second him in the dangerous mission with which he was to be entrusted.

So from the first d'Eon found himself engaged in delicate and confidential affairs. He formed part of that secret ministry which the King, with the assistance of the Prince de Conti, the Comte de Broglie, and M. Tercier, chief clerk at the Foreign Office, directed in

person, and employed to support, or more frequently to oppose and secretly to ruin, the official policy which he discussed with the ministers of State. What this strange and mysterious policy was, this conspiracy against himself, by means of which Louis XV. apparently desired to take his revenge for the insignificant part in the management of important affairs to which his indolence and timidity had reduced him, has been made known since Boutaric's curious publication of the secret correspondence, and the interesting work written later by the Duc de Broglie from the material in the archives of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and the papers of his ancestor. The deplorable result of this secret diplomacy, which did not repair any, or hardly any, of the blunders of the official policy, and was finally reduced to impotence by its own conflicting intrigues, is also known, and will appear in part in these pages. But what will never be known are the endless windings of this labyrinth, which had blind alleys even for the most initiated, and in which the King himself at times lost his way; for, writing one day to Tercier to give him his instructions, he was obliged to confess that he was becoming somewhat perplexed by the intricacies of all these affairs. The secret diplomacy mysteriously superseded the official diplomacy, and extended wherever the King's representatives were sent. Sometimes the ambassador himself was admitted into the secret service, and so found himself confronted by the difficult task of reconciling the instructions—frequently at variance—of the King and of the Minister for Foreign Affairs; more often, a secretary of the embassy, or some subordinate agent,

was selected to play this part, becoming thus the spy of his own chief. While ministers and official ambassadors were as a rule chosen by the favourite of the time, the agents of the secret correspondence were enlisted by the King himself, who, out of excessive mistrust or a stirring of pride, often selected them from among the enemies of the reigning mistress. All the correspondents of this obscure policy were paid, or rather suborned, by the King out of his privy purse. The secret minister, who was first the Prince de Conti and afterwards the Duc de Broglie, answered for their discretion; their reports were despatched by safe and indirect means, and then forwarded through the medium of Tercier and Lebel, the valet, to the King, who took as much pleasure in reading, annotating and answering them as he showed weariness when he presided at a cabinet council.

The origin of the secret diplomacy, the object and the organisation of which underwent frequent modifications, appears to have been the project cherished by the King, and more especially by the interested party, of securing for the Prince de Conti the throne of Poland. As for the idea itself, it may possibly have been suggested to Louis XV. by the correspondence he kept up at the beginning of his reign with the Marshal de Noailles. His illness at Metz and the love his people had shown him on that occasion had, it would seem, illuminated for him his kingly duty, and so for a time he displayed an ardent desire to conduct himself well, and a certain determination to devote himself to the government of his country.

The secret correspondence gives evidence of such inclinations, but reveals at the same time that lack of

decision, that prodigious selfishness, that spirit of mistrust and dissimulation which spoiled all the King's good qualities, and rendered useless the perspicacity and good sense with which he was so plentifully endowed. The Duc de Luynes says of him that he spoke and thought *historically* of public affairs: this word expresses wonderfully well, not only Louis XV.'s judgment and penetration, but also the egoistic indifference and dilettanteism with which he followed what his grandfather had called the "trade of king." History has repeatedly shown the consequences of such a disposition both in a statesman and in a sovereign.

In 1745 several Polish noblemen, disquieted by the state of anarchy and impotence into which their country had fallen, repaired to Paris with the object of attaining a more assured future by offering the crown to a French prince. They thought of the Prince de Conti, grandson of the man who had been called to the throne of Poland in the reign of Louis XIV. The King authorised the Prince de Conti to accept their offers, and resolved to attend to the matter himself, without mentioning it to his ministers.

Thenceforth he made the Prince come to his study to work with him; but the very precautions taken to ensure the secrecy of their conferences excited the curiosity and elicited the comments of the whole court. One Sunday they noticed that scarcely had the King left his chapel when he shut himself up with the Prince, and that several secretaries had been sent for, who spent the whole day busily employed in staining paper. Another day they saw the Prince go to his Majesty's apartments,

carrying, with an air of great mystery, some large portfolios. The Marquis d'Argenson, who relates the incident, set himself to find out the secret which had thus become common talk. He succeeded in discovering that the matter in question was to secure the throne of Poland for the Prince; and in his Memoirs, under date of March 31, 1753, he expresses himself as follows:—

Here is one of several secrets of which I have just been informed. The long and frequent labours of the Prince de Conti with the King solely concern the project for making the Prince King of Poland. I had already seen that this project was being secretly elaborated and was known to the King only; but I could not believe he thought of it seriously. Meanwhile he has been persuaded it is a simple matter—for it is ever thus that great and ruinous projects are made to appear to superficial and unsystematic minds. That is the beginning of these assiduous and oft-repeated efforts of the Prince de Conti with the King, for the Prince sometimes receives despatches when out hunting, and forthwith scribbles a few lines which he sends to the King by his messengers. Only the other day he came to work with the King, and returned to the Isle-Adam immediately afterwards. This secret correspondence cannot be attributed to other matters of state for he has no influence in any other affairs.

On this last point d'Argenson's perspicacity was at fault, for the Prince de Conti's influence, aided besides by the King's partiality for this kind of conspiracy, had proved powerful enough to spread the network of secret diplomacy over nearly the whole of Europe. The chief

object was still the throne of Poland ; but the means of ensuring its conquest had increased and widened, which, as often happens, proved detrimental to the success of the enterprise.

The mission with which d'Eon was to be entrusted was connected with the intricate scheme of these mysterious negotiations. For fourteen years diplomatic relations had been discontinued between France and Russia. The irregular and discourteous proceedings, which had led to the Marquis de la Chétardie being somewhat unceremoniously escorted to the frontier at the time of his last embassy, had left Elizabeth with a feeling of resentment which her liking for Louis XV. had not entirely effaced, and which the Grand Chancellor, Bestuchef, an avowed enemy of France, did all he could to promote and to revive. The personal sentiments of the Empress, her dislike for Englishmen and Prussians, were known at Versailles, and since that deplorable rupture attempts had been repeatedly made to renew relations, which seemed all the more important in proportion as the friendship of the King of Prussia appeared more deceptive and treacherous. Many envoys had set out, bearing letters from Louis XV. to Elizabeth, but all had failed. Russia was far from being easy of access, and Bestuchef's agents, who kept a good watch at the frontier, had managed to detect all these political smugglers. One of them, the Chevalier de Valcroissant, had avoided detection ; but, having been followed and recognised in the interior of the empire, he was arrested and confined in the fortress of Schlüsselburg, on Lake Ladoga, where his jailers were barbarous enough to put him into irons.

The wretched man had been in prison for a year when the enterprise which had turned out so badly for him was attempted again.

Among the Prince de Conti's protégés was Sir Mackenzie Douglas, who had come to offer his services to France. His attachment to the Stuarts had compelled him to seek refuge in flight, and his hatred of the English left no doubt as to the eagerness with which he would undertake a mission directed against them. Douglas had given proofs of his courage in accompanying the Pretender in his romantic wanderings. A knowledge of mineralogy enabled him to give his journey the plausible appearance of a scientific expedition. His English nationality and his ability were relied on to avert all suspicions.

The scheme thus devised was approved by the King, who deemed it prudent to impart it to his ministers, doubtless the better to conceal the essential part of the negotiations. The Minister for Foreign Affairs, Monsieur Rouillé, gave his sanction, and countersigned Douglas' mission.

The instructions, which were delivered to Douglas by the Prince de Conti immediately after they had been submitted to the King (they were written in small characters and enclosed in the false bottom of a tortoise-shell snuff-box), specified the route he was to take and the principal subjects upon which he was to obtain information.

He was directed to leave as an ordinary traveller, supplied with the usual passport; to enter Germany through Suabia, so as to avoid the great capitals, and

to pass thence into Bohemia, "under pretext of visiting for his personal instruction the several mines in that kingdom." From Bohemia he was to proceed to Saxony, not omitting to inspect the mines at Freiberg, and after spending a few days at Dantzic he was to continue his journey to St. Petersburg, passing through Prussia, Courland and Livonia.

He had strict injunctions to become acquainted with the progress of the negotiations undertaken by Sir Hanbury Williams, the British ambassador, with a view to obtaining troops from Russia. He was, subsequently, to examine the resources of that country; the state of its finance and commerce; to note the number of the troops and fleets; to learn the extent of the influence wielded by Count Bestuchef and Count Woronzow; to study the factions of the court; and to find out as far as possible the sentiments of the Empress herself. He was directed, besides, but cursorily and without insistence, to inquire into "the views of Russia in regard to Poland, both immediately and for the future." Lastly, he was to observe the utmost discretion, and was never to risk anything through the post except the briefest intimations, written in a cryptic phraseology, which had been agreed upon beforehand, and the alleged subject of which was the purchase of furs. Sir Hanbury Williams became the black fox, and Bestuchef the lynx; squirrel skins were to signify troops in the pay of England, and so forth.

All these preparations were completed during the summer of 1755; and Douglas was able to begin his journey with no more ado than would an ordinary English tourist.

There are no documents relating to the journey itself ; it is only known that Douglas arrived safely at St. Petersburg in the beginning of October, 1755, and that he was received and treated there as an English gentleman travelling for amusement and instruction. But so far he had only fulfilled the easiest part of his mission ; he had still to reach the Empress. The difficulties were great, for Sir Hanbury Williams, the British ambassador, being aware of Elizabeth's personal feelings, was keeping a good watch, and had arranged with Bestuchef that no Englishman should be admitted at court unless he were presented by himself. Douglas, therefore, applied to him, as a loyal subject of the King of England to his natural protector, requesting the ambassador to present him to the Czarina. Sir Hanbury, however, was on his guard, for the journey of this Scottish Catholic who had come to Russia to pursue geological studies, and was so anxious to see the Empress, appeared to him highly suspicious. He therefore warned Bestuchef to have his fellow-countryman carefully watched ; and Douglas, informed that Valcroissant's fate threatened him, crossed the frontier post-haste. It seemed to be a fresh defeat ; but less than five months afterwards, in the spring of 1756, Douglas returned to St. Petersburg. Before long he was admitted everywhere, even to the great audience chamber, where he solemnly presented to the Czarina letters accrediting him as Minister Plenipotentiary, charged with renewing diplomatic relations. D'Eon was there to assist the new minister, whom he was seconding in his official mission, as secretary of embassy.

What had passed during the winter, and who was

responsible for this remarkable change? How was it that Douglas, who was defeated at St. Petersburg, had conquered from Paris? Historians disagree on this point; and the absence of clear, positive and authentic documents further increases the mystery. Tradition attributes the success of the enterprise to d'Eon, who is said to have arrived secretly in Russia in Douglas' company, and to have found the means of prolonging his stay there after the Chevalier's flight. The legendary story is full of romantic details of the artifices devised by the young man to elude the watchful eye of Bestuchef, and to reach the Empress.

The story goes that little d'Eon, taking advantage of his slender figure, his delicate beardless face, and his feminine voice, assumed the name, attire and habits of a young girl. In this manner the Chevalier Douglas introduced his niece, Mademoiselle Lia de Beaumont, to Count Woronzow, Vice-Chancellor of the Empire, and the avowed enemy of the Chancellor. Perceiving how useful this new ally might be to his policy, Woronzow undertook to obtain his admission at court as maid-of-honour to the Empress. D'Eon was not slow to ingratiate himself with Elizabeth, and then resolved to disclose his deception, and the hidden purpose of his journey, by delivering to the Czarina the King's letters which he had brought with him, concealed in the binding of one of Montesquieu's books. The romantic nature of the adventure amused and captivated the Empress, who, far from bearing him ill-will, was grateful to little d'Eon for his daring and for his message, and entrusted him with her reply to the King, which was entirely favour-

able to the renewal of friendly relations between the two courts. It was then that the Chevalier Douglas returned at the head of the official mission in which d'Eon participated—undisguised this time, in the capacity of secretary of embassy, a fact which joins tradition to history.

This story is mentioned by most of the historians of the period in serious works, and even in the otherwise well-substantiated account which Gaillardet wrote, fifty years ago, to establish "the truth about the mysteries of the life of the Chevalier d'Eon." Like all traditions, it is an amalgam composed of much fiction and a substratum of truth, and, like most, it is grounded on evidence and even on a few documents which make it look genuine.

Nevertheless, the objection still holds good that it is wildly improbable; and this is the chief argument put forward by the Duc de Broglie, and, after him, by M. Albert Vandal, in favour of its rejection as an ingenious and romantic concoction.

But that is not all; even the examination of authentic documents, far from throwing light on this minor historical point, tends to increase its obscurity. There have been discovered among d'Eon's private papers the originals of several letters which he received from Tercier, when he was preparing to leave France for Russia. These letters show that he took his departure in the beginning of June, 1756, and seem to prove that this was his first journey, being sent to St. Petersburg on that occasion—but on that occasion only—to assist Douglas in bringing about the alliance of the two courts,

and the realisation of the Prince de Conti's secret ambition.

In that case the honour of having obtained official recognition for Douglas at St. Petersburg must be ascribed to another ; but it will be seen that d'Eon undertook and conducted to a successful issue negotiations of so delicate a nature that no one can be said to suffer by comparison with him. The clever intermediary of the reconciliation of Louis XV. and Elizabeth appears to have been simply a worthy French merchant of St. Petersburg, called Michel, the care of whose own affairs did not prevent him from applying himself with as much ability as disinterestedness to those of his country. This Michel, a native of Rouen, was often obliged, in the course of business, to travel all the way from St. Petersburg to the town of his birth, and had already, in 1753, carried a private message to Versailles from the Empress, in which she expressed herself willing to forget the offensive behaviour of La Chétardie and to renew friendly relations with a monarch in whom she had never ceased to take great interest.

Regard for a policy directed at that time against Russia had prevented Louis XV. from responding to these first overtures. Elizabeth did not risk a second rebuff ; but she let it be understood that her personal sentiments had not changed. According to La Mes-selière, afterwards secretary of embassy in Russia to the Marquis de L'Hospital, a miniature-painter named Sompsoy, who was reproducing the Czarina's features, learnt from her positive proof of her friendly sentiments. When he assured her, in the course of a sitting, that Louis

XV., as well as his subjects, revered the name of Elizabeth he was rewarded by "a smile of which he caught the expression, and which made the success of the portrait." La Messelière adds that the Empress, having thought the matter over, gave the artist "more sittings than he required for the painting," and concluded by charging him to inform the King that French gentlemen might count on a warm reception at her court. Sompsoy discharged the commission faithfully, but it was thought undesirable to entrust him with the reply, for it would have necessitated at the same time the disclosure both of the King's secret correspondence and of the Prince de Conti's projects. It was agreed, therefore, that he should remain in Paris, and Douglas be sent to Russia in his place.

We have seen how and why he failed in his first mission; but before he had left St. Petersburg the excellent idea occurred to him of conferring with the Sieur Michel, whose services and goodwill he could count upon, informing him who had sent him and for what purpose. Michel, unperturbed by the risk he was running in associating with one who was already under suspicion, introduced him to Woronzow, who apprized the Empress. Elizabeth expressed herself willing to receive an envoy-extraordinary from the King, and Douglas, armed with this promise, coolly eluded Bestuchef's spies, and took his departure for France. During his absence Michel continued to negotiate with Woronzow, and let the Chevalier know when the opportune moment arrived for his reappearance. Douglas then returned to St. Petersburg; but he deemed it prudent

to travel under an assumed name, and to conceal himself on his arrival in his friend's house, who passed him off as one of his clerks. Here d'Eon rejoined him, despatched officially by Monsieur Rouillé, Minister for Foreign Affairs, to the Vice-Chancellor, Woronzow, to act as his "companion and confidential man, whose sole duties should consist in looking after a fine library and transacting some important business with France." D'Eon was indeed surprised to find Count Woronzow's "fine library" on a single shelf, whereas he, a humble private person, had left at the Comte d'Ons-en-Bray's a large room and six chests full of books. Douglas was delighted to keep so earnest a collaborator, and forthwith informed the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the decision to which he had just come in regard to the young secretary :

"I am very greatly pleased at the arrival of M. d'Eon," he wrote ; "I have been long acquainted with his zeal, and his attachment to his work. He will be most useful to me, and also of good service to the King. Besides, he is steady and prudent. I introduced him yesterday evening to the Vice-Chancellor, Count Woronzow, who received him kindly and courteously, and seemed greatly pleased with him. Upon consideration, he was not of his former opinion ; he now thinks that the original plan for the accomplishment of his mission should not be followed, for particular reasons known to the Empress, which I shall have the honour of specifying later."

Chevalier Douglas and d'Eon were exerting themselves at that time to thwart the combined intrigues of

the Chancellor, Bestuchef, and the British ambassador, Sir Hanbury Williams. This they succeeded in doing, thanks to the support of Woronzow and also that of Count Ivan Schouvalow, at that time the favourite of the Empress. Douglas, accompanied by d'Eon, was solemnly received in audience as the Envoy of the King of France. Nevertheless, their enemies did not consider themselves beaten, taking many measures and even attempting assassination, if we are to believe La Messelière, who relates that pistols were fired one night at their windows. But their credit with Elizabeth became greater than ever, and the negotiations soon took, at least in part, an extremely favourable turn.

These negotiations were, indeed, twofold, comprising those of which the Minister for Foreign Affairs was kept informed, and those of which reports were sent directly to the King and the Prince de Conti through the medium of Tercier. The object of the official mission was to bring about the reconciliation of the two countries, to detach Russia from the English alliance so as to compel her to sign the treaty which France had just concluded with her old enemy, Austria. That of the secret commission was to induce the Empress to favour a French prince's candidature for the throne of Poland, and even to engage her affections on behalf of Conti. That prince aspired to a throne and, if he could not reign in his own right in Poland, was quite resigned to participate as Elizabeth's consort in the government of a great empire. Moreover, the realisation of either of these ambitious dreams would have served the political interests of France equally well. Whether Conti was king in Poland

or the Czarina's consort in Russia, Louis XV. had the aid of an ally capable of flanking his enemies: Frederick, with whom he had just fallen out, and Maria Theresa, with whom he had just been reconciled, but upon whose prolonged fidelity he hardly ventured to count.

Everything had been thought of to draw Elizabeth into this intrigue. Tercier had entrusted to d'Eon a quarto volume of *L'Esprit des Lois*, in the binding of which, between two pieces of cardboard, enclosed and bound up in the same calfskin, were concealed private letters from the King to the Empress, as well as several cyphers. One was for d'Eon's correspondence with the King and Tercier, another for d'Eon's use in communicating with the Prince de Conti and M. Monin, and a third designed to enable Elizabeth or her confidant, Woronzow, to correspond at any time with Louis XV. through the medium of Tercier, without the ministers and ambassadors becoming aware of it. Elizabeth, who did not share the King's fondness for dissimulation, and never concealed even her wildest caprices, proved insensible to the attraction of this mysterious correspondence. She declined the cypher, but received d'Eon, and consented to listen to the King's and the Prince de Conti's overtures. She showed, however, no inclination to marry the Prince, and even avoided pledging herself in regard to Poland. All she promised was to appoint Conti Commander-in-Chief of the Russian troops, with the title of Duke of Courland, provided the King granted his cousin permission to accept her offer and to proceed to St. Petersburg. And there, on another account, the matter stopped, for while d'Eon was negotiating for him

in Russia the Prince was ruining his prospects at Versailles. By incurring the displeasure of the Marquise de Pompadour, whom he had believed himself strong enough to set at defiance and to ridicule almost openly, he lost favour with the King, who ceased to place the secret diplomacy at the disposal of his ambitious cousin. D'Eon received instructions to protract the negotiation and to correspond in future only with Tercier and the Comte de Broglie, who succeeded the Prince de Conti as secret minister in the middle of the year 1757.

If the private parleys met with only partial success, which was soon made altogether useless by Conti's disgrace, the result of the official mission was more satisfactory. Thanks to the patient and persistent efforts of Douglas and d'Eon, the treaty concluded some months before between Bestuchef and Sir Hanbury Williams was annulled. Russia remitted to England the subsidies she had already received, but recalled her troops; it was decided that the eighty thousand men, who were already assembled in Livonia and Courland for the service of England and Prussia should change sides and unite with the armies of Louis XV. and Maria Theresa. At the same time it was resolved that, in order to indicate more clearly the character of the relations about to be established between France and Russia, there should be an interchange of ambassadors of high rank between the two courts. The choice of France fell on the Marquis de L'Hospital, and that of Russia on Count Bestuchef, the Chancellor's brother.

Russia, then, had broken off her alliance to join the new Franco-Austrian coalition. This unexpected change

caused some surprise in France, but met with general commendation, and the success of the negotiations appeared to be assured. Such was not the case, however, for an objection raised by Bestuchef, who was striving to revenge himself for his defeat by sowing discord among his triumphant opponents, very nearly caused the whole affair to be reconsidered, and threatened for a time to wreck the transactions.

In soliciting Russia's ratification of the treaty just concluded at Versailles, France and Austria had entertained the idea of stipulating for one exception to the general alliance which they were about to contract with the cabinet of St. Petersburg. This exception concerned Turkey, France's old ally, and certainly a source of danger to Russia less formidable than was Russia to her.

It soon occurred to Bestuchef to make this restriction the stumbling-block of the alliance to which he was so strongly opposed. He endeavoured to make Elizabeth believe that should she assent to this humiliating condition she would be profaning the ancient Muscovite gospel and disowning the duty held sacred by her predecessors—the delivery of Constantinople. In treating with Austria he artfully urged that it was no more to her interest than to Russia's to bind herself with regard to Turkey, her past enemy and her future prey. This argument prevailed at Vienna, the cabinet being all the more easily persuaded as hostilities had been resumed, and as Frederick's victorious advance in Austrian territory had already raised apprehensions far greater than any that conjectural events could inspire. Austria, therefore, entered eagerly into an alliance with Russia,

and, conscious of the immediate danger, took no account of France's allies, the Turks.

Then it was that Douglas began to fear he would lose all the fruits of his labour, and, though d'Eon advised him to stand his ground, he resolved to have recourse to an expedient devised by Austria's representative at St. Petersburg, Count Esterhazy, a man devoid of scruples as to the means of attaining his ends. It was agreed that the Porte should be guaranteed against the alliance in an ostensible treaty to be transmitted to Constantinople, but that the exceptional clause should be itself annulled by an article called *secrétissime*. This despicable artifice, a real humiliation for France, allowed Russia full scope for her aggressive designs, while giving to the Turks a false and dangerous security.

Douglas consented; but, happily, his transactions aroused the utmost indignation at Versailles, and the ratification to the agreement was refused. The official and the secret ministers were for once of the same mind, and each of them sent to Douglas bitter reproaches for his weakness, and his want of dignity, and the King, however great his desire to obtain official recognition for the reconciliation, shared those opinions.

Douglas was extremely mortified at the reproaches which assailed him from all quarters, and was at a loss how to save both his threatened reputation and the result of all his prolonged negotiations. It was d'Eon who got him out of this scrape.

Having first secured the support of Elizabeth's favourite, Schouvalow, who had been recently won over to the French party, the intrepid young diplomat made

a sudden attack on the terrible Bestuchef. He had a wordy quarrel with him which greatly entertained the favourite, and even the Empress, who endured, rather than liked, the omnipotent Chancellor. Bestuchef was beside himself with rage, but finally gave in, not daring to thwart Elizabeth in her increasing desire to enter into an alliance with France. The *secrétissime* clause was torn up, and the Chevalier Douglas hastened to inform the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the happy issue of the dispute. So far, indeed, did his satisfaction and his gratitude surpass his natural jealousy that he even insisted that d'Eon himself should be the bearer to the court of Versailles of Elizabeth's ratification to the treaty, and the Russian plan of army operations for the ensuing campaign. The Empress was not less thankful to the young French secretary for the victory he had gained over her own Chancellor, and, to crown the irony of the situation, it was Bestuchef himself whom she made her mouthpiece. Shortly before his departure d'Eon was invited to call on the Chancellor, who received him graciously, overwhelmed him with congratulations, and presented him with three hundred ducats as a token of the Czarina's favour. He set out in high spirits, his wallet filled with Elizabeth's money and the most flattering testimonials from the Chevalier Douglas, who was generous enough not to bear him a grudge for the services he had rendered him.

On approaching Warsaw he met an imposing procession, "the main part of which was made up of twenty-three berlins and twenty-three waggons." Couriers, equerries and numerous liveried servants were crowding

round the luxuriously appointed coaches, astonishing the peasants, unaccustomed to the sight of so resplendent a pageant. It was the embassy of the Marquis de L'Hospital, who was on his way to St. Petersburg, where he was to take the place of Douglas. No expense had been spared to make that mission as famous for the rank of the secretaries attached to it as for the splendour of the carriages by which it was conveyed. The ambassador was escorted by the Marquis de Bermond, the Marquis de Fougères, the Baron de L'Hospital, the Baron de Wittinghoff, M. de Teleins, and the Comte de La Messelière, whose account of the journey has been handed down to us.

Availing himself of this chance meeting, d'Eon retraced his steps as far as Bialestock, and accompanied the Marquis de L'Hospital to the house of the great Polish General Branicky. On the way he gave the ambassador the latest news of the Russian court, informed him that the annulment of the secret clause was an accomplished fact, doubtless without concealing the active part he had taken in the successful transaction, and left him overjoyed at not having so unpleasant a matter to settle on entering upon his functions at St. Petersburg. D'Eon then urged on the six horses which he had attached to his chaise, and crossed the plateaux of Moravia and Silesia post-haste. Stopped on the road by a band of four hundred Prussian deserters, he threw to them part of the Czarina's ducats, and reached Vienna at nightfall. Here, despite his furious protestations, the customs' officials prevented him from entering the city, and he had to resign himself to waiting in a guard-

room of hussars until he could obtain a pass from the embassy. He was thinking of staying at Vienna for the arrival of the Comte de Broglie, the new secret minister, who was on his way to his post in Poland, when news came of the Austrian victory won at Prague, on May 6, over the King of Prussia. He at once set out again, never halting, exhausting his horses, and driving at such reckless speed that he fell headlong and broke his leg. Barely allowing time to have his injury attended to he continued his journey with the same hot haste, and arrived at Paris, prostrate, and burnt up with fever, but outstripping by thirty-six hours the courier sent by Prince Kaunitz to the Austrian ambassador at the court of France, and so bringing simultaneously the first tidings of two happy events.

Louis XV. was glad of the message and highly pleased with the messenger, whose unflagging zeal impressed and flattered him the more as it emanated from one of the agents of his secret correspondence. He instantly despatched his own surgeon to the limping courier, and a few days later sent him a gratuity from the privy purse, a gold snuff-box ornamented with pearls, and a commission as lieutenant of dragoons. This last mark of favour d'Eon prized more highly than all the others, and it did much to hasten his recovery, which promptly followed. He was the first to acknowledge that by falling he had picked up a fortune, since, thanks to his broken leg, he was now a lieutenant of dragoons honoured by the King, having henceforward, both literally and figuratively, a foot in the stirrup. Nevertheless, he remained in the diplomatic service, his initial success showing how

profitably he might still be employed in that career, and he had to rest content for a few years with an honorary rank in the army. During the period of compulsory relaxation which ensued after his return to Paris, d'Eon occupied his time in drawing up notes relating to his mission.

II

DIPLOMATIC AND MILITARY

D'EON'S active mind, stimulated by success and hope, adapted itself ill, it is true, to this temporary rest, and the flattering reception he met with at Compiègne from the King and the court did not help him to restrain his impatience. He called at the Hôtel du Temple to acquaint Conti with the indifferent result of his mission, and to obtain the Prince's directions for pursuing the affair, in view of his departure. The duchy of Courland and the command-in-chief of the Russian troops were no longer in question. Louis XV. seemed already to have lost his interest in that project, and, if he permitted d'Eon to see his former secret minister, he deferred giving him instructions with regard to it; and, through fear of embroiling the already critical situation at St. Petersburg, soon definitely abandoned the interests of a cousin who had ventured to incur the displeasure of Madame de Pompadour.

Meanwhile d'Eon's departure had just been fixed for the end of September. The Minister for Foreign Affairs had granted his earnest request; Tercier, too, was anxious that he should rejoin his post; and the Marquis de L'Hospital, who had been impressed by his shrewdness and the experience of Russian affairs he

had shown in their brief interview, was also urging him to return to St. Petersburg.

In point of fact, the marquis found himself, almost from the moment of his arrival, in an extremely false and annoying position. He had been despatched to Russia for the purpose of cementing the friendly relations between the two courts ; but an apparently insignificant incident occurred which hindered his mission, and threatened to compromise an alliance so arduously obtained, and to wreck the new policy whereby past blunders were to be remedied.

Elizabeth, who had never been deterred from making advances to France—frequently complimentary, sometimes of pecuniary interest, but in either case politely evaded—had just found an opportunity for demonstrating her friendly feelings towards the King at the same time as her sympathy for her new allies. Godmother of the child to which the Grand Duchess was about to give birth, she desired that Louis XV. should stand godfather. She devoted to this end all the energy and tenacity of a woman intent upon the gratification of a whim, and when the council suggested the choice of some other god-parent she replied : “ No, no ; I will have none but Louis XV. and myself. . . .” Upon this, Woronzow sounded the Marquis de L’Hospital, who communicated the imperial proposal to the Minister for Foreign Affairs.

With an obstinacy that would be unaccountable had he not given numerous examples of similar scruples, the King refused to accept “ engagements which constrain him to see that, as far as possible, the child be brought

up in the Catholic faith." Elizabeth was greatly vexed by this repulse to her advances, and the motives were calculated to surprise her on the part of a monarch whom she had good reasons for believing to be even more sceptical than herself. She chose no other godfather, and the child was baptised in her arms. The Marquis de L'Hospital, fearing that the wound dealt her royal and feminine self-esteem would be adroitly envenomed by the party hostile to France led by Bestuchef, was impatiently awaiting d'Eon's return, knowing his favour with the Empress. The able secretary did not disappoint his chief's expectations; thoroughly acquainted with every intrigue of a palace in which he had been plotting for two years, he worked to such good purpose that Woronzow's party got the upper hand again and soon became strong enough to attack the omnipotent Chancellor. At the time of his passing through the Russian lines, d'Eon had ascertained beyond doubt the existence of a secret correspondence between Apraxin and the Chancellor. The marshal's inaction after the victory he had gained over the Prussian troops at Gros Jägersdorf, and the defeat to which he had exposed himself at Narva, made it manifest that instructions contrary to those he had received from his sovereign had been transmitted to him surreptitiously. Apprised by d'Eon, who had discovered the hiding-place of Bestuchef's secret papers, Woronzow did not hesitate to denounce to the Czarina the treason which threatened completely to foil a campaign so successfully begun. Elizabeth passed over definitely to the French party, and Bestuchef's disgrace was decreed a few days later.

When, in the course of an audience granted by the Empress to the Marquis de L'Hospital, upon his recovery after a long illness, the ambassador complained of ill usage on the part of the Chancellor which was quite inconsistent with the sovereign's kindness, "Count Bestuchef, who, according to etiquette, was standing behind the Empress, on her right, rushed forward like a madman, and went out, with his eyes glittering, boding some catastrophe for the night." He withdrew to his palace ; but the next day the Empress bade him attend her council. He pleaded sickness, but was obliged to comply with a second order. The following account of his arrest, too graphic not to have been taken from life, has been handed down to us by La Messelière :—

Bestuchef, thinking that his intrigues had not yet been unravelled, stepped into his coach with the pomp and circumstance of his rank. On reaching the gates of the Palace he was greatly astonished to see the guard of grenadiers, who usually presented arms to him, surround the carriage by a movement made from the right and left. A lieutenant-general of the guard arrested him and got up beside him, to conduct him back to his palace under escort. What was his surprise upon his arrival at seeing it invested by four battalions, grenadiers at the door of his study and seals affixed to all his papers. As was customary, he was stripped to the skin, and all razors, knives, scissors, pins, and needles were taken from him. His cruel and immovable character made him smile sardonically, notwithstanding all the evidence against him that was to be found in his papers. Four grenadiers, with fixed bayonets, kept a constant watch over the four corners of the bed, the curtains of which

remained open. All attempts had failed to discover a note which the Chancellor had written in anticipation of his arrest, and which he intended to send to the Grand Duchess. He asked to see his physician, Boirave, who was summoned, and on his approach to feel his pulse Bestuchef tried to slip this note into his hand ; but the doctor, not understanding what was expected of him, let it fall to the ground. The major on guard picked it up, and its contents were never known. The poor doctor, thinking he was going to be involved, was so alarmed that he died of the shock three days afterwards.

The Chancellor's papers left no room for doubt as to his secret schemes. Charged with high treason, it was owing to Elizabeth's mercy that he was not condemned to death, and was exiled to Siberia. Over eighteen hundred persons were arrested ; Apraxin had just committed suicide, and a movement more favourable to French interests was in course of formation at the instigation of Woronzow, who succeeded his rival in office.

D'Eon, whose part in this affair was so active and successful, had, according to La Messelière, unwittingly saved his own head. At all events, he had a claim upon Woronzow's gratitude, and fresh titles to Elizabeth's confidence ; consequently the idea was mooted of attaching d'Eon to the service of Russia, and a formal request to that effect was made by the Marquis de L'Hospital to the Abbé de Bernis. The Minister for Foreign Affairs and M. Tercier, being at one in this matter, were not at all opposed to the scheme, suggested, no doubt, by the Czarina herself, whereby an agent

esteemed at the same time by the ministry and the secret service should be established at her court. D'Eon, although flattered by this proposal, which he never omitted to mention in the rough drafts of his memoirs, did not think fit to accept it. The favour which he enjoyed at Versailles, a career brilliantly opened in diplomacy, the scope given to his aspirations in the army—all gave promise of a sufficiently enviable future for him in his own country. He knew, too, that foreigners seldom attained to high places in Russia. Fortune was particularly fickle there, and her wheel was more often than not broken on the road to Siberia. Lastly, his health was beginning to suffer from the effects of the severe climate; and he did not hesitate to refuse. "Had I a bastard brother," he wrote to Tercier, "be assured I should prevail upon him to accept such an offer, but for myself, who am legitimate, I should be glad to die like a faithful dog in a ditch in my native land." In thanking the Abbé de Bernis, "he begged him to dismiss him from his memory whenever there was a question of his destiny removing him entirely from France."

The Minister for Foreign Affairs did not insist, and even congratulated him upon his attachment to his country. At that time, moreover, d'Eon had other projects in view. He was tired of Russia, where he feared his energies would be wasted for many years to come, while he aspired to other spheres of action. He had followed from his distant post the disastrous campaign of 1757, which ended in the crushing defeat of the French army at Rosbach. Couriers arriving at the

embassy in March brought no better news. Hanover had just been evacuated, and the Comte de Clermont's troops, compelled to quit Westphalia, had to cross the Rhine again. Everywhere hostilities were being resumed with fresh vigour. D'Eon, who had been for some time impatiently waiting an opportunity for making his first campaign, was longing to join his regiment before the end of the war : " To do so after peace had been declared would," he said, " be too great a blow to his honour and his self-esteem."

He determined, therefore, to apply (April 14) to the Minister for War for a captain's commission. Marshal de Belle-Isle did not refuse him such rapid promotion. Less than three months afterwards d'Eon received a commission as captain on half-pay ; but he had again to exercise patience and give up for the moment his warlike plans.

Circumstances prevented him from leaving St. Petersburg, the King's secret diplomacy necessitating his presence near the ambassador on whom he was constantly to keep watch, and whose actions he had often to prompt. The Duc de Choiseul, Bernis' successor as Minister for Foreign Affairs, had just informed the Marquis de L'Hospital of the treaty, signed December 30, 1758, which drew Louis XV. and Maria Theresa more closely together in a policy directed against Prussia. The ambassador's task was to obtain Russia's adhesion to the agreement. He was, besides, to give the Czarina to understand that her mediation between France and England would be welcomed by the cabinet of Versailles, who in return would show less devotion to the interests

of Poland. As circumstances might make the Grand Duchess's support invaluable, they would be obliged to pay her greater deference, whereat it was hoped the Empress would not take umbrage.

Such double-dealing was not calculated to attract the ambassador, who, disliking intrigues, would not have been successful and did not take part in it. He had found favour with Elizabeth, and was particularly anxious to retain her esteem. His witty conversation, his good manners, and a liberality which Louis XV. called extravagant, had won for him the sympathies of the court. If he possessed all the qualities of the man of high rank whom his government had sought as a worthy representative of France at a stately court, his age, his infirmities, and a want of natural energy prevented him from reaping the advantages of an alliance which he confined himself to maintaining and strengthening as best he could. He deemed that to be the most important part of his mission, and relied upon d'Eon, to whom he had become genuinely attached, for the management of current affairs. So highly did he value his young secretary's attainments, and his experience of Russian people and affairs, that he made it a practice never to come to a decision without first consulting "his little d'Eon," whose functions as secret agent were thus singularly facilitated. Consequently the ambassador did not omit to communicate to him the instructions he had just received from the Duc de Choiseul.

D'Eon was already aware of their purport. But he had learned too, by a letter from Tercier, that the King would by no means consent to Elizabeth extending

her dominions at the expense of Poland ; such an aggrandisement being calculated to give her a preponderance in Northern Europe which the offer of mediation would strengthen. On those terms Louis XV. preferred to continue the war with England. In short, he desired no change in the attitude which had been adopted towards the Grand Duchess. D'Eon, without revealing his source of inspiration, pointed out these considerations to the Marquis de L'Hospital, who contented himself with negotiating the ratification to the treaty, and awaited more urgent orders before broaching the other points. These orders soon arrived. Choiseul, put out of patience by an inaction so inconsistent with the instructions transmitted, wrote a letter to the ambassador, the intimate and affectionate character of which alone mitigated the asperity of the language, and in which he gave him the option of obeying or of applying for his recall.

D'Eon renewed his entreaties to the Marquis de L'Hospital, and did all he could to dissuade him from launching out into intrigues which might not meet with the King's approval. So he managed to defer the project for over a year, and the defeats inflicted upon Frederick by the Russians made the minister abandon it of his own accord.

Unable to obtain what he desired from an ambassador whom his friendship prevented him from reprimanding, Choiseul decided to appoint a colleague to the marquis, with the title of minister plenipotentiary, and despatched to St. Petersburg the Baron de Breteuil, a young man enabled by his talents, his distinguished appearance,

and his high rank to ingratiate himself with the Grand Duchess and the young count. The King approved this mission officially ; but as it was prejudicial to the interests of his personal policy he resolved to counteract its effects by admitting the baron to the secret correspondence. Accordingly he signed a long letter, indited by Tercier, instructing d'Eon to let the new envoy know the King's private designs.

D'Eon's functions were thus about to become considerably restricted. After intriguing during five years and acting as intermediary in the secret correspondence between Louis XV. and Elizabeth, after working at the negotiations of several treaties, he found his diplomatic career hindered, and so he again entertained the idea of applying for active service in the army. He had, moreover, kept up a friendly intercourse with the superior officers of his regiment, having corresponded on several occasions with his colonel, the Marquis de Caraman, and his comrade, Captain de Chambry. He had even been considerate enough to look for furs for the Duc de Chevreuse, colonel-general of dragoons, who had acknowledged the delicate attention in a friendly note.

The historical studies to which he devoted the leisure left him by the negotiations (the mere titles of which show clearly that he lacked the sense of proportion in all he did) could not reconcile d'Eon to the kind of life which he led in Russia. In the month of July, 1760, he lost all patience, his health being seriously impaired, and he entreated the Marquis de L'Hospital for permission to return to France :

Your Excellency is aware that for over eighteen months I have been more often ill than well. M. Poissonier has seriously advised me to leave Russia, in order that I may recover my former strength by breathing my native air. Though I fear neither death nor physicians, and though I am fully persuaded that the medical profession has not the privilege of alarming your secretaries of embassy, yet I feel the approach of a general collapse, which is more convincing than all the doctors' arguments, and warns me not to spend a fifth winter in Russia. . . . By gaining still more experience of politics, I may aspire to follow some better trade than that of a scribe and a pharisee.

De L'Hospital did not detain d'Eon any longer, and commissioned him to convey to Versailles the ratifications to the treaty of 1758 and to the maritime convention concluded between Russia, Sweden and Denmark.

D'Eon left St. Petersburg with the fixed determination of never returning, and carried away with him eulogistic testimonials from the Marquis de L'Hospital and the Baron de Breteuil, and letters of recommendation to the Minister for War. The Czarina graciously presented him with a snuff-box ornamented with diamonds, and upon his taking leave of Woronzow, the Chancellor said: "I am sorry you are going away, even though your first journey here, with the Chevalier Douglas, cost my sovereign more than two hundred thousand men and fifteen million roubles."

As on the first occasion, the bearer of excellent news, d'Eon again met with a warm reception in Paris and at

Versailles. The Duc de Choiseul caused a pension of two thousand livres to be conferred upon him out of the privy purse, and promised to do something for his career.

D'Eon, whom the journey had exhausted, had just been attacked by small-pox, and was obliged to take care of himself and to await until the spring the realisation of his long-cherished wish. At last, in the month of February, 1761, he was able to ask the Duc de Choiseul, Minister for War, "for permission to serve as aide-de-camp to the Marshal and the Comte de Broglie in the army of the Upper Rhine, and for his transference to the regiment of d'Autichamp's dragoons, in the same army, the colonel-general's regiment doing duty that year on the coast."

The minister was anxious to comply with his request by despatching him to the army; but this official sanction was insufficient for d'Eon; he required further the consent of the King. The Comte de Broglie, whose aide-de-camp he wished to become, and who, in fact, continued to attend to the business of the secret diplomacy from the army, submitted his desire to the sovereign, and obtained the following reply:—

. . . I do not think we have need at present of the Sieur d'Eon; you may, therefore, take him as your aide-de-camp, and it will be all the better as we shall know where to find him in case of necessity.

D'Eon was immediately appointed and started without delay for the army, where he at once entered active service. At Höxter he was entrusted with the removal

of the ammunition and some of the King's stores which had been left in the fortress : these he put on board the boats moored on the banks of the Weser, and crossed the river several times under the enemy's fire. A little later, in an action at Ultrop, near Löff, he was wounded in the face and thigh. On November 7, 1761, when commanding the grenadiers of Champagne and the Swiss, he attacked the Scottish Highlanders, who were ambushed in the mountain gorges close to the camp of Einbeck, dislodging them and pursuing them as far as the English quarters. Lastly, at Osterwieck, when in command of a small detachment of only about a hundred dragoons and hussars, he fearlessly charged the Frankish Prussian battalion of Rhes, which had intercepted the communications of the French army near Wolfenbüttel. So sudden was his attack that the enemy, put to confusion, laid down their arms, enabling him to take eight hundred prisoners. The Prince Xavier de Saxe profited by this daring exploit in advancing his troops and occupying Wolfenbüttel. All these great feats, which d'Eon was wont to recount complacently, and which he bade his biographer, La Fortelle, relate, are attested besides by the certificate delivered to him by the Marshal and the Comte de Broglie on his leaving the army :

Victor-François, Duc de Broglie, Prince of the Holy Empire, Marshal of France, Knight of the Royal Orders, Commander in Alsace, Governor of the town and castle of Béthune, and in command of the French army on the Upper-Rhine ;

And Charles, Comte de Broglie, Knight of the Royal

Orders, Lieutenant-General of the King's armies, and Quartermaster-General of the army of the Upper Rhine.

We certify that M. d'Eon de Beaumont, captain of the regiment of dragoons of d'Autichamp, has made the last campaign with us as our aide-de-camp ; that during the whole of the said campaign we very frequently employed him in carrying the orders of the general, and that he has, upon several occasions, given proofs of the greatest intelligence and of the greatest valour ; notably at Hörter, in executing, in presence of, and under fire of, the enemy the perilous operation of removing the powder and other stores of the King ; at the reconnaissance and at the battle of Ultrop, where he was wounded in the head and in the thigh ; and near Osterwieck, where, as second captain of a detachment of eighty dragoons under the orders of M. de Saint-Victor, commanding the volunteers of the army, they charged the Frankish Prussian battalion of Rhes with such effect and determination that they took them prisoners of war, notwithstanding the superior number of the enemy.

In testimony whereof, we have delivered to him this certificate, signed with our hand, and have affixed thereunto our seals.

Cassel, December 24, 1761.

THE MARSHAL DUC DE BROGLIE.

THE COMTE DE BROGLIE.

The original of this certificate has been lost, but d'Eon published the text himself in London in 1764, at the time of his quarrels with the Comte de Guerchy, when the Marshal and the Comte de Broglie were still alive, so that the accuracy of the testimony cannot well be questioned.

It was at this time that d'Eon met a man in de

Broglié's army who exercised later a decisive influence over his destiny, ruining his regular career, and launching him in a series of adventures, one more bizarre than another, which involved the ruin of his brilliant qualities, and the loss, through an extravagant metamorphosis, of his manly dignity. The Comte de Guerchy, future ambassador of France in England, was then lieutenant-general in Marshal de Broglie's army. On August 19, 1761, the day that the French army crossed the Weser below Höxter, Captain d'Eon was commissioned by his chief to deliver to him the following order :—

The Marshal requests the Comte de Guerchy to order the brigades of infantry on the right bank of the Weser to take at once 400,000 cartridges which are there, and which a storekeeper of artillery will distribute to them, to the place to which M. d'Eon, the bearer of this note, will conduct them.

Given at Höxter, August 19, 1761.

THE COMTE DE BROGLIE.

P.S.—It is desirable that a staff officer should at once accompany M. d'Eon to effect this distribution to the troops under your orders.

Is it true, as d'Eon asserted later in the libel which he published in London against the ambassador, that the Comte de Guerchy contented himself with putting the order in his pocket, saying to d'Eon : " If you have a supply of ammunition, you have only to remove it to a park of artillery you will find at half-a-league's distance," and that, in spite of discipline, the young aide-de-camp had to gallop after the lieutenant-general to recover the

order, and to take it upon himself to carry out the marshal's instructions? The Comte de Guerchy naturally took care not to admit the truth of the story, which he treated as a wild fabrication, and the tardy and interested testimony of so biassed and insincere a person as d'Eon can only be accepted with extreme caution.

However that may be, it is interesting to record this first meeting on the battlefield of two officers who were destined three years later, as colleagues in the same embassy, to quarrel so violently and to astonish the whole of Europe by the scandal of their dispute.

Yet despite his exemplary conduct in the army and the ability he displayed in discharging the duties of a dragoon on real battlefields after following in embassies what he called "the trade of a scribe and pharisee," d'Eon quitted the service before the month of September 1762, when the preliminaries of peace were signed. Towards the end of December, 1761, he returned to Paris in compliance with an order from the ministry. There was some question of sending him back to St. Petersburg, where he had so successfully made his first diplomatic campaign, and of appointing him successor to the Baron de Breteuil. Once more he was about to change his career, by gaining another promotion. He left Cassel, where he chanced to be with Marshal de Broglie's staff, taking away with him the certificate which recorded his brilliant military exploits, and reached France in the beginning of the year 1762. Hardly had he set out when the Czarina died, bearing away to her grave d'Eon's prospects of an embassy. If, notwithstanding his comparatively inferior rank and origin, he had seemed in the

eyes of the Minister for Foreign Affairs and the King peculiarly qualified for the accomplishment of a confidential mission to the Empress, who had known him for several years and had frequently given him proofs of her good-will, the accession of a new sovereign at St. Petersburg considerably diminished the importance of these particular reasons, and the impetuous Burgundian was thwarted once again in his aspirations by the obstacle of caste.

In fact, instead of sending d'Eon to Russia, where the ministry decided upon leaving the Baron de Breteuil, they conceived the idea of turning the young diplomatist's indefatigable zeal and remarkable talents to profitable account in the negotiations for peace. The Duc de Choiseul appointed him secretary to the Duc de Nivernais, selected as the most subtle and expert arbitrator in the whole of France for the difficult task of concluding peace with England.

III

IN LONDON

IF the conclusion of peace with England presented difficulties, the choice of the arbitrator was an excellent one. The Duc de Nivernais met with a thoroughly good reception in English society, which was able to appreciate the qualities of a true nobleman, and recognised them in the person of the new French ambassador. The son of the Duc de Nevers and of a princess of the Spinola family, he had married H el ene de Pontchartrain. To the influence which his birth and his alliance gave him he had been able to add the intimate friendship of Madame de Pompadour, gained by organising those dramatic entertainments at Versailles by means of which the favourite succeeded in retaining the King's interest. In the numerous notes which she sent him the marquise hardly ever omitted to call him "my dear little husband"; nicknames had been brought into fashion by the King himself, and this one serves to show on what an intimate footing the duke was treated at the palace. He had talents, however, more genuine and more rare than the qualities necessary to a good courtier.

As ambassador to the Holy See in 1748, at the time that the *Unigenitus* bull was promulgated, he succeeded at once in astonishing the Romans by the splendour of his retinue, and in gaining the confidence of Pope Bene-

dict XIV. by the ability of his diplomacy. Sent afterwards to Berlin, he managed to captivate Frederick, but unfortunately too late to detach Prussia from the English alliance, an understanding secretly arrived at. The failure of his mission was due entirely to the tardiness and hesitation of the King's government. For this reason nobody blamed him for it, and the general opinion was that he was the man most likely to obtain the least stringent terms for a treaty which had become indispensable to France. An accomplished nobleman and able negotiator, a witty talker and charming writer, as well as a good horseman and musician, he was at home in every society. No one then had a better chance of reconciling two nations which pride themselves equally on being judges of good breeding, and the English gave him a warm reception, Horace Walpole going so far as to say that France had sent them the best she had to offer.

Nivernais had been selected as the most able ambassador, and d'Eon was appointed to assist him as the cleverest and best-informed secretary.

Having already taken part, on several occasions, in extremely delicate and important transactions, he was likely to be an invaluable adviser for his chief and to develop in his ingenious mind many an expedient for the negotiation. They embarked at Calais together on September 11, 1762, and reached London as soon as the 14th, thanks to the swift horses of the Duke of Bedford. If the English seemed eager to receive the ambassador of France, they were not in so great a hurry to proceed with the negotiations for peace. The Opposition, which desired to continue the war, were on the watch for an

opportunity for breaking them off and for upsetting Lord Bute's ministry. The news of the taking of Havana, which was received in London on October 1, turned everyone's head, and the King and the cabinet became more exacting under pressure of public opinion, demanding Florida, which France had still, under difficulties, to obtain from Spain. "That wretched Havana, my little husband," wrote Madame de Pompadour to the Duc de Nivernais, "I am alarmed about it." It was important that the preliminaries of peace should be signed before the opening of Parliament, the Opposition being intent upon overthrowing the ministry, and resuming hostilities. Nivernais was afraid, besides, that another British naval victory would make the terms of the treaty still less favourable: "I fear now," he wrote to Choiseul, "that Lisbon will be taken before that confounded signature."

Lisbon was not taken, for on November 5 Choiseul was able to inform Nivernais that the preliminaries of peace had just been signed at Fontainebleau, adding, with self-complacency somewhat irritating for the ambassador, whose task in London had proved less profitable, that he had been raised on that occasion to the peerage, with the title of Duc de Praslin. A large share of the success of this first agreement, which, notwithstanding all that it cost France, was regarded at the French court as highly advantageous, was due indeed to the mission of the Duc de Nivernais. Are we to believe that in order to induce the English ministers to conclude peace, in spite of the Opposition, the French ambassador was obliged to bribe them, as was boldly

asserted in London some years later, at the time of the action for libel brought against Dr. Musgrave? It would not have been in the least improbable, for it is known that more than once during the long struggle which fills the history of the eighteenth century, England and France endeavoured to bribe one another. At all events d'Eon relates how he succeeded one day, at the Duc de Nivernais' house, in alluring Mr. Wood, Under Secretary of State, by the offer of some good wine from Tonnerre, and how he took copies, while this latter was drinking copiously, of the papers he had brought in his portfolio. Among these there happened to be the ultimatum about to be transmitted to the Duke of Bedford, the British ambassador at the court of Versailles. Thanks to this impudent trick, Choiseul, already apprised of all the difficulties about to be raised, was enabled to come to terms with the Duke of Bedford, expeditiously and without taking any risks. This amusing story was given considerable publicity throughout France, and the papers of the Opposition soon published it in England, taking advantage of it to heckle the cabinet.

The preliminaries signed, there was nothing more for the two governments to do but to come to an agreement on certain minor points and the actual wording of the treaty. This task, somewhat ungrateful and difficult on account of Choiseul's anxiety about recovering some of the concessions he had made in his great haste to negotiate before the opening of Parliament, kept Nivernais and d'Eon occupied for three more months; the definite treaty being signed only on February 10. This disastrous peace, which cost France a fine colonial

empire full of still finer possibilities, was welcomed there with transports of joy, while in England it raised genuine reprobation. D'Eon was too ambitious not to turn to good account the transactions in which he had taken part. Two personal experiences had taught him that it was always profitable to bear good news to the court, and that the King showed his pleasure on such occasions by granting favours to the messenger. He had won a lieutenancy in the dragoons by bringing to Versailles the Empress Elizabeth's ratification to the Treaty of Versailles, and three years later a life-pension of two thousand livres by discharging a similar commission. The new treaty which had been so earnestly desired and so well received in France should evidently obtain from him still greater advantages, only he must reach the King himself, not surreptitiously, as the agent of the secret correspondence, but before the whole court, as the accredited secretary of an official embassy. D'Eon, who thought nothing was impossible, urged his chief to request the British Government to grant him the favour of conveying the ratifications to the treaty to Versailles. Such a selection on the part of a foreign government for a mission regarded as highly honorific was unprecedented and contrary to all usage. Nevertheless, the ambassador consented to make the application, however irregular, although the Duc de Praslin considered it to be doomed to failure. The Minister for Foreign Affairs put Nivernais on his guard, assuring him that the court of St. James' would certainly not entrust such a mission to a French secretary. It would appear also that the minister, out of patience at the aspirations with which premature

successes had inspired d'Eon, was anxious to put him in his place. "He is young," he wrote, "and has still time enough to be of good service and to earn distinction. I take an interest in his welfare and will gladly put him in the way of gaining advance by time and work."

In spite of de Praslin's sceptical conjectures, the Duc de Nivernais obtained for "his little d'Eon" the difficult favour he had requested. This success was a clearer indication of Nivernais' great influence at the court of St. James' than any testimonial; and the ambassador did not omit to banter the minister on his incredulity:

I am very glad you were stupid enough to believe it impossible that the French secretary—my little d'Eon—should be the bearer of the King of England's ratifications. The fact is, you did not fully realise the great kindness and esteem which your ambassador enjoys here, and it is just as well that you have done so, for otherwise you would be capable of despising me all your life, while now you will doubtless have some regard for me.

D'Eon reached Paris on February 26, as bearer of the ratifications. Praslin did not fail to remark that he had made "great haste," but, without grudging him his success, exerted himself in his behalf. On March 1, he informed Nivernais that the Cross of Saint Louis and a gratuity were to be conferred upon his little d'Eon by the King: "I think he will be satisfied," he added; "as for me, I am delighted, for he is a handsome young fellow and a hard worker, and I am his well-wisher." D'Eon met with a warm reception at court, and took good care not to forget the commissions with which his

chiefs had charged him. He gave Madame de Pompadour news of the wretched health of her "little husband," and delivered to her some purses from England which she pronounced to be very ugly and "coarse as ropes." The favourite thought d'Eon was "an excellent person," and considered it "a great act of politeness on the part of the English to entrust him with the treaty." Congratulating Nivernais upon having terminated his work, she urged him to return and "repair his health by the good air of France."

As the Duc de Nivernais had accomplished to his master's satisfaction the delicate and difficult negotiation for which he had been sent to London, the Duc de Praslin could not think of prolonging an embassy from which his friend had reaped every advantage and honour, and which was hardly better than an honourable exile for that wealthy and literary nobleman. The choice of a successor had, moreover, preoccupied Nivernais himself for several months. He had thought of his friend, the Comte de Guerchy, lieutenant-general of the King's armies, who had earned distinction in the Seven Years' War, and enjoyed a great reputation for courage at Versailles. A fearless soldier, Guerchy had never been afforded the opportunity of proving himself a diplomat, and even his friends doubted his qualifications for that career. Such was the opinion of de Praslin, who replied, on January 8, 1763, to the proposals which the Duc de Nivernais had just made :

I am still much concerned about Guerchy. I am not sure, however, that we are doing him a good service by

appointing him ambassador in London. . . . I dread his despatches like fire, and you know how defective despatches injure a man and his work. A minister is often judged less by the manner in which he conducts business than by the account he gives of it. . . . But he cannot write at all ; we must not deceive ourselves on this point.

Nevertheless, Guerchy was named for the post—first, because it was not deemed desirable that Nivernais' candidate should be rejected—the ambassador being in high favour at Versailles—secondly, because Praslin, in spite of his too just opinion of Guerchy's merits, was glad to oblige two of his intimate friends at the same time. On February 16, 1763, the Duc de Nivernais was apprised of this selection in London. It was settled that d'Eon should remain at the embassy for the purpose of assisting his new chief, and wielding the pen in his stead. In the interim he was even left in charge, and, upon Nivernais' earnest recommendation, Praslin agreed to give him the title of Resident Minister. D'Eon was still in France when Nivernais recalled him to London to commit the embassy to his care. He was somewhat long in complying with his chief's order, and even gave out that he was ill. In reality, the intrigues of the secret diplomacy were detaining him in Paris.

The Comte de Broglie was at that time an exile in his estates in Normandy. He had been involved in the disgrace of his brother, the marshal, to whom the Marquise de Pompadour, notwithstanding facts and the force of public opinion, had attributed the responsibilities really incurred by Soubise during the Seven Years' War.

Louis XV., unable to oppose the favourite openly, but unwilling to be deprived of his secret minister's services, resigned himself to transferring the headquarters of his private diplomacy to the Château de Broglie. It was during this temporary seclusion that the Comte de Broglie matured a plan for the invasion of England which had been formed a long time before, but the recent hostilities had prevented its execution. If the conclusion of peace put back the opportunity for doing so, it allowed, at least, of the conditions and means likely to lead to a successful issue being studied on the spot. The King and the minister understood better than the nation the fatal terms of the Treaty of Versailles, and were anxious to prepare themselves quickly for counteracting its effects. Accordingly Louis XV. examined with interest the plan submitted to him, and sent it back to Tercier with his approval. It was at this latter's house that d'Eon and the Comte de Broglie, who was passing through Paris at the time, met for the purpose of organising this perilous mission. D'Eon's position in London and his experience of intrigues of this description enabled him to conduct the researches, and a colleague was given to him—his cousin, the Sieur d'Eon de Moulouze, who should take charge of the documents in the event of the discovery of the scheme. As for the technical part, it was to be entrusted to an engineer, Carrelet de la Rozière. Lastly, the basis of a cypher to be employed in the affair was arranged. The King gave his instructions himself :

The Chevalier d'Eon will receive through the Comte de Broglie or M. Tercier my orders on the surveys to be

made in England, whether on the coast or in the interior of the country, and he will comply with the instructions he will receive to that end, as if he received them direct from me. It is my desire that he shall observe the greatest secrecy in this affair, and that he shall not make any communications thereon to any living person, not even to my ministers wheresoever they may be.

These instructions were precisely stated and commented upon by the Comte de Broglie in a letter which he sent, on May 7, 1763, to the Chevalier d'Eon in London. He recommended him to observe the utmost prudence in his conduct, apprising him that the Comte de Guerchy's suspicious character would render his secret mission extremely difficult, and urged him to take every conceivable precaution for the safety of the papers connected with the correspondence. The Count appointed him tutor to M. de la Rozière, adding: "He is a somewhat wild pupil, but you will be pleased with him." In conclusion he congratulated himself upon having d'Eon as "lieutenant in so important an affair, which may contribute to the safety and even to the prosperity of the nation," and thanked him for the zeal and devotion which he had never ceased to show to the Marshal de Broglie and to himself.

D'Eon's attachment to the exiled de Broglies had awakened the suspicions of the Duc de Praslin, and the Minister for Foreign Affairs did not hesitate to subject the young representative of the King at the court of St. James' to a regular interrogatory, in the presence of his senior clerk, Sainte-Foy, and the Comte de Guerchy. He began by abruptly asking him to give an account of

the battle of Villinghausen, at which he was present while serving in the dragoons. D'Eon did not require much pressing, and boldly laid to the charge of Soubise all the blunders officially imputed to the Duc de Broglie. Praslin, who was striding impatiently up and down the room, suddenly interrupted him, exclaiming: "I know it to have been just the opposite of what you say, and this from one of my intimate friends who was also there." And he turned to the Comte de Guerchy. "But, my dear d'Eon, you surely did not witness all you tell me."

"The minister pulled a long face," d'Eon relates, "and gave a sardonic smile, for I persisted in assuring him, as I shall do to the end of my days, that I had indeed seen and heard what I had told him." The duke concluded by saying: "It is your attachment to the Broglies that makes you speak as you do." "Faith, sir," d'Eon replied, "it is my attachment to the truth. You question me, and I can only tell you what I myself know."

Upon leaving the minister, Sainte-Foy rebuked d'Eon and advised him not to remain "in a country where he would never make his fortune, but to return to England."

Another attempt to discover d'Eon's real sentiments towards the Broglie party was made—more discreetly this time—by the Duchesse de Nivernais, who, chancing one day to be alone with him, asked if he was not in correspondence with M. de Broglie. "No, madam," replied d'Eon, "and I am sorry for it, as I am very fond of Marshal de Broglie, but I do not wish to weary him with my letters; I am satisfied with writing to him on

New Year's Day." "I am very glad to hear this for your sake, my dear little friend," continued the duchess. "Let me tell you in confidence that intimacy with the House of Broglie might be of injury to you at court, and in the estimation of Guerchy, your future ambassador."

D'Eon had barely arrived in London, where the Duc de Nivernais, longing for departure, was impatiently awaiting him, when he was invested "in the prescribed forms" with the Cross of the Order of Saint Louis by his chief, at his own request. He had brought with him presents from the King to the Sardinian minister, one of the negotiators of the peace. Count Viry accepted "his Majesty's favours with great pleasure and gratitude." The presents consisted of the King's portrait set in diamonds, accompanied by an autograph letter, a Gobelin tapestry, and a Savonnerie carpet. The first idea of the happy recipient of these gifts was to go to the Prime Minister, Lord Bute, and show them to him. The latter, Nivernais relates, "took them at once to the King of England, who considered they were magnificent and the letter charming."

On May 4, the Duc de Nivernais was received in a farewell audience by George III., and two weeks later he set out for France, tired of London fogs, and happy to be again at Versailles, and at the Academy, and on his beautiful estate at St. Maur.

D'Eon became his own master in London, and began immediately to play the part and to lead the life of an ambassador. He kept open house, and among his visitors there were de Fleury, the Chevalier Carrion, a friend of the Duc de Nivernais, "a deputation of the

Academy of Sciences which was to go to the Equator for the purpose of measuring the terrestrial meridian," scholars and men of letters, among them Duclos, Le Camus, Lalande, and La Condamine. The Comtesse de Boufflers, who had captivated the Prince de Conti and the frequenters of the Hôtel du Temple by her wit and elegance, did not disdain, when on a visit to London, to do the honours of the embassy, as the following note testifies :—

Madame de Boufflers and Lady Mary Coke will come to dine with M. d'Eon on Monday if that suits him, and will bring Lady Susannah Stuart. Madame de Boufflers will, perhaps, avail herself of M. d'Eon's offer by bringing two other friends of hers if they have returned to town, which she, however, thinks unlikely. She presents her compliments to M. d'Eon, and begs to say that she will help him to do the honours of the dinner to the ladies, both as a fellow-countrywoman and as one quite ready to be counted among his friends.

She has to inform M. d'Eon that Lord Holderness has returned, and that he therefore should be invited.

Thanks to the Duc de Nivernais, who did not consider himself quits with him, and was still exerting himself on his behalf in France, he received letters in July accrediting him minister plenipotentiary to the King of England.

Fortune and distinctions had come apace to "little d'Eon." In less than two years he had risen from the post of secretary of embassy to that of Louis XV.'s representative to his Britannic Majesty, and had exchanged the title and uniform of a captain of dragoons for the position of a minister plenipotentiary. The

obscure gentleman of Tonnerre could henceforth entertain on an equal footing the ambassadors of the highest rank and the great dignitaries of the court of St. James'. He took care not to miss the opportunity, and on August 25, St Louis' day, he gave a gala dinner, at which Lord Hertford, Lord March, David Hume, and the whole diplomatic corps were present. So sudden a success intoxicated him. But everything was extraordinary in the career of this young man of quite mediocre extraction, who, employed occasionally in secret diplomacy, was afterwards received into the regular service by favour; rewarded for his services by a lieutenancy of dragoons, and who, when barely thirty-six, was representing the King of France at the most magnificent court of Europe, after that of Versailles, and carrying on the mission of the Duc de Nivernais, a peer of the realm. D'Eon did not realise how surprising this rapid ascent through the most rigid aristocracy and the most exclusive classes appeared to the onlookers, nor how scandalous to his rivals. It was more in keeping with his character to abuse his advantages than to preserve them. His survey of the ground that had been covered, the remembrance of innumerable obstacles he had surmounted, far from teaching him prudence, only increased his presumption. He did not believe he was at the zenith of his fortune, but merely at the outset. His head was turned, although, anticipating reproaches, he denied it. He wished to access himself in the eyes of the English, his countrymen, his minister, and even of his King.

He continued to assume the position of ambassador until they should decide to confer the title upon him, and

so raise him to the same rank as the premier lords of France. But if his determination never waned, if the resources of his active mind never diminished throughout this wild enterprise, his money was rapidly dwindling away. The almoner, the equerry, the five cooks and butlers, the four footmen, the porter, the two coachmen, the two grooms, and others, who formed his household, had to be paid, and, as his emoluments were insufficient for the purpose, d'Eon was obliged to apply to the Duc de Praslin for additional subsidies. He did so with admirably feigned moderation and disinterestedness, explaining that the appointment of minister plenipotentiary, for which he had never asked, compelled him, much against his will, to wear a few decent clothes and a little lace :

The appointment of minister plenipotentiary, for which I never asked, has certainly not turned my head, thanks to a little philosophy ; it has only involved me in heavier expenses, as the enclosed account testifies. When I was secretary of embassy I went about plainly dressed in my uniform and cambric cuffs ; now, much against my will, I must wear a few decent clothes and a little lace. If the King's affairs are in a bad state, mine are going from bad to worse. Your kindness and your sense of justice will not suffer this. Soon I shall complete ten years' service as a diplomatist, without having become richer or more proud. Many promises have been made to me, but promises and promisers have vanished. Till now I have sown much and reaped little. When the happy time comes for my release from politics, I shall be obliged to abscond and become bankrupt, unless you are humane enough to help me with some additional

donation. The more zealously and courageously I work, the poorer I become : my youth is passing away, and I have nothing left but bad health, which is growing worse every day, and debts to the amount of over twenty thousand livres. These various little debts have been worrying me for so long that my mental capacities are completely absorbed and are no longer free, as I should wish, to serve the King's interests. The time of reckoning appearing to be imminent, I entreat you to decide upon my present and future prospects, and upon the favours I am to expect from your sense of justice and kind-heartedness. . . .”

The Duc de Praslin was all the less inclined to grant the request as he had received at the same time serious complaints against d'Eon from the Comte de Guerchy. Not satisfied with incurring debts, the Chevalier had already spent a part of the future ambassador's stipend. He regarded these emoluments as his own, for he would not admit that after being in the first rank he was once more in a subordinate position, that “ he should descend from peer to peasant.” He persisted with Burgundian tenacity in his fanciful dream of gaining the title as well as the functions of ambassador, and of succeeding his former chief, Nivernais, in London. In spite of the warnings which he received from every quarter, and of the counsels of moderation which his best-informed and most devoted patrons, Sainte-Foy, the chief secretary of the Foreign Office, and the Duc de Nivernais himself, continually urged upon him, he would not yield and ended by receiving a well-deserved reproof from the Duc de Praslin :

I could never have believed that the title of minister plenipotentiary would cause you so quickly to forget the point whence you started, and I had no reason to expect that your aspirations would increase in proportion as you received new favours. In the first place, I gave you no ground for anticipating the reimbursement of your former journey to Russia, because three of my predecessors upon whom you made a similar demand had not, it appeared, found it legitimate. In the second place, you complain to me of empty promises having been made, but surely such has not been my way of dealing with you. Remember that I received you at Vienna when I had no reason for obliging you, for you were a perfect stranger to me. Upon your arrival you were ill, and I looked after you. When you left me you were uncertain as to your prospects here, and it was I who obtained the pension which was conferred upon you. Two years afterwards, being without employment, you applied to me, and I gave you the most suitable post and the most favourable opportunity for rising to notice. Lastly, when you brought the ratification of the treaty with England to us, the expenses of your journey were paid, and his Majesty rewarded you as if you had made ten campaigns in the field. If you are not yet satisfied, I shall be obliged to discontinue employing you, for fear of being unable to recompense your services adequately. But I prefer to believe you will feel the truth of my statements, and put your trust in future rather in my good will than in such groundless claims. I must not forget to mention that I have not noticed that the character of plenipotentiary involved M. de Neuville in any expenses here ; his style of living is the same as when he was in the service of the Duke of Bedford. I cannot conceive the necessity for this extraordinary outlay at the expense of the Comte de Guerchy, which is quite out

of place. I do not conceal from you my displeasure at your having involved in so great expenditure one in whom I take such an interest, and who trusted in you on my recommendation. I hope that you will be more circumspect in your demands for the future, and more sparing in your use of other people's money, and that you will endeavour to be as useful to him as you have been to the Duc de Nivernais.

The Duc de Praslin was singularly mistaken if he expected to have the last word with his impetuous correspondent. D'Eon, far from giving in, was exasperated by such sensible advice, and, giving full vent to his ill-humour, replied the same day :

As soon as I learned, Monsieur le Duc, that the title of minister plenipotentiary was to be conferred upon me against my will, I had the honour of writing to the Duc de Nivernais that I regarded the title rather as a misfortune than as a boon.

The point whence I started, when very young, was my native town, Tonnerre, where I possess a small property and a house fully six times as large as that occupied in London by the Duc de Nivernais. The point whence I started in 1756 was the Hôtel d'Ons-en-Bray, Rue de Bourbon, Faubourg St. Germain. I am the friend of the owner of that mansion, which I left against his will to make three journeys to Russia and to other courts in Europe, to join the army, to come to England, and to bring four or five treaties to Versailles, not as courier, but as a man who had contributed to the framing of them. I have frequently travelled when very ill, and once with a broken leg. Nevertheless, I am prepared to return to the place whence I started, if such

be my fate. I shall recover my former happiness there. The points whence I started are those of being a gentleman, a soldier, and a secretary of Embassy—all of them naturally leading to the position of a minister at foreign courts. The first gives a claim to it; the second confirms the idea and endues with the necessary firmness for such a post; but the third is the school for it. . . .

If a marquis had accomplished one-half the things which I have accomplished in ten years, he would ask no less than the title of duke or of marshal. As for me, my aspirations are so modest that I ask to be nothing at all here, not even secretary of Embassy.

D'Eon, who felt excited that day, and courted disgrace for the pleasure of indulging in witticisms, was not yet satisfied. By the same post he sent similar impertinencies to the Comte de Guerchy, who had not ceased exhorting him to be more circumspect in his behaviour :

. . . I take the liberty of observing to you on the character which chance has given me, that Solomon said, a long time ago, everything here below was vanity, opportunity, mere accident, happiness, and misfortune, and that I am more than ever persuaded Solomon was a great preacher. I will modestly add that the chance which gave the title of minister plenipotentiary to a man who has negotiated successfully during the last ten years was perhaps not one of the blindest. What has come to me by chance might come to another by good luck. . . .

A man, no matter who, can only form an estimate of himself by comparison with one or many men. There are several proverbs which serve to prove the truth of this. It is commonly said : *He is as stupid as any thousand—he is as wicked as any four—he is as mean as any ten—*

men. This is the only scale by which we can be guided except in certain cases where men measure themselves by women. An ambassador, no matter who, may be worth half a man, a whole man, twenty, or ten thousand men. The question is to determine how a minister plenipotentiary, who is a captain of dragoons, and has completed ten political campaigns (without counting campaigns in the field), stands relatively to an ambassador who is a lieutenant-general, and is making his début. . . .

I have already had the honour, sir, of thanking you sincerely for all your kind offers of assistance. As to my prospects, I frankly confess I am a second edition of Sister Anne in Blue Beard, who was always watching but saw nothing coming, and this often induces me to sing that beautiful song :

*Belle Philis, en désespère
Alors qu'on espère toujours.*

IV

CONTENTION WITH DE GUERCHY

IN his letter to the Duc de Praslin d'Eon called to mind "the point whence he started," and only found cause to pride himself on his success.

This was a fair estimate of himself, though not a very modest one; but it showed little knowledge of his time. Having obtained when still quite young a rank and distinction which, to a man of his birth, should have appeared an unlooked-for consummation of his whole career, he could neither rest satisfied nor even equip himself with patience. Above all he could not resign himself to being put back. After contributing to an important negotiation as secretary to an enlightened and brilliant ambassador, whose tradition and bearing he had striven to maintain as minister plenipotentiary, he found himself compelled to act again as secretary under the orders of a chief new to diplomacy, wanting in ideas and resources, and bent on reaping the advantages of a fat living from his embassy.

Short of money, and irritated by the recriminations which the expenses of his temporary administration had obtained for him, d'Eon angrily awaited his ambassador.

The Comte de Guerchy arrived on October 17. "He received me with hypocritical politeness," d'Eon relates, "and asked me in a wheedling tone if I did not

regret having sent him my letter of September 25. I replied quietly: 'No, sir; my letter was perhaps a somewhat sharp, but a fair, rejoinder to your attack of September 4, and were you to address to me such another letter, I should be obliged to send you a similar reply.' 'Come, come, my dear M. d'Eon,' he retorted. 'I see you are rather a quarrelsome person.' Thereupon he drew from his pocket my letters of recall, which he handed to me with a grieved air, expressing his regret and assuring me once more of his friendship and attachment. I answered him only with a look . . . and bowing distantly I withdrew, taking with me that official document of my disgrace."

If d'Eon was as successful as he relates in concealing his mortification and in maintaining his composure, which was hardly his wont, the Duc de Praslin's letter must have roused bitter reflections. Not only was he recalled to Paris, but he was forbidden to appear at court. This meant utter disgrace, exile and a severe check, if not an end, to his career. Too irritated to give way to despondency, and still hoping that Louis XV. would intervene on behalf of his secret agent, he determined upon awaiting events and deferring his departure as long as possible. His imagination, which was never at a loss for an expedient, supplied him with a complete plan of resistance in the scandalous contest which he did not hesitate to wage against the orders of his ambassador, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, and the King. The next day, upon delivering the papers of the embassy to de Guerchy, d'Eon informed him that he was not in the least hurry to obtain his audiences of

leave. Being accredited by letters bearing the King's signature, he could only be recalled, he contended, by an act in the same form. Regarding, therefore, as null and void the letters of recall which he had received, and which were signed with the stamp alone, he declared his intention of awaiting "further orders from his court."

De Guerchy pointed out to him in violent language the extreme impropriety of his behaviour, and the consequences to which it exposed him; then, growing gradually more and more heated, he told him—according to d'Eon—that "he should soon get the mastery over his obstinacy, and that, moreover, his ruin was already decided upon."

With a view to putting an end to an equivocal situation and depriving d'Eon of every means of resistance, Guerchy went so far as to ask the court of St. James' to hasten the audiences of leave of his embarrassing colleague. D'Eon allowed the step to be taken, but was most opportunely hindered from proceeding to the palace on the appointed day. All these chicaneries exasperated him and made him completely lose his presence of mind. A single incident was enough to make the dispute public, and to give this diplomatic intrigue an unexpected notoriety.

A Frenchman, the Sieur Treyssac de Vergy, arrived during the month of September. Advocate of the Bordeaux Parliament, he gave himself out to be a man of letters, made a parade of his grand acquaintances, and even boasted of having come to England with the promise of being appointed minister plenipotentiary in place of d'Eon. Upon calling at the embassy, he was

somewhat harshly dismissed by d'Eon himself, who gave him to understand that he would not be received unless he brought with him the letters of introduction of which he had made mention. De Vergy protested, asserting that he was on intimate terms with the Comte de Guerchy; nevertheless, he promised to produce the recommendations required of him. D'Eon had not seen this strange visitor again, but had received extremely unfavourable reports concerning him from Paris. He was described as being a mere adventurer, over head and ears in debt, and of doubtful reputation, who imposed upon people under an assumed name. Consequently, the Chevalier was greatly surprised to meet de Vergy, with whom de Guerchy was, or pretended to be, unacquainted, at a reception given by the ambassador soon after his arrival. He showed his astonishment at seeing him at the embassy without an invitation, and during the course of a somewhat heated altercation "insulted him, and challenged him to a duel on foot or on horseback," and was only calmed at de Guerchy's intervention.

On the following day d'Eon happened to be dining at Lord Halifax's, in the company of Lord Sandwich and the Comte de Guerchy. He was too excited by the events of the previous day to maintain his composure, even before the English ministers, and the ambassador's presence only served to aggravate him the more. He thought it a good opportunity for declaring that he would not leave England before being recalled in a regular manner, and that, besides, he could not, in any case, dream of taking his departure before settling an

affair of honour. The affair of honour in question was the quarrel of the previous day, which he complacently related to his hosts, informing them that he expected a visit from de Vergy on the morrow, that he should accept his challenge, and kill his adversary. When the English ministers reproached him with causing a scandal, and reminded him of the duties attached to his official position, he replied that "if he was a minister plenipotentiary he was above all a dragoon." "Well, then," retorted Lord Halifax, "were you even the Duke of Bedford himself, I should have to give you in charge of the guards." "I have not the honour of being the Duke of Bedford; I am M. d'Eon, and have no need of any escort."

He was so heated that Guerchy joined Lord Halifax in making every effort to calm him. D'Eon heeded neither entreaties nor threats and, pleading an engagement at his club, attempted to make his escape. Thereupon the minister ordered the passage to be barred, and d'Eon, beside himself with rage, exclaimed that he never could have believed it possible for a minister plenipotentiary to be kept a prisoner, in the presence of his ambassador, at the residence of a secretary of state. The scene was becoming tragi-comic. Lord Halifax and de Guerchy felt that they must put an end to it, so as to avoid a far greater scandal than the one they had tried to prevent. They began again to argue with d'Eon, who gradually grew calmer, and finally consented to sign a paper whereby he gave his word of honour to the Earls of Sandwich and Halifax not to fight M. de Vergy, and "not to insult him in any way, without previously informing the said earls of his intention."

D'Eon made a copy of his engagement and caused Lord Halifax, Lord Sandwich and the Comte de Guerchy to sign it.

This extraordinary scandal, brought about quite as much by the ambassador's tactlessness as by the very undiplomatic excitement of his impetuous minister plenipotentiary, had its sequel the next day. D'Eon himself has written an account of it too graphic to be omitted.

“ The affair passed without a blow being struck. My position was far more difficult than his, for I had promised not to molest him, and I could not foresee that the brave Vergy was the man to take alarm at my every movement. But when I secured the door, intending to detain him until the ambassador's servants for whom I had sent arrived, he at once began to rush round the room, crying, ‘ Do not touch me, do not touch me ! ’ ‘ What ! ’ I replied, smiling, ‘ you come to me in fighting trim, and are afraid lest I should touch you ! ’ A few dragoon-like expletives interlarded in this speech led him to mistake the window for the door ; and noticing his pallor and his action, I said : ‘ If you jump, I will push you ; but take care, for you will find a moat and pikes below.’ This remark sufficed to stop him.

“ Then, handing a paper to him, I said : ‘ I require you to read this note and sign it in duplicate.’ He ran through it so hastily that on returning it to me he asked for a delay of three weeks in order that he might receive letters from Paris. ‘ If your mind was not so confused,’ I replied, ‘ you would see that I give you a month.’ And taking him by the arm, I led him to my bedroom, where my writing-table stands. Upon entering he cried out :

‘Do not kill me!’ I did not know what to make of this exclamation, when suddenly I saw de Vergy’s eyes fixed on my Turkish sabre and my cavalry pistols, which I had brought back from the war in Germany. I then understood the cause of his excessive alarm, and at once laid one of the pistols on the floor, putting my foot on it lest it should bite the so-called de Vergy. ‘You see I am not going to hurt you or even to come near you,’ I said. ‘Now, sign with a good grace.’ Thereupon he resigned himself gallantly to signing the note in duplicate, and—I think it necessary to add—he did so with his hat under his arm and one knee on the floor. He did not see fit to take a copy of the note, although I suggested that he should do so; he was in too great a hurry to reach the door.”

Vergy made straight for a justice of the peace, to whom he gave a dramatic account of what had just passed, and obtained a summons against d’Eon. The Chevalier, who still enjoyed diplomatic immunity, did not think fit to reply. Besides, he was far too preoccupied by his disputes with his ambassador, which were daily growing more serious. He accused de Guerchy of an attempt to poison him, declaring that on October 28, when he dined at the embassy for the last time, Chazal, the butler, had mixed with a certain brand of wine from Tonnerre, to which he was known to be partial, so strong a dose of opium “that he all but fell into a lethargy,” and was obliged to keep his room for several days. The following day the ambassador, accompanied by two of his secretaries, came to inquire after his health, and d’Eon imagined that de Guerchy wished to acquaint

himself with the plan of his apartments, with a view to discovering the hiding-place of the secret papers. Upon his visitor being announced, he even hastened to the room of his cousin, d'Eon de Mouloize, and asked his secretary to come—"in order," as he said, "to prevent a sudden attack." He kept telling his friends of all these persecutions, and assured them he was constantly watched. His servant, having to put a new lock on the door of his lodging, naturally sent for the nearest locksmith, who happened to be the locksmith of the embassy. D'Eon then thought that he was at the mercy of the Comte de Guerchy, apprehending an attack upon his person, and the immediate seizure of his papers. Accordingly, driven to distraction and no longer able to contain himself, he discharged his servant, and convoked his faithful comrades to a secret meeting, at which it was resolved that he should move immediately. D'Eon, who was never prevented by any circumstance from indulging his mania for writing, has left us a kind of official report of the proceedings, which well depicts his state of mind: "The Council of Three," he writes, "after discussing at some length the question of a change of lodgings, has decided that the furniture and clothes shall be conveyed to-morrow morning on a barrow, because everything can be removed in two or three journeys. . . . All these batteries are ready to be unmasked in case of need, and the garrison is fully determined, in the event of a capitulation, to leave the fortress, with drums beating, torches alight, and all the honours of war—*et operibus eorum cognoscetis eos.*"

D'Eon was not obliged to adopt the war-like proceed-

ings with which he threatened his ambassador. He took up his residence in the house of Carrelet de la Rozière, his kinsman, and his colleague in the secret mission with which he was entrusted, bringing with him arms and baggage; and then, still suffering from the same obsession, he transformed his new habitation, situated in the very centre of London, into a real stronghold, occupied and commanded by soldiers.

De Guerchy was accustomed by now to d'Eon's ways, and yet this surreptitious and sudden departure filled him with amazement, and made him all the more anxious because he began to despair of settling the accounts which d'Eon owed him, but always deferred paying. On November 9, he wrote to him in his ambassador's style, which the Duc de Praslin had so justly dreaded:

I learned yesterday that you had left the house which I rented for you and for those whom Lord Holland's residence, which I occupy, was unable to accommodate. I do not know what can be the reason for so hasty a determination on your part, or why you omitted to inform me of it. The day that I came to inquire after your health, hearing you were unwell, I forgot to mention the account which you have to settle, for the various sums of money you have drawn on my credit. You told me, some time since, you would let me have it within two days, and I beg you will bring it or send it to me immediately.

D'Eon did not send the account required of him, but he proceeded to the King's levee, and, as soon as his Majesty had retired, he approached the ambassador,

saying : " I did not answer your letter of this morning, because I rose late. If I have any accounts to settle, I shall settle them with my court when I am asked to do so. The minister plenipotentiary of France has lived at the expense of the King, just as the ambassador now lives. I am delighted at the opportunity you have given me of stating that I never was, and never will be, your steward." And, without giving de Guerchy time to reply, he made him a " deep bow," and hastened back to his stronghold. Summoning his council, he exerted his utmost eloquence in convincing M. de la Rozière that, to judge by the turn of events, the secret documents were in imminent danger of being discovered. They were voluminous enough to prove embarrassing, and difficult to conceal in the event of a surprise visit. D'Eon spoke to such good purpose that de la Rozière offered to convey part of them to France. The mission was a perilous one, though his somewhat obscure office and the discreet attitude he had adopted made it easier for him than for anybody else. D'Eon entrusted him with a large number of the documents in his possession ; but he was careful to keep the most important and the most compromising, those which could serve him as a weapon, or at any rate as a guarantee which he would know how to turn to account. These papers naturally included the minutes concerning the mission which kept him in England, the studying of plans for a military invasion.

Charged with the mysterious parcel, de la Rozière set out for Paris a few days later, taking with him, besides, in an envelope addressed to M. Tercier, letters which were to be delivered to the King and the Comte de

Brogie. In them d'Eon told of all the plots which he imagined he had discovered; the attempts which had been made to poison, to abduct and to watch him. He even boasted of having "humiliated and mystified his ambassador," and "of having fought like a dragoon for the King, his secret correspondence, and the Comte de Broglie."

These letters, full of such obvious exaggerations, produced an effect in Paris contrary to that which d'Eon had expected. The King felt that in the keeping of such a hare-brained individual his correspondence might at any moment be seized by his ambassador, and sent to his ministers. The entire scheme of his secret diplomacy, which he had concealed so carefully, would thus be discovered. Without consulting the Comte de Broglie, or even M. Tercier, Louis XV. hastened to take his precautions.

He despatched a courier to his ambassador in London informing him that he had just countersigned a letter from the Duc de Praslin, demanding d'Eon's extradition. In the event of d'Eon's arrest, Guerchy was to take charge of "all the papers he might find in the Sieur d'Eon's possession, without communicating their contents to anybody." These documents were to be "kept entirely, and without exception, secret," and, being first carefully sealed, were to remain in the keeping of the ambassador, who was to deliver them to the King in person on his next journey to Paris. The Sieur Monin, secretary to the Comte de Guerchy, and a friend of d'Eon, was entrusted with the mission of discovering the place where these papers had been deposited.

Louis XV. thought he had thus guarded against every event, expecting to make sure of Guerchy's discretion by the semi-confidential attitude he had adopted towards him, and prevent him from imparting his discoveries to the Duc de Praslin. Tercier and the Comte de Broglie were dismayed by the hasty step taken by the King, who informed them of it the following day. They knew that Guerchy was blundering enough to reveal everything inadvertently, even if his attachment to the house of Choiseul did not tempt him to commit an indiscretion which would betray the secret of the King's private policy. If such disclosures were necessarily mortifying for the King, they were to be dreaded by the secret agents, upon whom the ministers would assuredly vent their rage. Consequently, the Comte de Broglie, much alarmed, at once made known to the King his apprehensions with regard to the instructions sent to Guerchy, and Tercier communicated to him equally pessimistic reflections. Louis XV., relieved at having escaped so imminent a danger, made a point of reassuring his counsellors: "If Guerchy betrays the secret," he wrote, "he betrays me, and will be a lost man. If he is a man of honour, he will not do so; if he is a knave, he deserves to be hanged. It is very clear that you and the Comte de Broglie are uneasy. Be reassured, I am quite calm."

Guerchy, to do him justice, does not appear to have abused the King's confidence. Whether he perceived the danger to which disclosures exposed him, or whether he preferred to regard the King's letter as a mark of confidence of which he wished to prove himself worthy, he divulged the matter only to Madame de Guerchy,

who kept the secret loyally. The ambassador was glad enough, moreover, to have at his disposal fresh weapons against d'Eon, for he was at a loss to know what he should do next. Threats having failed, he had tried flattery, suggesting to the Duc de Choiseul that he should write a letter full of promises to d'Eon. The minister had consented, couching his letter in the most affectionate terms :

Whatever detains you in England, my dear d'Eon ? Abandon the diplomatic career and your ministerial disputes with M. de Guerchy, and join me here, where I intend to employ you usefully in the army. I promise you will be quite free from annoyance in my service. As the military contract will shortly expire, I have requested M. de Praslin to recall you. Nothing should prevent you from coming now, and you will please me greatly by joining me at Versailles without delay. I await you, my dear d'Eon, with the great interest which, as you know, I take in you.

In spite of the alluring terms of this letter, d'Eon was not tempted to relinquish the barren and interminable contest which he had undertaken against his ambassador, in order to seek again, on real battlefields, successes worthier of his brilliant past. Fully aware of the reception which awaited him in France, he limited himself to declining the Duc de Choiseul's proposals respectfully and gratefully.

He was determined not to quit London, where every citizen's residence was protected so effectually by law. Such a safeguard was indeed calculated to astonish a Frenchman of the eighteenth century, and de Guerchy

was not yet accustomed to it. So unused was he to English customs that he could not save his government from an unpleasant miscalculation. Hardly had he received the King's further instructions than he hastened to submit to the English ministers the demand for extradition transmitted to him by the Duc de Praslin. However great their desire to deliver the unfortunate ambassador out of his embarrassments, the English ministers did not consider they were justified in coming, on their own initiative, to a decision so contrary to the laws and spirit of their country, and they referred the matter to the Privy Council. Guerchy made a second still more urgent application to the secretaries of state, but in vain; and the King of England only expressed to the ambassador "his regret at being unable to comply with the request of his cousin, the King of France, since the laws of his kingdom did not empower him to do so."

The defeat was the more mortifying for Guerchy as he had involved his government in these unskilful tactics, and he found but slight compensation in the formal discharge which the chamberlain of the King of England caused to be delivered to d'Eon :

SIR,—The King your master has informed the King my master that you are no longer his Minister at the Court of St. James', and has at the same time required of the King to forbid you the court, and I deeply regret to have to inform you that I have this morning received orders from the King my master to communicate to you his intentions on that point.

I have the honour to be . . .

GOWER,
Chamberlain to the King of England.

This polite, but explicit, note marks the end of the Chevalier d'Eon's ordered career, confirming, in the name of the King of England, the revocation of the minister plenipotentiary of the King of France, brought about by his excessive ambition. Officially repudiated by the sovereign who had sent him and by the sovereign who had received him, d'Eon was now divested of his dignity. Anybody else would have given way to despondency, and asked pardon. The Chevalier, however, became more insolent and intractable than ever. Unable to believe his patrons had deserted him, and relying, in spite of everything, on the secret support of the King, d'Eon deemed himself still capable of holding his own against Guerchy. It was, in fact, the latter who was obliged to own himself beaten, and to give an account of his defeat to the King in person :

I have been expecting to execute the orders contained in the letter your Majesty did me the honour to address to me from Fontainebleau on November 4, before replying to it, but I have found it quite impossible to do so, notwithstanding the various means employed. Your Majesty will have been informed, by my despatch, of the obstacles I meet in my endeavours to possess myself of d'Eon's papers, for he persistently refuses to deliver them to me, in spite of the order he has received from M. de Praslin in the name of your Majesty. This shows his lack of wisdom, which, however, is not elsewhere apparent. Your Majesty will also have been informed that the court of St. James' has authoritatively refused my request, replying that it is against the laws of the country. Nevertheless, the King of England and his ministers are extremely anxious to get rid of d'Eon.

I have found it impossible to seize him, either by force or by strategem, because he no longer lives in my house, nor has he been here since running to such extremes. . . .

I am deeply grieved, Sire, at being unable to furnish your Majesty upon this occasion with proofs of the fervent zeal by which I shall be actuated throughout my life. . . .

D'Eon had once more evaded Guerchy's plots, and had laughed at the ambassador's official steps as he did at his secret intrigues. He had beguiled Monin, de Guerchy's secretary, with false confidences, and had let him believe that the important documents which he possessed were not in England. As for the police officers sent from Paris to carry him off, he intimidated them, only going out in the company of several people and remaining for the most part entrenched in his lodging. "His bedroom, sitting-room, study, and staircase were undermined; and he kept a lamp burning throughout the night. . . . The garrison consisted of several dragoons of his old regiment, and some deserters picked up in London, who occupied the ground-floor." These precautions, which would appear to be a gross fabrication had they not been the work of an adventurer anxious above all to impress public opinion, were quite superfluous. English law was a surer protection to d'Eon than "the four brace of pistols, the two guns, and the eight sabres of his arsenal," and Lord Halifax, when questioned as to the fate that awaited him, replied: "He had better keep quiet; tell him his behaviour is abominable, but his person inviolable."

Sure henceforth of being unmolested, d'Eon obstinately

London Mag. Sept. 1777.



MADemoiselle de BEAUMONT, or the
CHEVALIER D'EON.

Female Minister Plenipo. Capt. of Dragoons &c &c

MADemoiselle DE BEAUMONT

From a Caricature in the London Magazine, Sept. 1777

refused to come to terms, and de Guerchy, having exhausted his means of coercing a man who "put his minister's letters of recall in his pocket and refused to return the ministerial papers," decided upon drawing up an official statement of his refusal. He proceeded to d'Eon's lodging towards the end of December, and the drawing-up of the report gave rise to a scene in which the Chevalier lost all self-control. Striding up and down the room, he gesticulated, and declared "that he would rather die than deliver up the King's papers, and that they would have to take them at the muzzle of his gun." D'Eon signed this statement, which was destined to furnish Versailles with a formal proof of his folly. Louis XV. had ceased, moreover, to take any interest in d'Eon, dreading his disputes and bitterly regretting "the choice of such an agent." He determined upon keeping him at a distance, without appearing to desert him entirely; and if d'Eon obtained fresh favours in the sequel he owed them to the fear he inspired rather than to the esteem he had won by his former services. The King wrote to Tercier on December 30: "I do not believe that M. d'Eon is mad, but he is presumptuous and a very extraordinary person. I think we must allow some time to elapse and support him with a little money; let him remain where he is in safety, and above all let him refrain from fresh action."

Harassed by these several persecutions to which his pride had exposed him, and openly blamed in Paris and at Versailles, d'Eon found himself deserted, even by his friends. The little Burgundian town which had never ceased to follow his career with interest, while predicting

a brilliant future for him, now re-echoed the general reprobation. His relatives began to doubt if he was in his right senses, and his aged mother was thinking of coming to London herself, to implore his submission to the King's orders. But d'Eon wrote to her at the end of this eventful year, with his wonted triumphant self-assurance :

I have received, my dear mother, all the woeful and piteous letters you have taken the trouble to write to me. Why weepest thou, woman of little faith ? as Scripture says. What is there in common between your affairs at Tonnerre and my political affairs in London ? Go on planting your cabbages in peace, weeding your garden, and eating its fruit ; drink the milk of your cows and the wine of your vines, and spare me the idle chatter of Paris and Versailles, and your tears, which grieve but do not comfort me. Not that I am in need of consolation, for I am not in the least sad, and my heart plays the violin and even the double-bass, as I have already written to you, because I do my duty, and my enemies, who call themselves great men, do not perform theirs—being guided in their actions by caprice and personal interests, and not in the least by the interests of justice and the welfare of the King and country. Let them do as they please, I will do as I think proper. . . . I do not fear the thunderbolts of these little Jupiters, be they far or near. That is all I have to say ; therefore set your mind at ease, as mine is, and if you come to see me in London I shall be delighted, and I will take as good care of you as I do of the court despatches and the accounts of the Comte de Guerchy, which he will not have except on good grounds, with colours flying, ammunition at hand, and drums beating. He shall not even have the envelopes

of the letters, I swear it to you by all that is sacred, unless he brings to me an authentic order from the King, my master and his, and this is what he has not been able to effect hitherto.

. . . If you wish to do what is best, remain quietly in your charming retreat at the gate of Tonnerre, and do not return to Paris unless the court pays your travelling expenses in some surer way than it has mine, and remember that, whether men praise or blame you, you are none the better or the worse. *The glory of the righteous is in their conscience, and not in the praise of men.*

LAWSUITS AND A PENSION

THE storm of which d'Eon appeared to think so lightly was far from abating, however, for de Guerchy, enraged by his failure, had not yet given up the fight. He began by attacking his adversary's partisans, and had just obtained from the minister an order recalling M. d'Eon de Moulouze to France, and arbitrarily divesting him of his rank of lieutenant of cavalry. Then, having exhausted all the resources of official pressure, he tried less circuitous means—launching out in a paper war which originated in the incident that occurred at Lord Halifax's. The English newspapers had given a discreet explanation of the dispute on the following day. They were unfavourable to the ambassador, who realised that the laughter was not with him. Desirous of publishing his own version of the incident, he employed the services of a writer called Goudard, singularly unskilful in the profession by which he earned his livelihood. In exchange for a few guineas, Goudard delivered to de Guerchy a little pamphlet of a harmless description, but in which the facts were related in a light so favourable to the ambassador that d'Eon naturally felt prompted to reply. De Guerchy knew by experience how quick d'Eon was at repartee, and hoped that his adversary, unable to resist such a temptation,

would expose himself in consequence to the penalties of English law, so severe in matters of libel.

However, whether he did not deem himself insulted, or whether he suspected a trap, d'Eon kept quiet, and the ambassador was once more disappointed in his expectations. At this juncture de Vergy came to offer his services to de Guerchy for a modest consideration. He, too, had reasons for taking offence at the pamphlet, and this pretext was sufficient to envenom matters. Accordingly he published a little brochure openly attacking the Chevalier. This time d'Eon thought it necessary to reply, but in doing so he made use of language mild enough to put an end to the discussion. This did not suit the ambassador, who never allowed his sense of dignity to prevent him insisting on the last word. He pursued the petty warfare, making one blunder after another, and issued his "Contre-Note," a genuine piece of bathos, a severe and absurd condemnation of d'Eon. This publication produced the singular effect of animating persons unconcerned in the quarrel. Anonymous lampoons written in English were distributed among the public, also manuscript pamphlets, some taking d'Eon's part and some the ambassador's. Vergy, Lescalier, late clerk at the embassy, Henry Fielding, Justice of the Peace in London, took up the quarrel. A woman even, called Bac de Saint-Amand, signed a few pages which were deemed so comic that a second edition was rapidly exhausted.

For three months, during which over twenty different publications were produced, d'Eon contained himself; but his patience, as also his funds, was daily diminish-

ing. Deserted by the King and without resources he wrote to the Duc de Choiseul asking him for permission to enter the service of England with two of his cousins, since, as he said, "he could not obtain justice in M. de Guerchy's proceedings." At the same time he made a last appeal to the Duc de Nivernais for support, in humbler and more friendly terms, but in which the threatening allusions were also clear. These letters remained unnoticed, as well as those he sent to the Duc de Broglie and to Tercier. Impelled by necessity as much as by a desire for revenge, d'Eon then determined upon making use of his last weapons against de Guerchy. On March 22, 1764, he published a book, full of impertinence and gross allusions to the ambassador and the ministers. It consisted of a vehement account of all his contentions with de Guerchy, written in a sarcastic tone, at times full of wit, and throughout aggressive. D'Eon reproduced, besides, the letters he had ventured to address to his ambassador and those he had received from him; intimate letters in which de Guerchy displayed, in a heavy, involved style, all his shabby parsimony and perplexity at the outset of his diplomatic career. Lastly, in a third part, d'Eon gave extracts from the correspondence exchanged between the Duc de Praslin and the Duc de Nivernais, which the latter had communicated to him, and in which the two friends expressed themselves freely and confidentially upon the subject of de Guerchy's meagre qualifications.

These disclosures, so painful and humiliating for the ambassador, made a great stir in London. Fifteen hundred copies of the work were sold in the course of a

few days. But the scandal did not in the least produce the desired effect. D'Eon only lost much of the sympathy which his wit and good-humour had formerly won for him, and which all his wanton insults had not yet exhausted. Walpole, writing at this time to the Earl of Hertford, British Ambassador in Paris, reflects faithfully the opinion of Englishmen, who blamed d'Eon severely, though not without regret :

D'Eon has published (but to be sure you have already heard so) a most scandalous quarto, abusing Monsieur de Guerchy outrageously, and most offensive to Messieurs de Praslin and Nivernais. In truth, I think he will have made all three irreconcilable enemies. The Duc de Praslin must be furious at de Nivernais' carelessness and partiality for d'Eon, and will certainly grow to hate de Guerchy, concluding the latter can never forgive *him*. D'Eon, even by his own account, is as culpable as possible, mad with pride, insolent, abusive, ungrateful, and dishonest—in short, a complication of abominations, yet originally ill-used by his court, afterwards too well ; above all, he has great malice, and great parts to put that malice in play. . . . The Council have met to-day to consider what to do upon it. Most people think it difficult for them to do anything. Lord Mansfield thinks they can ; but I fear he is a little apt to be severe in such cases.

The Privy Council approved Lord Mansfield's intentions. If the work was not, strictly speaking, libellous, it contained defamatory insinuations which admitted of the application of the act. Moreover, the whole diplomatic corps supported de Guerchy in his demand for an

inquiry, and the Attorney-General brought an action for libel against d'Eon in the King's name, which was tried a few months later.

The sensation in London was enormous, and even greater in Paris, where the author of the scandal was far more severely condemned, as a contemporary who kept a diary of political and literary events relates, under date of April 14 :

M. d'Eon de Beaumont's book has made a great stir here. It contains letters attributed to Messieurs de Praslin, de Nivernais, and de Guerchy, annotated by the inaccurate editor. They give a poor idea of the talent, the wit, and the statecraft of those who wrote them. The work is preceded by a preface in which M. d'Eon sets forth his motives for publishing these letters. His infamous behaviour, and the incongruity between his conduct and his style in the statements denote a malicious madman.

And he adds, under date of April 26 :

The trial of M. d'Eon has begun, who is exciting much interest just now as the author of a most scandalous libel and most atrocious calumnies.

The volume so severely and justly condemned by public opinion was destined not only to rouse indignation at Versailles, but also to cause the utmost anxiety. Indeed, there was everything to fear from a man whose mind was so disordered. D'Eon had confined himself so far to talking about his own affairs ; but it was by no means certain that he would prove equally circumspect for the

future, or that he would refrain from divulging the secret and delicate negotiations in which he had been implicated, at the time of the conclusion of the last treaties.

The Duc de Praslin decided that the book should be torn up ; but while giving this order he bethought himself of treating with the author. The King encouraged him to do so, for he shared his minister's apprehensions, having just examined two letters addressed by d'Eon to Tercier, who did not wish to answer them. Moreover, they expressed only too plainly their author's intentions :

I will never be the first to desert the King or my country (wrote d'Eon in one of them) ; but if, unhappily, the King and my country should think fit to sacrifice me by deserting me, I shall be obliged, in spite of myself, to abandon the latter, and in doing so, I will justify myself before the whole of Europe, and nothing will be easier, as you are well aware.

I will not conceal from you, sir, that the enemies of France, believing they may be able to take advantage of the cruel position in which I find myself, have invited me to enter their service. Whatever the benefits they offer, I cannot be influenced, and I shall be guided under these circumstances by honour only. I have answered as became me.

. . . The leaders of the opposition have offered me any money I demand, on condition that I deliver to them my papers and letters, under seal, promising to return them to me in exactly the same state when the money is brought to me. I unbosom myself to you, and you must feel how repugnant to me must be such an expedient. . . . But if I am entirely forsaken, and if, between this and April 22, Easter Sunday, I do not receive a pro-

mise, signed by the King or by the Comte de Broglie, to the effect that reparation will be made to me for all the ills I have endured at the hands of M. de Guerchy—then, sir, I declare to you, formally and authentically, I shall lose all hope, and in forcing me to clear myself entirely before the King of England, his ministry, and the two Houses of Parliament, you must make up your mind to a war at no distant period, of which I shall surely be but the innocent cause, and this war will be inevitable. The King of England will be driven into it by the force and nature of circumstances, by the voice of the nation and the opposition.

Louis XV., who did not go so far as to believe that d'Eon had in his portfolio the means of bringing about war with England, took the danger with which he was threatened coolly enough; but he was aware that his secret was in peril. M. de Praslin had not concealed his earnest desire "to see d'Eon safe in France, under lock and key." The minister had even sent police officers to England, with orders to secure d'Eon, but only alive. Louis XV., however, "could not believe his agent was a traitor." He judged him more justly and dispassionately than his secret ministers. Notwithstanding his faults, his pride and his imprudence, d'Eon was incapable of committing a disloyal action. If he had been induced to write such compromising letters, he had done so only under compulsion, and when driven to extremities by the excessive severity, or by the equally excessive weakness, of the means employed against him, and also by the obstinate silence preserved towards him by the Comte de Broglie and Tercier. On learning of the death of Madame de Pompadour, which

occurred at this time, he believed that the secret ministers were at last publicly to enjoy their credit with the King. But his hopes were shattered : Louis XV. continued his double game, and the Comte de Broglie did not feel powerful enough to take advantage of the situation by obtruding himself upon the King, nor did he venture even to plead d'Eon's cause.

Deserted by everybody, the Chevalier was extremely flattered by the offers of the Liberal party, which compared him to Wilkes, the idol of the people and the victim of a trial for libel. His popularity was increased rapidly in London, where his name was cheered after that of the patriot, but he was flattered chiefly because it was hoped that he might divulge some scandalous details with regard to the conclusion of the last peace. The Liberals expected him to furnish them with formidable weapons against Lord Bute, the late ministers and their successors, who were said to have been bribed by France. Though d'Eon did not intend to respond to their advances, he did not reject them, and he boasted of them to the secret ministers, hoping to obtain by intimidation the aid which had been denied to his entreaties. He was not altogether unsuccessful, since he was causing the King grave anxiety, if not on the score of the peace of Europe, at least on that of his secret correspondence. At the Comte de Broglie's suggestion, Louis XV. despatched M. de Nort to England, with the mission of pacifying de Guerchy, but also with formal instructions to conciliate d'Eon by advice and promises, and to discover at least the nature of his demands. D'Eon, who had frequently met de Nort at the Comte de Broglie's, welcomed him

with enthusiasm, and proved unexpectedly moderate, believing that his rehabilitation was now imminent.

Hardly had he read the Comte de Broglie's letter, brought by M. de Nort, when, elated with the alluring promises and the flattery which it contained, he wrote to the King on the spur of the moment :

SIRE,—I am innocent, and have been condemned by your ministers ; but from the moment that your Majesty wishes it, I place my life, and the recollection of every outrage I have experienced from the Comte de Guerchy, at your Majesty's feet. Be persuaded, Sire, that I will die your faithful subject, and that I am more than ever in a position to serve your Majesty for your great secret plan, of which you must never lose sight if you wish your reign to be the period of France's greatness, and the humiliation and, perhaps, the total destruction of England, which is the only power really always hostile and formidable to your kingdom.

I am, Sire, your Majesty's faithful servant in life and
in death,
D'EON.

In writing this note, d'Eon allowed himself to be guided by his first impulse, and he realised afterwards that he had been too hasty. He was pleased to regard the Comte de Broglie's letter as an earnest of more extensive negotiations. In this he was entirely mistaken, for if M. de Nort was disposed to let things take their course, he was obliged to confine himself to the terms of the letter, which contained a promise of a sum of money not stated, and the assurance of royal protection, but no reference to his reinstatement, nor to any redress of the injuries he had suffered at the hands of de Guerchy.

The infliction of this fresh and more bitter disappointment was a blunder. It was irritating him unnecessarily, and at the same time increasing his arrogance and infatuation by idle parleys. The Chevalier became aware the day after de Nort's arrival that he had been greatly deceiving himself, and, in a fit of temper, he sent the Comte de Broglie's letter back to the messenger, adding that, "since he was not being dealt with fairly," he would rather remain, "like the goat in the fable, at the bottom of the well into which the King's and the Comte de Broglie's orders, and the personal hatred of de Guerchy's friends, had cast him." M. de Nort did not lose courage, and exerted himself to make him listen to reason; but d'Eon proved intractable and Tercier's urgent letters did not meet with greater success. Feeling he had gone too far, however, in not providing himself with any loophole for the future, d'Eon declared that he could not reasonably be expected to give up the only weapons with which he could defend himself against M. de Guerchy in his judicial proceedings. The ambassador had but to desist from his action for the negotiations to be immediately simplified. Thus rebuffed, M. de Nort deemed that there was nothing more for him to do in London. He had not succeeded better, moreover, in the case of M. de Guerchy.

The time was indeed ill-chosen for urging the ambassador to be moderate. Never was he so near the attainment of his object, so sure before long of having the Chevalier at his mercy. The humiliation he had just experienced had, moreover, greatly increased his irritation. He was awaiting the result of the trial for libel,

counting on English law for the conviction of his enemy, and already keeping in readiness for his capture a few carefully chosen myrmidons, despatched to him, at his request, by the Duc de Praslin. "A vessel, manned by twenty-one armed men, was moored at Gravesend," and they had "detached a little six-oared boat which lay between Westminster and London Bridge," and into which he was to be put as soon as they had seized upon his person. The admirers whom d'Eon had found in the slums of London, among the mariners and the rabble of the port, came immediately to report this to him, by which means the Chevalier eluded once more the pursuit of the prematurely triumphant ambassador. D'Eon wrote letters to the Lord Chief Justice, the Earl of Mansfield, to Lord Bute and to Mr. Pitt, which he had printed, and which the newspapers published. In these letters he represented what plots were being laid against him, appealed to public opinion, and requested the ministers to take measures for his safety.

Mr. Pitt alone replied by a few lines :

Considering the extremely delicate nature of the circumstances, you will not, I trust, disapprove of my confining myself to regretting a state of affairs with regard to which I am unable to offer the advice you do me the honour of soliciting.

The agitations fostered by d'Eon were sufficient to protect him against de Guerchy's attempts, in a country where the liberty of the individual was so effectively safeguarded. Summer was approaching, and he set out for Staunton Harold, the seat of his friend, Earl Ferrers,

while the ambassador returned to France on leave of absence.

Autumn brought de Guerchy back to London, where the action for libel was on the point of being tried. The cabinet had all but assured the ambassador that he should obtain a favourable verdict, authorising him to seize d'Eon and his papers. Meanwhile d'Eon, of whom everything could be expected but a retreat, failed to make his appearance in court. His counsel asked for an adjournment, alleging that the defendant had not had sufficient time to summon the witnesses whom he intended to produce; the judges refused the application and proceeded with the case. The desired verdict was given, d'Eon being found guilty; but when the officers of the law called at his residence to notify the sentence they found his apartments empty—the Chevalier had departed. Foreseeing that the trial would turn against him, he had taken refuge in furnished lodgings in the city, together with his cousin de Mouloize. So safe did he think himself, and so little did he trouble himself about his concealment, that he narrowly escaped being arrested forthwith by “two messengers of State who entered the house of Mrs. Eddowes, where the Sieur d'Eon was supposed to have taken refuge, with a warrant and a number of armed soldiers.” “The police officers,” relates d'Eon, “burst open doors, cupboards, and valises, in their search for me, and only found my cousin, de Mouloize, who was quietly warming himself beside the fire with Mrs. Eddowes and another lady. The other lady was she who is generally called the Chevalier d'Eon.”

The English ministers, goaded by de Guerchy, and furious at the blundering of the police officers, as well as at the laxity of their chief, were growing impatient. Lord Halifax, extremely displeased that d'Eon was still at large, was surprised at the Solicitor-General's absence at this critical moment, and requested him to return hastily, in order that the affair might be no further delayed, and that the culprit might be arrested legally and brought before the court to receive sentence. All these measures proved ineffectual, for d'Eon had hidden himself, his recent adventure having taught him to be more prudent. He had set his spies to work, going out "only with all the vigilance a captain of dragoons should observe in time of war," and was engaged in his retreat upon a "brilliant and exhaustive defence" against the cabal of the court. He was preparing the crowning act of his folly, the set-piece of the firework display with which to astound the ambassador. His "brilliant defence" was about to cause an unprecedented scandal, in London and Paris, unique in the annals of diplomacy. Having disdained to answer the notice of action served on him in the Court of King's Bench, he was about to summon the ambassador of France before the grand jury of the Old Bailey on a charge of attempted poison and murder.

In fact, d'Eon renewed all his former accusations, having discovered an invaluable witness and gathered fresh proofs. At his instigation the *Sieur Treyssac de Vergy* reappeared upon the scene. Imprisoned for debt and deserted by the ambassador whom he had served with his pen, but from whom he had been unable to

procure any help, Vergy turned to d'Eon quite repentant, promising to give evidence in support of extremely grave disclosures. He again affirmed that he had come to England by order of the ministers, who had made him understand that they desired "to bring d'Eon into disgrace; but that a skilful and an alien hand must do this." No sooner had de Guerchy arrived in London than he brought about the events which, thanks to d'Eon, were already notorious. Vergy declared himself ready to sign his statements, and to recapitulate them, for greater safety, in his will. In 1774, he again repeated them, when on the point of death, as the Chevalier's papers prove.

However suspicious, such evidence was extremely compromising in the eyes of a British jury. Guerchy would not be convinced, refusing to believe that anybody could credit these fabrications, which "were enough to make one shudder." More astonished than alarmed he merely remarked that "d'Eon had crowned his rascality." The Chevalier was exulting openly; however, in order to avoid breaking with the secret minister, he strove to interest the Comte de Broglie in his behalf, and to induce him to make common cause with him. In a letter accompanying a copy of Treyssac de Vergy's lengthy deposition he wrote:

The horrible plot is at last disclosed. I can now say to M. de Guerchy what the Prince de Conti said to the Marshal de Luxembourg before the battle of Steenkerque: "Sangaride! this is a great day for you, my cousin! You will be indeed a clever man if you get out of this mess." . . . The King cannot but be persuaded

now of the truth ; it is as clear as daylight. . . . I have informed the Duke of York and his brothers of the truth and heinousness of the conspiracy against you, the Marshal de Broglie, and myself. They will inform the King, the Queen, and the Prince of Wales. M. de Guerchy, who has been unfavourably received since his return, is disturbed beyond measure, notwithstanding his recklessness, and I know that the King of England is disposed to be just towards the Marshal and myself. Do your part and do not desert me as you appear to be doing. I will defend myself to the last drop of my blood, and fearlessly serve your house notwithstanding that you desert me, for you send me no money, whereas I am struggling on your behalf. Do not abandon me and do not drive me to despair. I have expended more than twelve hundred pounds in carrying on my war, and yet you send me nothing. It is abominable, and allow me to say that I should never have believed it.

The Comte de Broglie, who naturally desired to have nothing to do with such a campaign, refrained from sending the funds which d'Eon so insolently solicited. Several months before he had ceased to submit to the King the claims of his secret agent ; but this time, realising the imminence of the scandal which d'Eon was about to cause, he asked Louis XV. to allow him to proceed to London in person. The King agreed to the Comte de Broglie's proposal, and sought for a plea on which to obtain M. de Praslin's approval of this mission. The design was abandoned, however, owing to an incident which threatened his secret diplomacy and completely absorbed his attention. D'Eon's valet, a man named Hugonnet, who had been employed formerly as

courier by the Marquis de L'Hospital, and afterwards by the Duc de Nivernais, was arrested at Calais when bearing despatches from Drouet, private secretary to the Comte de Broglie. Long suspected of being the intermediary of the secret correspondence, of which the ministers had some inkling, he had succeeded hitherto in baffling the spies set to watch him. Less fortunate this time, he was forcibly detained on applying at the offices of the Admiralty for his passport. "Upon his stating his name," d'Eon relates, "the naval commissioner at once pointed his sword at his breast saying that he made him a state prisoner. Two grenadiers took him to M. de la Bouillie, commandant of Calais, who seized the bundle of papers and caused the said Sieur Hugonnet to be placed in close custody. He was then made to undress, his clothes and even the heels of his boots ripped open. A week later an officer of police arrived from Paris who had Hugonnet fettered and handcuffed, and removed him to the Bastille, chained by the waist to the coach-box of a post chaise."

Hugonnet's arrest brought about that of Drouet. The Duc de Praslin thought he had at last a proof of the Comte de Broglie's correspondence with the criminal of the state, d'Eon, and he hastened to apprise the King of his discovery and his suspicions. Louis XV., seeing his secret again in danger, did not think of stopping the inquiry by simply expressing his will. He preferred the deplorable expedients to which his weakness had already led him to resort. Irresistibly attracted at all times by double-dealing, he contrived a comedy of which the subordinate agents of the ministers were to be at once

the confidants and the actors. He sent for M. de Sartine, lieutenant of police, and ordered him "to lay aside all papers which might be seized in this affair concerning the Comte de Broglie, Durand, and Tercier." Satisfied with this skilful, but still more strange, move, he wrote to Tercier making this admission, unexpectedly humble on the part of an absolute monarch: "I have unburdened myself and confided in de Sartine. He seemed pleased, and we must hope that his discretion and this mark of confidence will guide him aright. If we are disappointed, we will see what is to be done."

Sartine had, at first, shown himself flattered with the secret unexpectedly entrusted to him; but it was not without misgivings that he undertook a dangerous part which was equally incompatible with his character and his office, and exposed him besides to the Duc de Praslin's resentment. Indeed, so diffident had the Comte de Broglie found him that, in order to overcome his hesitation, he was obliged to reprimand him twice and to assure him that he could not refuse the service the King expected of him. Drouet's papers were in consequence carefully sorted, and only a few unimportant letters were left to be investigated. Though the documents in question were now in safety there was still some fear of indiscretion on the part of the two prisoners, and Louis XV. was obliged to apply, directly and under the seal of secrecy, to M. de Jumilhac, Governor of the Bastille, in order that he should allow Tercier to enter the prison and communicate to Drouet and Hugonnet the depositions which the Comte de Broglie "had been more than fifteen hours preparing." So well did each

actor know his part, and so minutely was every detail foreseen, that the comedy was a complete success. No clear sign of a compromising correspondence could be traced, and de Praslin, who was present at the investigation, was forced to accept a judgment by which he was not really deceived. "I know well enough they are playing the fool with me," he said to de Sartine angrily, as he left the court. But, conjecturing that he was running counter to a superior will, he resolved to await events before reopening the case.

Drouet was released after a few days; but Hugonnet was left in the Bastille, it being feared that too much indulgence would arouse suspicions. During his detention, which lasted over two years and a half, he lost all the savings of the calling whereby he had lived. In 1778 he was reduced to poverty, and if he obtained some slight compensation it was due entirely to the pressing appeals in his behalf which d'Eon made to M. de Sartine.

This incident, which had created so many different impressions at Versailles, had revived the hopes of revenge which de Guerchy nourished against his adversary and de Broglie's partisans, and the news of this fresh defeat proved a bitter disappointment which increased the ambassador's ire.

At this juncture strange reports began to be circulated about d'Eon, which were countenanced at the embassy, always ready to be malignant. The reserved habits of the Chevalier and the total absence of feminine intrigues in his life had long since excited ironical curiosity. Even the least perfidious tongues mocked the weakness of his constitution, others suspected him of being a woman;

but many, attracted by the unusual, ascribed both sexes to the Chevalier. However strange and absurd such an assertion may appear, there is no doubt that it was made, and that it met, at this time as well as later, with amazing credulity. Other less ridiculous but more formidable insinuations, emanating from the same enemies, attributed to him the authorship of a defamatory pamphlet, published in the form of an anonymous letter addressed to the Lord Chief Justice. D'Eon was obliged to protest, and published a reply haughty enough to refute such accusations; but public attention, which he had courted so frequently, was now fixed upon him so persistently that several of the satirical works which it was becoming the fashion to treat with rigour were laid to his account. He was regarded as the author of a "dialogue between Mr. Frugality and Mr. Truth," the ambassador and the ex-minister plenipotentiary of France being easily recognised under these pseudonyms. In Paris it was thought his bitter style was discernible in a work in six parts entitled: *L'espion chinois ou l'envoyé secret de la cour de Pékin pour examiner l'état present de l'Europe*. This was attributing to d'Eon many more books than he could possibly have produced. Engrossed by the judicial proceedings he had instituted against his ambassador, he had, with the assistance of his secretary and his lawyers, collected and often suggested the depositions of his witnesses. The grand jury of the Old Bailey met on March 1, 1765, and found a true bill against the Comte de Guerchy for conspiracy against the life of the Chevalier d'Eon. The case caused an extraordinary sensation. M. de Guerchy was expecting to be arrested at any

moment ; his butler, Chazal, who was accused of having administered the poison, had just taken flight, and also one of the secretaries who had written some of the libels. The cabinets of London and Paris were exasperated ; Louis XV. and the Comte de Broglie thought it inconceivable that an ambassador could be delivered up to foreign tribunals. De Guerchy's situation was all the more serious because the English law was founded on a number of intricate and not very well-known precedents. The case in point had been provided for by an extremely old statute, which jurisprudence had had no occasion to revoke. Only one case could be cited as an exact parallel, a trial which had led to the execution of the Portuguese Ambassador in the time of Cromwell.

De Guerchy could not believe that a similar fate awaited him ; but the spirit of the English people had so frequently afforded him surprise that uncertainty increased his dejection, and drove him on to the most incautious measures. He was deeply humiliated, and his pitiful attitude was a source of infinite joy to d'Eon, who, triumphant, arrogant and full of threats, gave free rein to his malicious banter. " Considering the actual state of affairs," he wrote to the Comte de Broglie, " it is absolutely necessary that the arrangement proposed by you should be at once concluded, and that you should be here without loss of time, say by the 20th of this month. . . . This is the last letter I shall have the honour of writing to you on the subject of the poisoner, that scoundrel de Guerchy, who would be broken aliev on the wheel in France, did he meet with his deserts. But, by the grace of God, he will only be hanged in

England. . . . I give you my word of honour that ere long de Guerchy will be arrested as he leaves the court, and taken to prison in the city of London. His friend Praslin will try to set him free if he can ; but it is more likely that the friend to deliver him will be the executioner."

The above ironical predictions were not fulfilled. So strange a finding could not justify the application of an expired law. The English cabinet would have dreaded the consequences, had they not already realised the injustice, and the absurdity even, of such a course. They at once began to search for a means of avoiding the danger of their immutable laws, and found one in the very arcana of their statutes. The suit was removed by writ of *certiorari* into the Court of King's Bench. This new tribunal declared the indictment suspended, and, without settling the main point at issue, granted a *nolle prosequi* in favour of the ambassador.

The case was definitely withdrawn. The Comte de Guerchy was obliged to content himself with the paltry expedient which he had urgently demanded, but which did not efface in public opinion the disgrace of this scandalous trial. He retained the esteem of the ministers and of all discerning persons, but the general feeling in England was hostile to him. The King's interference in a purely judicial matter was much criticised, and Lord Chesterfield, writing to his son, Philip Stanhope, questioned its legality. Among the people there was an outburst of indignation which threatened the person of the ambassador himself. The mob did not spare Guerchy their hisses, and one day they even stopped his coach.

He had to hide his Cross of the Order of the Holy Spirit and declare that he was not the French ambassador but merely his secretary. Nevertheless, the threatening crowd followed him to the embassy, where the lacqueys hastily closed the gates, thus giving the police time to arrive and put an end to a disturbance which might have had extremely serious consequences.

De Guerchy's position in London was becoming so intolerable that he took leave of absence and spent several months in France. In 1776 he made another short stay in England, and never afterwards returned. Durand was appointed his successor as minister plenipotentiary. He was one of the most faithful agents of the secret service, and had already represented the King in Poland.

D'Eon did not wait for the arrival of the new envoy, with whom he had been long acquainted, before attempting, by entreaties and intimidations, to resume his negotiations with the Comte de Broglie. The latter, still indulgent towards him, consented, deeming the opportunity favourable. The Chevalier made no further difficulty about delivering the royal warrants for his mission (but these only) to the new minister plenipotentiary, and, as is stated in the report drawn up at the time, he presented them "in good condition, folded in a parchment cover addressed to the King, and enclosed and cemented within a brick adapted for the purpose, removed from the walls of the cellar."

In exchange for these papers, Louis XV. earnestly solicited by de Broglie and Tercier, and above all dreading d'Eon's indiscretions and disputes, granted

him a favour of which he deigned to inform him by his own hand :

As a reward for the services rendered to me by M. d'Eon in Russia, in my army, and in the execution of other commissions entrusted to him, I am pleased to bestow upon him a yearly allowance of twelve thousand livres, which I shall cause to be paid to him punctually at the expiration of every three months, wherever he may be, except in a country with which I am at war ; and this until such time as I may think proper to nominate him to some post, the emoluments of which will greatly exceed the present allowance. LOUIS.

So flattering a testimonial, which showed that his many scandalous intrigues were forgiven, if not forgotten, would have pacified a man less incensed. Sheltered by a minister plenipotentiary's pension from the complete destitution in the midst of which he had been struggling for three years, anybody else but d'Eon would have gladly availed himself of this second opportunity for wiping out the past, in order to resume later a career greatly compromised, indeed, but in which his acknowledged talents still afforded him some prospects of advancement. Such was far from being the case, however ; his destiny had driven him into adventures, and from this time adventures attracted him.

De Guerchy had died on his return to France. His health, undermined, it was said, by the anxieties of his embassy, never recovered from the final blow—the ridicule, if not disgrace, of his condemnation, to which he speedily succumbed. D'Eon's hatred of this name which

had proved so fatal to him was not disarmed by the death of his enemy, whom he continued to pursue with his pen. He was quite prepared for a fresh outburst of indignation against himself, in consequence of de Guerchy's death, for which he felt sure he would be held responsible, and conjectured that he would meet with a hostile reception at court, should he venture to return to France.

The ministers' resentment, which he had so freely mocked and scoffed at, and the anger of the house of de Guerchy, then all powerful, were sufficiently cogent reasons for his abandoning any idea of return. In England, where the judgment by which he was declared to be outlawed had just been annulled by the suit he had won against the ambassador, he was assured of a safe asylum and a degree of liberty that he could not hope to find elsewhere. Accordingly, he resigned himself to remaining there, fully determined to improve, by every possible means, a position he regarded as quite unjustly lowered, and to sustain that notoriety to which he had grown accustomed, and which had become indispensable to him.

VI

BIRTH OF AN IDEA

WHILE demanding the restitution of the warrant commissioning d'Eon to make surveys in England with a view to an invasion of that country, Louis XV. had no intention of depriving himself of any services his secret agent could still render him in the capacity of informant. He knew that d'Eon had a thorough knowledge of the country, that he was well received in the upper classes of English society, and that he enjoyed genuine popularity, and consequently invaluable influence, in the lower. The King was anxious only to recover possession of a document bearing his own signature, which in the hands of an adventurer might prove dangerous, if not to French diplomacy, at least to the security of the secret correspondence. But, in his haste to make sure of the Chevalier's silence, he omitted to demand the restitution of other papers which touched him less personally—namely, the instructions for the mission, written by the Comte de Broglie, and the entire correspondence relating to that subject, not to mention original despatches and copies which had been kept by d'Eon after his temporary position at the embassy. D'Eon had carefully refrained from parting with such precious documents, which might yet enable him to bring pressure to bear upon a government from

whom he had received more promises than pay. Appeased by de Guerchy's death, and less apprehensive, he applied himself again to the secret correspondence. Moreover, the Comte de Broglie gave him every encouragement in his letters. He tried also to make him realise the full extent of the last royal favours, and recommended him "to conduct himself with modesty and wisdom in future, and to abandon the romantic pose for the attitude and speech of a sensible man. Thus, and in course of time," he added, "your talents will be remembered. . . . With an honest heart and a brave spirit, but not a fierce or violent one, the hatred and envy of the whole universe may be overcome."

In another letter, written somewhat later, in which one can see the personal anxiety caused by the weapons remaining in his correspondent's hands, the Comte de Broglie urged d'Eon to win the good-will of M. du Châtelet, the new ambassador, by delivering to M. Durand, who was returning to France, "the ministerial and other papers of every description" which were still in his possession. He concluded as follows: "I have received nothing from you since the letter I wrote to you in cypher at the end of last month. You have not acquainted me with what has passed in the interior of England. I recollect, and have not concealed from his Majesty, that you attribute the fact to the absence of your friend, Mr. Cotes, from the capital, but your ingenuity should supply the deficiency."

The reproach itself proves how greatly the Comte de Broglie prized the information supplied by his correspondent. Entirely divested of any official position,

d'Eon was still a newsmonger to whom the King's secret counsellors constantly applied, and whose communications frequently influenced them in their decisions. His cultivated mind and natural curiosity had enabled him to acquire knowledge of state affairs while engaged in diplomatic negotiations. Unreasonable in his personal resentments, pretentious and imprudent in all that concerned himself, in politics he was a discerning judge, an accurate, and frequently a shrewd, observer. His fertile imagination, though wanting in tact, gave facts a graphic and original turn. The portraits he sketched, with a slight tendency towards caricature, were nevertheless faithful. "D'Eon," says the Duc de Broglie, "was the precursor, if not the first, of those political reporters who play so important a part in the destinies of all the European parliaments." He delighted and excelled in his task.

If d'Eon declined to follow the Comte de Broglie's interested advice on the subject of the "ministerial papers," he at all events showed that he was affected by the reproaches he had incurred for his negligence. Thus, during the course of rather over seven years, we find him drawing up reports, which he entitled "political letters," and which he sent to the secret minister, either corresponding in cypher under his own name, or openly under the name of William Wolf. In these reports he discourses on war and finance; gives brief statements of home administration and colonial aspirations; relates carefully parliamentary debates and party quarrels; and does not omit to mention the little incidents of the court and the intrigues of the diplomatists. In one of

his letters, selected from among many others, in which he expatiates on the question of *General Warrants*—a burning question in England at that time—he reports the love affairs of the royal princes. The Duke of York, surprised with a lady by her jealous husband, had just received a sword thrust in the shoulder; his brother, the Duke of Gloucester, on the point of contracting a secret marriage, was to be sent abroad. The Duke of Brunswick neglected his wife because he had discovered that she had contracted the king's evil, which had broken out on the leg.

In this same letter, after this scandalous gossip (which, however, is not always a negligible quantity in politics), d'Eon touches lightly upon a matter of the greatest interest—namely, the overtures made to him by Lord Bute, the ex-minister, with a view to an eventual restoration of the Stuarts. Concerning this the Chevalier stated as his own point of view that “men and matters were not sufficiently matured.” The Comte de Broglie hastened to reply that he should follow up the proposals without binding himself; but the project, so frequently considered by France, was once again abandoned. In the same year d'Eon informed the cabinet of Versailles and Prince Masseran, the Spanish Ambassador, of “England's design to invade Mexico and Peru in the approaching war, on the plan devised by the Marquis d'Aubarède, who was in receipt of a pension from England.” But the sphere of his inquiries was not confined to England; the correspondence he entertained with acquaintances in Russia enabled him in 1769 to apprise the King of an expedition which the Empress was then planning against

the Turks, and which actually took place eight months later.

In an affair that occurred at the same time, and caused a great stir in London, d'Eon played a more active part, which, thanks to his great ability, obtained for him the approbation of the two courts and of the whole of English society. At this time the Liberal party, which had been increasing from day to day under the leadership of Wilkes, made a last effort to overthrow the cabinet. Dr. Musgrave, one of the leaders of the party, had just issued a virulent *Address to the Gentlemen, Clergy, and Freeholders of the County of Devon*. In this document he renewed the insinuations against which d'Eon had already protested in the papers as early as the year 1764, and which represented that the Princess of Wales, Lord Bute, the Duke of Richmond, Lord Egremont, and Lord Halifax had received money from France at the time of the conclusion of the treaties. Dr. Musgrave further stated that he was prepared to support his charge by fresh evidence, which he had obtained during a recent stay in Paris, and asserted that the overtures had been made through the medium of the Chevalier d'Eon, in whose possession the papers relating to that affair had assuredly remained. Finally, in a direct attack on Lord Halifax, he reproached him for having refused from personal motives to prosecute a public inquiry with regard to d'Eon's papers, or to examine the Chevalier himself. He invited that nobleman to justify his acts before Parliament. The Secretary of State did not hesitate to accept Dr. Musgrave's challenge, and triumphantly refuted his accusations in an eloquent speech.



LA CHEVALIERE D'EON 1782

From a Contemporary Oil-painting

Parliament declared them to be groundless, and severely reprimanded the orator who had formulated them. D'Eon, besides, contributed in some measure to Lord Halifax's success, protesting before the debate against the pamphlet by "depositions and publications." At an early stage of the affair he addressed the following letter to Dr. Musgrave, which was reproduced by the periodicals of the day :

You will permit me to believe that you never knew any more of me than I have the honour of knowing of you, and if in your letter of August 12 you had not made a wrong use of my name, I should not now find myself obliged to enter into a correspondence with you. You pretend that in the summer of 1764 overtures were made in my name to several members of Parliament, purporting that I was ready to impeach three persons (two of whom were peers and members of the Privy Council), of having sold the Peace to the French, and you seem to found thereupon the evidence of a charge which you yourself made against Lord Halifax. Therefore, I hereby declare that I never made, or caused to be made, any such overture, either in the winter or the summer of 1764, nor at any other time. . . . I now call upon you to make public the name of the audacious person who has made use of mine to cover up his own odious offers. . . . I swear to you, on my word of honour, and before the public, that I never entered into any negotiation for the sale of papers, and never either by myself, or any agent authorised by me, offered to disclose that the Peace had been sold to France. If Lord Halifax had caused me to be cited, he might have known by my answers what my thoughts were, that England rather gave money to France than France to

England, to conclude the last Peace, and that the happiness I had in concurring in the work of making peace has inspired me with sentiments of the justest veneration for the English commissioners who were employed in it. . . . In order to enable you to be as prudent as patriotic, I sign this letter and therein give you my address, that to maintain your own sense of justice you may furnish me with the means of publicly confounding those slanderers who have dared to make use of my name, in a manner still more opposed to real facts than to the dignity of my character.

This reply was received with equal satisfaction by the two governments, who, having no interest in throwing too searching a light on the facts of the case, did not fail to add their approbation to that which public opinion had already bestowed upon the Chevalier.

However, if he had had no intercourse with Dr. Musgrave, d'Eon had been able to secure the attachment of another popular member of Parliament, the celebrated John Wilkes. He had even proposed, for a moment, that the cabinet of Versailles should assist the great agitator in conspiring against the house of Hanover. The Comte de Broglie almost suffered himself to be persuaded ; but the King refused to engage in so rash an undertaking ; and Drouet, the count's secretary, was despatched to London to put a stop to the enterprise. D'Eon, nevertheless, had not broken with Wilkes ; and, thinking that he might make use of him in another way, he wrote to the Count de Broglie :

Do you desire a riot at the opening of Parliament after the next election ? If so, I must have so much for Wilkes

and so much for the others. . . . Wilkes costs us very dearly, but the English have the Corsican Paoli, whom they lodge and feed on our account. He is a bomb which they keep loaded to throw in our midst at the first conflagration. Let us keep bomb for bomb.

These numerous intrigues testify to the ingenuity and activity which d'Eon did not cease to display at every turn. He was ever on the watch, ever ready to follow the first trail which chance or even his imagination supplied. Though wounded in his self-love and disappointed in his ambition, d'Eon did not resign himself to becoming useless, to being forgotten. Elated by too rapid a success, he was attacked with a malady rarer at that time than at the present day—the passion for advertisement. He must attract attention, even at the risk of incurring blame, preferring the questionable reputation of an adventurer to the obscurity of an honest servant of the King. Besides, he thought that by rendering the King new services, even should they be unsolicited, he would be strengthening his claim to a pension which was paid to him with no regularity. The privy purse was indeed often empty, as most of the private letters reveal. The Chevalier was in consequence sadly in want of money; he petitioned the Duc de Choiseul, renewed his complaints to the Duc d'Aiguillon, who, thanks to Madame du Barry's protection, had just succeeded the Duc de Praslin as Minister for Foreign Affairs; and he entreated the Comte de Broglie. "I am dying of starvation," he wrote to the count, "between the two pensions you have granted me, like Buridan's ass between the two bundles neither of which he could

reach with his mouth." He was in despair, and although he had always refused the offer of the English Cabinet, which promised him an equal, but more punctually remunerated, post if he applied for letters of naturalisation, he would willingly have quitted the service of France, provided it was for the benefit of a friendly nation.

Indeed, he was seriously thinking of transferring his allegiance to Poland, where the nobles had just chosen Stanislas Poniatowsky, the favourite of Catherine II., as their king. During his residence in Russia d'Eon had been at great pains to ingratiate himself with that brilliant prince, and his efforts had been crowned with success. On the election of Stanislas, he therefore hastened to present his respectful congratulations to the new king, and informed him that he should be extremely happy to enter his service. Stanislas having answered him kindly and having even invited him to join him at Warsaw as soon as he could, d'Eon at once wrote to him a grateful and effusive letter, of which he kept a copy, and in which he dwelt complacently upon his capabilities, with a view, no doubt, to obtaining a more advantageous offer.

Even if I had not the good fortune of being bound to you by affection from my youth, I could not fail to be deeply moved by the reply of February 26, with which your Majesty has deigned to honour me. Were I to follow the first impulse of my heart, I should set out immediately in order to enjoy the inestimable privilege of paying my court to you in Poland; but my duty compels me first to crave your permission.

Time and again have I been tempted to offer my

services to your Majesty, both in the army and in diplomacy; but my misfortunes have always made me fear that your Majesty might look upon my offer as interested, and as coming solely from my want of employment.

I will take the liberty of stating that I have an income of fifteen thousand livres and a library of three thousand volumes, consisting in large part of rare books and of ancient and modern manuscripts. With these and a little circle of English noblemen who are friendly disposed towards me I live the quiet life of an exiled philosopher in a free country. But your greatest misfortune and your happiness and your extreme kindness remind me, Sire, that as I am only forty and enjoy good health, and as I still possess my courage, my sword, and some experience of war and politics, I might be able to serve and avenge the cause of a king who knows me personally, a king whose goodness is his glory, and who, like Socrates, loves truth, and like Titus loves men.

1768

If my poor talents can be of use to your Majesty you have but to command, and I will wing my flight with the remains of my small fortune, in order to devote them to your Majesty's service.

P.S.—On my return from Lord Ferrers' seat I went immediately to pay my court to his Highness the young Prince Poniatowski, who has been entirely successful in London. He has done me the honour of accepting my invitation to a philosophical dinner with M. de Lind, his worthy mentor, and of promising me to forward this letter to your Majesty. Should you vouchsafe to cause an answer to be sent, I beg you will not transmit it through France but through the medium of his Highness the Prince, your nephew, or of your envoy in London.

D'Eon, still worried by the recollection of his scandalous dispute, did not omit to send with his letter a copy of the "literary productions which he had," he said, "been compelled to publish during his past unhappy dissension with the deceased ambassador of France, M. de Guerchy."

D'Eon's papers do not admit of the belief that he received an answer to that letter, but if so, it was by word of mouth and by the interposition of a chamberlain of the King of Poland who happened to be in London. At all events, d'Eon must certainly have hesitated to follow up that attractive design, for M. de Broglie, of whom he had asked permission to enter the service of Poland, replied that it was "the wish of the King" that he should not leave London without his Majesty's orders, that "there was no other place where he could be in greater safety from the malice of his enemies or where he could serve the King more usefully." He advised him to keep up a correspondence with the King of Poland, overwhelmed him with compliments, and mentioned in conclusion that his Majesty was convinced "of his attachment and loyalty." If d'Eon's object in confiding his design to the secret minister was merely to raise the price of his work and to sound the King's intentions concerning him, he might have realised that the services he had rendered in voluntary exile had not sufficed to blot out from the King's mind the recollection of his follies. He sincerely considered himself a political victim, and thought he had much in common with the unfortunate Cato, to whom an eminent doctor of divinity of Oxford had once compared him.

The Comte de Broglie's letter must have confirmed his proud conviction ; but at the same time it vexed him greatly, for he was too cautious to be deceived by the count's handsome promises and to fail to see that what was demanded of him was his self-effacement. No cruder punishment could have been meted out to him.

In the course of his contentions with the ambassador d'Eon had not scrupled to make use of one invective after another ; but he had, perforce, exposed himself in his turn to most offensive repartees. A strange insinuation had been made against him which had not remained unnoticed, and which, cleverly turned to account and well circulated, had finally excited the curiosity of a people ever on the watch for eccentricities. One of the pamphleteers in de Guerchy's pay had raised doubts as to the nature of the Chevalier's sex, whose "dragon's uniform," he said, "concealed a woman or a hermaphrodite." D'Eon's frail appearance, small stature, slender figure, and the delicate features of his almost beardless face lent colour to this idea. He was not known to have had any of those amorous adventures of which it was unusual at that time to make a mystery. D'Eon, who, in the heat of the controversy, had probably attached no importance to that strange insult, had taken no notice of it. Besides, he must have felt it less than anybody else, for he was wont to speak openly "of the singular lack of passion of his temperament," taking in good part the banter which neither the Marquis de L'Hospital nor the Duc de Nivernais had spared him. His acquaintances in London had often expressed surprise

at the discrepancy in such an exuberant personality. John Taylor, a contemporary of d'Eon, relates, in his *Records of My Life*, that "several marriages with ladies of good family, and with large fortunes, had been proposed to him at the country seats he visited; but that upon all such occasions he immediately left the house, whence it was inferred he quitted the place on account of his being really of the female sex."

The French ambassador (at that time M. du Châtelet) was persuaded that d'Eon was a woman, and had not been slow to inform the King of the public report which was spread upon Princess Daschkow's arrival in London. The princess, a niece of Woronzow, the Grand Chancellor of Russia, who had so effectually assisted the Empress Catherine II. to rid herself of her royal husband and to ascend the throne, was living in exile by the order of her sovereign. She had taken refuge in England and had not omitted to relate at court and in society that the Chevalier d'Eon, whom she knew well at St. Petersburg, and whose eccentricities were the topic of every conversation, had presented himself at the imperial palace attired as a woman, and that the Empress Elizabeth, deceived by the disguise, had admitted the young officer of dragoons into the circle of her maids of honour. This story, which confirmed the most credulous in their convictions and excited the curiosity of the sceptics, made the question of d'Eon's sex the topic of the day, and led to a succession of those bets which were then so common in London, and for which the most trifling incident served as a pretext. Insurance policies were effected at Brooks's and White's, the quotations being posted up

in the coffee-houses ; and the memoranda which have been handed down to us show that the stakes frequently reached a thousand pounds.

The news thus spread soon crossed the Channel, causing no less astonishment in Paris, where it was eagerly discussed in fashionable as well as official circles. Bachaumont, the literary and political chronicler of the time, states in his *Mémoires*, under date of September 25, 1771 : “ The reports which have been countenanced for several months to the effect that the Sieur d’Eon, that fiery person so celebrated for his adventures, is only a woman dressed in man’s clothing, the confidence with which the rumour has been received in England, and the wagers for and against amounting to over a hundred thousand pounds, have revived the attention of Paris about that strange man. . . .” This testimony, which can easily be verified by the newspapers of the day, does not in the least exaggerate the interest with which the French public continued to follow d’Eon in his exploits. It would be difficult to believe such extravagant statements if the portraits of the hero and the most varied caricatures which were published at that time had not come down to us, and if traces of that curiosity were not to be found in the periodicals and magazines of the various capitals. Journalists, artists, song-writers and minor poets exercised their talents in his honour to their hearts’ content. Thus, among so many transient documents, we find in the *Almanach des Muses* of 1771 the following verses, flattering in their credulity and kind in their irony :—

À MADEMOISELLE * * *

QUI S'ETAIT DÉGUISEE EN HOMME

BONJOUR, fripon de Chevalier,
 Qui savait si bien l'art de plaire
 Que par un bonheur singulier
 De nos beautés la plus sévère,
 En faveur d'un tel écolier,
 Déposant son ton minaudier
 Et sa sagesse grimacière,
 Pourrait peut-être s'oublier,
 Ou plutôt moins se contrefaire.
 Mon cher, nous le savons trop bien,
 (Le ciel en tout est bon et sage),
 Pour un si hardi personnage
 Dans le fond vous ne valez rien.
 Croyez moi : reprenez un rôle
 Que vous jouez plus sûrement.
 Que votre sexe se console,
 Du mien vous faites le tourment
 Et le vôtre, sur ma parole,
 Vous doit son plus bel ornement.
 Hélas, malheureux que nous sommes !
 Vous avez tout pour nous charmer ;
 C'est bien être au-dessus des hommes
 Que de savoir s'en faire aimer !

D'ARNAUD.

This revival of popularity was anything but displeasing to the vain Chevalier, whom the ambassador's death had reduced to a state of comparative oblivion. He did not hesitate to brave ridicule, having furnished sufficient proofs of virility, sword, sabre or pen in hand, and took

delight in being talked about. Ladies, especially, showed curiosity, and seemed almost anxious to reckon the dashing Chevalier as one of themselves. Their curiosity encouraged them to ask him point blank for the answer to the enigma, as the daughter of Wilkes, the member of Parliament, did, with audacious ingenuousness :

Miss Wilkes presents her compliments to Monsieur the Chevalier d'Eon, and is very anxious to know if he is really a woman, as everybody asserts, or a man. It would be extremely kind of the Chevalier to impart the truth to Miss Wilkes, who earnestly entreats to be informed of it. It would be kinder still of him if he would come and dine with her and her papa, to-day or to-morrow, or, in fact, as soon as he is able to do so.

If curiosity expressed so candidly was quite charming, the much more practical interest which the uncertainty had awakened in the gambling world was manifested with greater boldness and impatience. It was also harder to baffle, and d'Eon soon experienced again the disadvantages of celebrity. Not only did the papers report the wagers day by day, but extremely satirical caricatures began to appear. Anxious to drive d'Eon to extremities, those who had laid wagers became more and more impertinent, and at last went so far as to assert that the Chevalier shared in the insurance policies made on his sex. This insinuation decided d'Eon to break the silence he had preserved until then, by making an energetic protest. On March 20, he proceeded to the Exchange, and to several neighbouring coffee-houses, and

there, in uniform, walking-stick in hand, he compelled "the money-broker Bird, who was the first to start one of these impudent insurances, to beg his pardon." Bird assured him, in the face of his apologies, that, following an Act of Parliament, he and other bankers besides had the right to effect the most extraordinary wagers, even with regard to the royal family, except so far as concerned the life of the King, the Queen and their children. D'Eon, who relates this incident in a letter to the Comte de Broglie, adds: "Yielding the choice of weapons, I challenged the most incredulous and the most insolent of the entire assembly (which numbered several thousands) to fight; but not one of those male adversaries in this great city dared either to cross sticks or to fight me, although I stayed among them from noon until two o'clock." This swaggering tirade had not exactly the desired effect; for although his antagonists, intimidated by so expert a swordsman, did not accept the challenge, their curiosity was still as intense as ever, and became so aggressive that the Chevalier was obliged, a few days later, to furnish more obvious proofs "of a sex which he stamped in a most virile fashion on the faces of two insolent fellows." Incessantly exposed to such imperinences, and informed that several wealthy gamblers were determined to kidnap him, by stratagem or by force, d'Eon realised that he could not hope to avoid so great a humiliation by hiding himself in London, as he had formerly succeeded in doing, or even by shutting himself up in his house in Brewer Street. Accordingly, he resolved to follow the advice of his friend, Earl Ferrers, and to accept that nobleman's hospitality at his

seat at Staunton Harold. Thence he intended to repair to Ireland, to spend several months there, and not to return until the disturbance had subsided. He therefore set out without taking leave of any of his friends, and apprised only the Comte de Broglie of his flight. In his letter he protested emphatically against the reports accusing him of having an interest in the policies of insurance, and concluded by this evidently sincere confession, which fully explains many acts of his adventurous life: "I am terribly mortified at being what nature has made me, and that the natural lack of passion in my temperament, which has prevented my engaging in amorous intrigues, should induce my friends in France, in Russia, and in England to imagine, in their innocence, that I am of the female sex; and the malice of my enemies has strengthened all this."

D'Eon travelled in the north of England under an assumed name and, after spending a few weeks in Scotland, was preparing to proceed to Ireland when news reached him through the papers which obliged him to alter his plans. His friends, alarmed at his disappearance and fearing that he had fallen a victim to some attempt on the part of those interested in the wagers, were causing inquiries to be made in London and had published his description. His creditors, no less concerned, had just demanded that the doors of his lodging should be sealed; lastly, he was publicly accused of participation in the wagers. Dreading lest the indiscreet zeal of the officers of the law should lead to the discovery of his papers, d'Eon hastily returned to London. Upon his arrival he at once repaired to the Mansion House,

and delivered to the Lord Mayor a deposition under oath to the effect that he was "not interested to the value of one shilling, directly or indirectly, in the policies of insurance" made on his sex. *The Public Advertiser* published this affidavit the same evening, and d'Eon, anxious to clear himself from such an imputation in the sight of his chief, sent him an extract from the newspaper, not without accompanying it by fresh protestations. "It is not my fault," he wrote, "if the rage for betting on all matters is a national failing among Englishmen. I have given proof, and will again do so to their hearts' content, that I am not only a man, but a captain of dragoons with sword in hand."

It is strange to find d'Eon claiming, in July 1771, so energetically (for it was the last time that he did so without ambiguity) his real sex. From that moment he began to entertain the idea of the audacious farce which he only decided to enact some time later, and the plot of which was suggested by his contemporaries themselves. His resolution to transform himself into a woman was formed between the months of July 1771 and April 1772. If he still abstained for over a year from avowing his supposed sex to his protectors, if he still hesitated to make his transformation public, he proved more communicative with a friend, who informed the secret minister, and so indirectly the King. D'Eon first confided in Drouet, secretary to the Comte de Broglie, who happened to be in London at the time. The latter had not omitted to rally d'Eon on the subject of the sex which was already being ascribed to him in Paris also, whereupon d'Eon exclaimed, and, to his

interlocutor's profound astonishment, asserted that he really was a woman. His parents, he said, misled at his birth by doubtful appearances, and being particularly anxious, as in every noble family, to have a male heir, had compelled him to assume a sex other than that which nature had bestowed upon him. His disposition and education had enabled him to play his part in public, and his talents to achieve a brilliant career. D'Eon exerted in support of this theory all the eloquence of which he was capable, and as Drouet remained incredulous he indulged in an unseemly comedy, which he revived at a later period in the presence of the adventurer Morande, and thereby managed entirely to convince the Comte de Broglie's secretary. Upon his return Drouet at once reported the unexpected discovery to his master, who wrote to the King, in May 1772 :

I must not forget to inform your Majesty that the suspicions entertained on the sex of this extraordinary personage are well founded. The Sieur Drouet, whom I had ordered to do his best to verify them, has assured me, since his return, that he has succeeded, and that he is able to certify . . . that the Sieur d'Eon is a woman and nothing but a woman, of whom he has all the attributes. . . . He begged the Sieur Drouet to keep the secret, justly observing that if discovered his occupation was gone. . . . May I entreat your Majesty to be pleased to permit that the confidence he has reposed in his friend be not betrayed, and that he will have no cause to regret what he has done. . . .

It is difficult to believe that this letter can have sufficed

to convince so shrewd a monarch, who had long since taken d'Eon's measure. Like Voltaire, Louis XV. must have regarded all this as an absurd sham, the first news of which had, some months previously, left him sceptical. The very astonishment he had then shown disproves the assertion that the sovereign was the Chevalier's secret accomplice. But that is the theory which Casanova has ventured to sustain in his *Mémoires* :

The King alone knew, and always had known, that d'Eon was a woman, and the entire quarrel between the sham Chevalier and the Foreign Office was a farce which the King allowed to be played out for his own amusement. . . . Nobody ever possessed in a more marked degree the great royal virtue called dissimulation. Faithful guardian of a secret, he was delighted when he felt certain that none but he was aware of it.

VII

THE MORANDE CASE

LOUIS XV., as his correspondence shows, was unaware of the secret of his former agent's real sex or, more probably, indifferent to the question. As for d'Eon, he had only just decided finally to adopt the expedient, beginning to realise that his career was at an end, and that the only asylum he could hope for in France was at Tonnerre, or, as was even more likely, in the Bastille. He had not much more to lose as a man, and was seriously considering the advantages he should obtain from assuming the sex which the public attributed to him so persistently. Sensation, popularity, notoriety and fresh pecuniary resources were the stakes of a hazardous game, but one in which, in d'Eon's opinion, the gain outweighed the risk, and he therefore decided to take his chance as soon as a favourable opportunity offered.

Meanwhile he had not thought fit to make the Comte de Broglie directly acquainted with the change. The latter pretended to ignore it, and continued to employ his services as formerly, an urgent and particularly delicate affair just then needing his co-operation. The fact was a report had just been spread in Madame du Barry's set to the effect that a scandalous work against herself, in which even the person of the King was not spared, was

about to be published in London, and thence to be circulated on the continent.

The author of this pamphlet was a certain Théveneau de Morande, who, having incurred the displeasure of the King's tribunals, had sought in England the refuge of which all people like himself availed themselves at the time. A clever adventurer, and an intriguer of the worst type, he openly trafficked in London in scandal and slander. In a little blackmailing newspaper, which he edited himself, he disseminated the most odious calumnies to the prejudice of ministers and people about the court, which he interlarded with scandalous anecdotes current at Versailles, and "notices on several opera dancers, the whole"—Bachaumont concludes—"forming a most pernicious composition."

This publication, in the style of the Paris *Colporteur*, was called *Le Gazetier Cuirassé*, and displayed on the title-page a print "representing the gazetteer in the uniform of a hussar, with a little pointed cap on his head, and a face expressive of sardonic laughter, aiming to right and left the cannons, bombshells, and all the artillery which surround him." This dishonest livelihood, however, did not satisfy Morande, who, not content with demanding sums of money directly from the persons whom it was his intention to blackmail, produced more voluminous works of an equally depraved nature.

Well and promptly informed by needy correspondents whom he employed in France, he imparted the latest news from Versailles to his acquaintances in London. "Madame du Barry," he wrote in one of his bulletins,

“ has given balls to the high nobility during the carnival, and bodyguards have been posted in all the avenues, just as at the residence of Madame la Dauphine. Neither the young Prince nor the Princesses were present, but the Duc de Chartres and the Comte de la Marche made their appearance for a moment with the King. Mimi opened the ball with the Prince de Chimay. Madame du B—— was mightily disappointed to see so few guests. As for me, they are hanging me, burning me, erecting altars to me in Paris ; in short, they are as eager to buy my book as I am to sell it.” Indeed, M. des Cars was actively engaged in suppressing the scandal, and he had induced the Comte de Broglie to write to d’Eon instructing him to make terms with the blackmailer. D’Eon’s reply was not long in coming :

You could not have recourse to anybody more able to assist and bring to a satisfactory conclusion the affair you have mentioned to me, M. Morande being a countryman of mine, who boasts of being connected with a branch of my family in Burgundy. As soon as he arrived in London, three years ago, he wrote to me that he was a countryman of mine, and that he wished to see me and make my acquaintance. For two years I refused for very good reasons. He has so frequently called since, that I have occasionally received him rather than be annoyed by a young man of an exceedingly turbulent and impetuous disposition. . . . He has married his landlady’s daughter, who was in the habit of attending to his room. (They have two children, and live on good terms together.) He is a man who blackmailed several rich people in Paris by means of his pen, and has libelled the Comte de Laraguais in the grossest possible manner.

The King of England (himself so frequently attacked in the papers) asked the Count, with reference to this affair, what he thought of the liberty of the English press. "I have nothing to complain of, Sire," he replied, "it treats me like a king."

I am not informed that Morande is engaged on a scandalous account of the du Barry family; but I have very strong suspicions that such is the case. If it should be so, there is nobody in a better position than myself to negotiate for its suppression. He is very fond of his wife, and I undertake to persuade her to do anything I wish. I might even induce her to carry off the manuscript, but that might make a quarrel between them; in which case I should be compromised, and another, and more annoying affair would ensue. I believe that if Morande were offered eight hundred guineas he would be quite satisfied. I know that he is in want of money just now, and I will do my best to arrange for a smaller sum. But, sir, to tell you the truth, I should be delighted if the money were given to him by some other person, so that nobody will imagine that I have made a single guinea by such a transaction.

If d'Eon despised this intriguer as much as he said he did, he had nevertheless always kept him on good terms, and was far more intimate with him than he wished it to appear. Morande was continually offering his services, whether to assist him in "some literary productions upon which he was engaged," or to write, "with true Burgundian zeal, the biography of the enigmatical Chevalier." D'Eon did not long remain indifferent to his incessant flattery and respectful assurances of devotion; he even entertained him, and

supplied him with money. Morande, his insolvent debtor, and now his guest, soon confided to him his blackmailing projects. These d'Eon often urged him to give up, and if unsuccessfully, he was still in a position where money arrangements for that end could be easily made. The Comte de Broglie's orders were in consequence promptly executed. Morande entered readily into terms of composition with "his countryman and companion in exile," as he was pleased to call him. In a few days the bargain was made, d'Eon obtaining a promise written and signed by the hand of the Sieur Morande whereby the latter pledged himself "not to confide this negotiation to a single creature." He promised besides "not only to refrain from printing his work against the family of the Marquis and the Comtesse du Barry, but also to sacrifice it entirely, and to deliver faithfully to the Chevalier d'Eon all the memoranda and copies, according to the stipulations of the agreement."

The negotiation had been conducted by d'Eon with great rapidity and genuine skill; the terms were relatively moderate; and there was every indication that the King's ratification and that of the interested family would not be long in forthcoming. Such, however, was far from being the case—either because Madame du Barry did not desire to employ the services of the Comte de Broglie, whom she particularly disliked, and whose assistance had been sought without her consent; or, more probably perhaps, because she scorned to think her reputation at the mercy of these scandalous disclosures. Less anxious about public opinion than

were her own courtiers, "she appeared to be easy about a matter which should have concerned her so much," and when the conditions obtained by d'Eon were submitted to her she replied somewhat evasively, "that they must be considered." The matter was never "discussed more thoroughly." The King shared the favourite's indifference to that which concerned himself personally, and deemed, with like good sense, that it was best not to trouble oneself about slanders which threatened to increase in proportion to the importance attached to them by the people concerned. Accordingly he wrote to the Comte de Broglie: "This is not the first time I have been abused in like fashion; they are the masters, I do not hide that from myself. Surely, they can only repeat what has been said about the du Barry family. It is for them to do as they choose, and I will fall in with their views." This note throws no new light on Louis XV.'s character; but it is not one of the least striking testimonies of the innate unconscientiousness and the complete lack of moral feeling in a monarch otherwise full of shrewdness and good sense. A few days later, the Comte de Broglie received a letter from the King ordering him to suspend the negotiations begun by d'Eon.

M. du Barry had at last thought it advisable to look to the honour of his house. He had sent to London an emissary selected from among the hangers-on of his set, assisted by the police. This adventurer was as ill-noted as Morande himself, but less cunning, and he regarded his mission chiefly as an opportunity for a pleasant, well-remunerated journey. As soon as he

arrived in London he had an interview with Morande, during the course of which he astounded him by his influential acquaintances, his fictitious post in the household of the Comte d'Artois, and dazzled him by the brilliancy of his promises. Morande raised his price proportionately, at once broke with d'Eon, and introduced everywhere in London the emissary who had been sent to him. But after a few weeks the Sieur de Lormoy, having squandered the sum of money with which he had been provided, and being unable to persuade Morande to moderate his new demands, left London surreptitiously, without having done anything but incur debts to the amount of a thousand pounds. Morande, disappointed and extremely irritated, was on the point of publishing his work, when the du Barry family sent another negotiator, chosen this time by M. de Sartine himself—Caron de Beaumarchais, the pamphleteer, who was not yet the successful author of the *Mariage de Figaro*, but merely the boisterous and litigious antagonist of President Goëzman.

D'Eon has left another version of that mission which is neither likely nor in good taste, and appears to have been inspired by the bitter hatred he entertained against Beaumarchais to the end of his days.

“The Sieur Caron de Beaumarchais,” he says, “under censure of the Parliament of Paris, and on the point of being arrested in accordance with the judgment, takes refuge in the King’s wardrobe, an asylum worthy of such a personage. M. de Laborde, the King’s valet, confides to Beaumarchais, in the gloom of the wardrobe, that the King’s heart is saddened by a scurrilous libel on the

love affairs of the charming du Barry, which is being written in London by the scoundrel Morande.

“Forthwith, the romantic and gigantic heart of the Sieur Caron swells with idle fancies; his ambition rises to the height of the waves of the sea which he will have to cross. . . . He communicates to Laborde his idea of going to London, and secretly bribing with gold the corrupt Morande. This project is imparted by Laborde to Louis XV., who deigns to give his approval. Accordingly, the Sieur Caron de Beaumarchais arrives in London *incognito*, escorted by the Comte de Lauraguais *in publico*.”

The day of their arrival Morande called on d'Eon, if we may believe the latter, and informed him of the advantageous offers he had just received. He did not wish to accept them without consulting the Chevalier, who was the first to open up negotiations, and mentioned that “two gentlemen desired to confer with the Chevalier d'Eon,” and were awaiting him “in their coach at the corner of the street.” D'Eon, extremely dignified, refused to see strangers who had brought no letters of introduction “from official persons, and might be emissaries of police.” He then dismissed Morande, observing “that the love affairs of kings being very delicate matters for anybody to meddle in, he was exposing himself to the dangers associated with the occupation of a highwayman; that such being the case he was justified in exacting the largest sum out of the richest gilt coach he might meet, and that his own only contained eight hundred pounds sterling.”

A few days later, the Chevalier “learned that the

two gentlemen were the unknown Caron de Beaumarchais and the most illustrious and well-known Louis François de Brancas, Comte de Lauraguais." They had concluded, almost without discussion, an extremely liberal agreement with Charles Théveneau de Morande, whereby an annuity of 4000 livres was settled on that adventurer, and one of 2000 livres on his wife, after his death. In addition to that, Morande gained a sum of 32,000 livres, which was handed to him in exchange for the manuscripts.

D'Eon, after casting up the items of the bargain and adding the expenses and emoluments of the "ambassadors extraordinary," asserts that the libel cost the court the respectable sum of 154,000 livres, and expresses great indignation at such deplorable extravagance. He was, moreover, all the more inclined to be critical as he had been excluded from a negotiation which he had all but concluded with greater skill and moderation, and had been counting on his success to regain the King's favour.

Beaumarchais, who, as we shall see presently, had a lively private interview with his opponent a little later, hastily returned to France to turn his advantage to account, while d'Eon consoled himself by publishing a work which was the fruit of his long years of inactivity, and which he entitled philosophically, *Les Loisirs du Chevalier d'Eon*. Studiously and patiently did he beguile his leisure. In his shady retreat in Petty France, the garden of which bordered on the park, he indulged in the gravest meditations, to judge by the subjects discussed in these thirteen octavo volumes.

War, administration, general politics, foreign affairs, one after another, are studied at length; even finance is not neglected, and suggests to the author such judicious observations, such prudent measures of reform, that the King of Prussia took care, it is said, to point them out to his ministers. He is, at any rate, reported to have done so in a London newspaper! Very favourably received in Berlin, the work owed its success in London chiefly to a daring dedication, which, on the other hand, prevented its sale in the Paris booksellers' shops, and, particularly, in that of Antoine Boudet, in the Rue Saint Jacques. The most eloquent petitions, the most influential recommendations failed to appease M. de Sartine's wrath against a book published under the auspices of the Duc de Choiseul, whose signal disgrace had just created so great a sensation and aroused so much indignation. D'Eon had placed himself of his own accord under the duke's patronage in the following terms:—

“In dedicating this work to you, Monsieur le Duc, I was not seeking a protector, for I am sufficiently protected by my liberty and my innocence. I sought a great man, and I have found him in his retreat at Chanteloup.”

If history has not ratified d'Eon's judgment of Choiseul, it must be remembered how ungrateful and difficult was the task of a minister whose foreign policy was almost continually counteracted by the secret action of the sovereign, and whose initiative, often very happy, in home politics was well-nigh paralysed by the hostile caprices of the favourite. A victim of Madame

du Barry's resentment, whom his mordant wit had not spared, Choiseul bore serenely and proudly an exile during which the court, and even the royal princes, visited him. Such a fine attitude attracted d'Eon, and all the more because vanity made him compare the lot of the exile with his own, and regard the fallen minister as another victim of the same intrigues and the same favourites. Pride or, to be more correct, bravado had similarly prompted him to write to the duke, at the time of his disgrace, a letter evidently inspired by a desire of impressing the world by his noble sentiments :

MONSIEUR LE DUC,—You have long honoured me by your good-will and your undisguised protection. The latter you withdrew from me only out of consideration for the Duc de Praslin, my enemy and your relative and colleague.

I have always been glad of your good-will and have never complained of your desertion.

Now that your fair-weather friends are about to disown and forsake you in the hour of your disgrace, I draw nearer to you and lay at your feet the homage of my devotion and gratitude, which will endure to the end of my days.

Pray accept them, and believe me your very humble and devoted servant,

THE CHEVALIER D'EON.

Louis XV., who had once more sacrificed his minister to his favourite, no longer even bethought himself of making up, as formerly, for his disgraceful surrenders by clandestine intrigues. The secret correspondence, at which he had laboured every day for fifteen years, did not interest him any more. The letters published

by Boutaric testify to the fact, barely including a few notes from the King for the years 1773 and 1774.

Such indifference on the part of the King continually exposed the secret correspondence, formerly guarded so jealously, to the danger of discovery. Moreover, the ministers had not been long in suspecting its existence. The Duc d'Aiguillon, who had guessed the part played by the Comte de Broglie, was now watching for an opportunity for detecting the intrigue, and also for revenging himself on a hidden rival whose arrogance had exasperated him. The still somewhat mysterious excursion of two agents of the secret service, Favier and Dumouriez, who appear to have attempted at that time to enter into a negotiation with Prussia to the prejudice of Austria, supplied the long-sought means of putting the Comte de Broglie in a false position. The duke caused a report to be spread at Versailles that a conspiracy had lately been discovered, and gave orders for the imprisonment in the Bastille of Favier and Dumouriez, who had just been arrested—the former in Paris, and the latter at The Hague, on his way to Germany. Failing to discover anything sufficiently compromising on the persons of these two subordinate agents, he made bold to suggest to the King that the Comte de Broglie's papers should be seized.

Louis XV. replied, with feigned indifference, that he saw no reason for doing so ; that the count, it was true, submitted to him, from time to time, reports relating to foreign affairs ; but that these were historical matters, without any political tendency. D'Aiguillon was obliged to content himself with this explanation, and knew how

to make the best of his ill success. Favier and Dumouriez appeared alone before three commissioners, one of whom the King had taken the precaution of seeing should be M. de Sartine, duly apprised as on a former occasion; they were sentenced to a few months' imprisonment, Favier being sent to the fortress of Doullens, and Dumouriez to the castle of Caen.

As for the Comte de Broglie, whom the King had screened, guided by selfish motives rather than by a sense of justice, he only escaped imprisonment to be exiled. His arrogant character made it impossible for him to endure the mistrust in which he was held at court since the discovery of the intrigue. Conjecturing that the Duc d'Aiguillon was responsible for his disgrace, he wrote to him so imprudent a letter that, on its being communicated to the King, he was forthwith exiled to Ruffec. Louis XV. was not sorry to find a pretext for ridding himself of a devoted, but at times indiscreet, servant, whose zeal had become more and more importunate. Consequently, he paid no heed to the submissive and apologetic letters which the count sent to him from Ruffec, to the entreaties of the countess, or even to the appeals of the marshal. Nevertheless, he did not wish, or did not dare, entirely to withdraw his confidence from the secret minister, who, exiled and disgraced officially, continued to correspond clandestinely with the King's private agents from his remote provincial residence.

The Comte de Broglie's occupation was not destined to last long. It was now devoid of interest and utility, and was a mystery to nobody. The agents of Austria

had made the cabinet of Vienna acquainted with the secret correspondence, and it kept the other courts of Germany punctually informed. In France even the ministers were now aware of the intrigue, and the court had had some inkling of it through the disclosures of the Cardinal de Rohan, to whom a spy in the *cabinet noir* had confided it.

When Louis XV. died his secret was common property, and the policy on which he had vainly expended so much ingenuity, and sacrificed so much devotion, ended in a scandal which the death of the King himself was alone powerful enough to suppress. France did not lose a sovereign in this worn-out old man, become the plaything of a worthless woman, and even the agents of the secret service had no cause to regret a protector who had never made demands on their devotion without sacrificing them afterwards to his peace of mind. Consequently, they were not far from joining in the general rejoicings. By way of funeral oration, d'Eon wrote to the Comte de Broglie, only a few months after the King's death :

It is time, after the cruel loss we have experienced of our *Counsellor-in-Chief* at Versailles, who, in the midst of his own court, had less power than a king's advocate at the Châtelet, who, through incredible weakness ever suffered his faithless servants to triumph over his faithful secret ones, and favoured his avowed enemies rather than his real friends ; it is time, I say, that you should inform the new King (who loves truth, and of whom it is said that he is as firm as his illustrious grandfather was weak) of your having been the secret

minister of Louis XV. for upwards of twenty years, and of my having been under-minister, under his orders and yours.

D'Eon, whose estimation of his services, and the functions which had been entrusted to him, was far from modest, then recapitulated his claims and grievances, compared himself with La Chalotais and expressed his hopes of a similar reinstatement, concluding as follows:—

As for you, Monsieur le Comte, you will know better than I how to represent by what jealousy, treachery, baseness, and foul vengeance the Duc d'Aiguillon keeps you still an exile at Ruffec, without your having ceased to be the friend and secret minister of the late King, until his death. Posterity could never believe in these facts, had not you and I all the necessary documents to establish them, together with others still more incredible. Had the late good King not expelled the Jesuits from his kingdom, and had he had a Malagrida for his confessor, nobody would then have wondered; but, by the grace of God, I hope the new King will soon deliver you and me out of our embarrassments. I trust that no Jesuit will ever be his confessor, friend, or minister, whether he be disguised as priest, chancellor, duke, peer, courtier, or courtesan.

Louis XV.'s secret minister had not waited for that letter before attempting to regain favour with the new monarch. He was obliged to present his defence in writing, being still in exile at Ruffec, and feeling the burden of the suspicions aroused by Louis XV.'s obstinacy in keeping so compromising a collaborator at a

distance. He had to contend with all those who had formerly envied him ; and Marie Antoinette's influence on her husband, and her intention of participating in the administration of public affairs, did not improve the case of the man who had secretly attacked the Austrian alliance.

He therefore sent, on May 13, 1774, a memorandum to Louis XVI., in which he informed him of the various negotiations of the secret correspondence, and also of the places where the late King might have concealed his papers and letters, but which showed above all his anxiety to clear himself and to explain the part he had played personally. A fortnight later he wrote again to the King ; but this time it was chiefly d'Eon's conduct which he strove to explain and justify. In defending d'Eon, the Comte de Broglie was serving his own ends, and the very terms of his letter prove that he was aware of that fatal joint responsibility. " I conceive it to be possible," he wrote, " that your Majesty has heard him unfavourably spoken of, and that you will therefore be astonished to find him included among the number of those persons honoured with the confidence of the late King." He admitted that d'Eon's excessive hastiness had given rise to " unseemly incidents," but did not conceal the fact that the Chevalier was first provoked by the Comte de Guerchy's want of tact. He concluded : " This curious person (since the *Sieur d'Eon* is a woman) is, even more than most others, a mixture of good and bad qualities, and he carries both to extremes." The Comte de Broglie therefore urged upon the King that it would be wise to continue to pay

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THE CHEVALIER D'ÉON
From an Engraving published in 1810

to Mademoiselle d'Eon the pension conferred upon the Chevalier by Louis XV. For himself he asked more, and intimated that he would not deliver the secret papers until he should have been able to justify himself completely before a special commission. Louis XVI., who had bethought himself for a moment of continuing the secret policy of his predecessor, soon abandoned this project under the influence of Marie Antoinette herself, urged by her mother. His immediate care then was to pay off the staff of the secret service. In order to put an end to the Comte de Broglie's claims, he gave him an opportunity of justifying his conduct before three commissioners—De Muy, Vergennes and Sartine—who did justice unreservedly to the discretion, penetration and ability which Louis XV.'s secret minister had shown during the course of extremely delicate negotiations. Such striking testimony might satisfy the count's conscience, but it did not restore him to royal favour. Louis XVI. obstinately refused to confer a peerage, or even the least reward, upon his grandfather's faithful and unfortunate servant. He confined himself to settling the pensions of the subordinate agents, henceforward deprived of all employment by the abolition of the secret service.

Among these d'Eon alone was not included. The ministers thought that the figure of the pension which Louis XV. had conferred upon him was excessive, and hesitated to ensure payment in the same proportions. The motive for such liberality still existed, however, since numerous political papers were still in d'Eon's possession. The Comte de Vergennes had been able

to satisfy himself of this fact, and he wrote to the King on August 22: 1774

M. de Muy and I have already seen the entire correspondence which the Comte de Broglie has entertained with the Chevalier d'Eon since he made return to his own country impossible. We are preparing a report which we shall have the honour of communicating to your Majesty, as well as the means we propose to employ for recalling a man whom it would be unwise to allow to remain in England.

The means in question were really suggested by the Comte de Broglie, who interceded on d'Eon's behalf and undertook to induce him to come to an agreement. It was he who persuaded the King to continue the payment in full of the pension conferred upon the Chevalier by Louis XV. in the year 1766, and to authorise him to return to France.

In return, d'Eon was to surrender the secret papers and give his word of honour that he would desist from provoking or attacking in writing a family which he had already so unjustly persecuted. Such were the offers transmitted to d'Eon by the Comte de Vergennes in a letter approved by the King. It was decided that the Marquis de Prunevaux, captain in the regiment of Burgundian Cavalry, should proceed to London for the express purpose of conducting that negotiation. He was to deliver to the Chevalier a safe conduct, together with a note in which the Comte de Broglie exhorted him to submit readily and gratefully to the King's will. "For my own part," wrote the former secret minister

in conclusion, "I am delighted to have been able to contribute to your securing a liberal and honourable retiring pension in your own country."

What the Comte de Broglie regarded as an honourable pension was in d'Eon's estimation a wretched gratuity, which in no wise indemnified him for the pecuniary losses he had sustained, and the disgrace he had incurred in consequence of his obedience to royal commands. Since the death of Louis XV. he had never ceased to profess himself "ready to submit to anything that might be agreeable to the new King," but such feigned humility was merely the result of fear. He was afraid of being forgotten in London, and strove by the bait of the secret papers to involve Louis XVI. in a negotiation which he hoped to turn to good account.

Upon the arrival of the negotiator, he promptly forgot the disinterestedness he had displayed, and set about discussing eagerly the terms of the bargain. He did not doubt that this was a final opportunity offered him for deliverance once for all out of the unhappy plight to which his foolish pride had reduced him. An unexpected event revived his hope of reinstatement. Treyssac de Vergy, who had been implicated in his quarrels with the Comte de Guerchy, had just died, and, in a will which d'Eon immediately caused to be published in the papers, certified anew the truth of all the ambassador's plots and nefarious designs, of which he confessed he had been the unwitting agent. The adventurer's confession *in extremis* was credited in London; Sir John Fielding declared d'Eon's innocence to be "clear as daylight," and Mr. Charles, tutor to the royal children,

sent to the Chevalier the congratulations of Lord Bute, the minister. "The Chevalier's old friend [Lord Bute]," he wrote, "to whom Charles has shown the enclosed document [a copy of the will], rejoices at the favourable turn affairs appear to be taking."

So well, indeed, did D'Eon think things were getting on, that he protested strongly when the Marquis de Prunevaux made him acquainted with the Comte de Vergennes' decision and offers. He declared heatedly that the terms were unacceptable, as they did not take into account "the amends due to his honour and the money owed by the court" to the former minister plenipotentiary. He proved so untractable that de Prunevaux forthwith informed the minister of the Chevalier's frame of mind, which had completely upset their calculations. De Vergennes, perceiving that d'Eon's moments of repentance were brief, charged the Comte de Broglie to make a last effort to persuade his former agent, who thereupon received a letter of judicious recommendations and salutary warnings. "Upon my return from Ruffec," wrote the count, "I was greatly surprised to hear that you had not accepted the Comte de Vergennes' offers. . . . I confess I do not see what grounds you have for such a refusal. I trust, therefore, you will listen to reason, consider your duty and your own interests, and redeem your faults, which prolonged resistance would aggravate irretrievably."

But d'Eon would not listen to advice, urging that a minister plenipotentiary of France and a knight of the Order of Saint Louis could not "run away like so many despicable Frenchmen who had duped the generous

English." "He had promised," he added, "never to quit the island before he had met his engagements." The Marquis de Prunevaux concluded that his mission was at an end, and returned to Paris, bringing back nothing but a letter, at once humble and threatening, in which d'Eon permitted himself to state his own terms for returning to the King and the minister. He asked that he should be reinstated, if only temporarily, in the diplomatic rank and title he had held, and that the indemnities included in the enclosed detailed statement should be paid to him in full. It was, as M. de Loménie has justly remarked, the most impertinent *compte d'apothicaire* (exorbitant bill) conceivable. Not only did d'Eon claim his captain's pay for a period of fifteen years, as well as the reimbursement of his extravagant expenses during his ostentatious administration *ad interim*, but even the reimbursement of the "great expenses occasioned by his twelve years' residence in London," which amounted to the modest sum of 100,000 livres. His claims became completely farcical when the sum of 6000 livres was demanded for having refused Prince Poniatowsky's present of a diamond of that value.

Item (the Chevalier continued)—the Comte de Guerchy dissuaded the King of England from making the present of a thousand guineas to M. d'Eon which he confers upon ministers plenipotentiary who reside at his court 24,000 livres

Item for several family papers lost by Hugonnet at the time of his arrest 27,000 livres

Item, to having been unable to look after his vineyards in Burgundy from 1763 to 1773 . . . 15,000 livres

When a few other no less imaginary monetary payments are added to the above, the sum total amounted to between 200,000 and 250,000 livres.

VIII

METAMORPHOSIS

THE Comte de Vergennes, astounded and indignant, was obliged, although regretfully, to communicate to the King the extraordinary bill he had just received.

It is only remarkable (he wrote to his master) for its diffuseness and for the presumption and avidity which it reveals: it is throughout a fresh example of his extraordinary eccentricity. I wish I could spare your Majesty the perusal of this lucubration; but I cannot refuse the demands of this strange person without your Majesty's orders.

The Sieur d'Eon sets so high a price on the surrender of the papers, of which he was the depositary, that all hope of recovering them must be abandoned for the present. But as it might be unwise to deprive him of all resources, by compelling him to make an ill use of the deposit, if your Majesty approves, things might be allowed to remain as they were on your Majesty's accession to the throne.

Louis XVI. said that he had never read "a more impertinent and ridiculous document than d'Eon's statement, and but for the importance of the papers in his possession, he should certainly send him about his business." Moreover, he thought it useless to spend

12,000 livres a year for the safety of a secret which was decreasing in value day by day. D'Eon accordingly remained in London. He must have owned to himself that he had seriously injured his prospects by showing too much avidity, but he would not admit it officially, and he hastened, as usual, to inform the public of the negotiation which had been opened with him and which had failed, according to a London paper, because "the Chevalier deemed all pecuniary satisfaction beneath his honour, gold being but a means and not the object of great souls."

It was, indeed, gold that d'Eon required. Harassed by his creditors, he resolved to pledge, and also to put in safe keeping, his precious correspondence, which he deposited with his friend Lord Ferrers, an English peer and an admiral. The latter advanced 100,000 livres on a sealed coffer containing the secret papers. This sum of money was not sufficient, however; in order to procure fresh supplies, and also, no doubt, to emerge from an inaction which weighed on him, he tried hard to obtain a situation. He even applied abroad, offering his services to the new Spanish ambassador, Prince Masseran, who replied declining his proposal.

Continual failures and fresh disappointments revived in d'Eon, more and more persistently, the idea which had already occurred to him as a venturesome and quasi-heroic means of extricating himself from his quandary. It was a difficult way of recovering his vanishing popularity; but he had little to lose and everything to gain. The deception which circumstances had formerly suggested to him might well become his last resort; and

consequently he allowed the report, which he was afterwards to turn to account, to spread without any further contradiction. When the public were tired of repeating that d'Eon was a woman the papers took up the tale; and a portrait even appeared of the "modern Minerva." This was the engraving which d'Eon took care to send to his old friend, M. de la Rozière, then Governor of St. Malo, who, quite amazed, acknowledged its receipt:

During my stay in Paris an English print was brought to me in your name, in which you are represented as Minerva, and the inscription of which so astonished me that I still hesitate to believe that the present came from you directly. I beg you will explain the meaning of this, which I cannot regard but as a pleasantry until you assure me that it is not so.

D'Eon took good care not to satisfy his correspondent's curiosity on the point, which was about to become the talk of the town. But in order to effect the transformation with all proper brilliance, he required an auxiliary whose renown would further add to his own celebrity, and nobody could serve his purpose better than Beaumarchais, the intrepid and witty adversary of President Goëzman. That is why, as he wrote later on, "like a drowning man abandoned by the King and his ministers to the current of an infected river, he endeavoured to cling to the boat of Caron."

At the time of the negotiation relating to the libel published in London against Madame du Barry, d'Eon, foreseeing all the advantages he might reap from such intercourse, had already laboured hard to make the

acquaintance of Beaumarchais, his intermediary being no less a person than Morande himself, the author of the memoir, who had undertaken to bring about a meeting. "Beaumarchais is at my disposal," he wrote to d'Eon; "he is an adorable man, and I see truth flowing from his pen. He writes so gracefully that I feel consumed with envy. Voltaire never approached him for style. You will form your own opinion of him to-morrow." But the following day, Beaumarchais, put on his guard, perhaps, by the suspicious patronage assumed by d'Eon, begged to be excused on the score of work, and Morande, vexed, was obliged to write to the Chevalier: "M. de Beaumarchais will not stir abroad until Thursday evening, as he has much business to attend to, which prevents him from seeing anybody." D'Eon related afterwards that Beaumarchais and he met spontaneously, "led, no doubt, by a curiosity natural to extraordinary animals to seek each other's society." The explanation is ingenious but incorrect, for, after buying Morande's libel on Madame du Barry, and studying the cause of the American rebels, Beaumarchais returned to Paris, and it was only during his second visit to London, in May, 1775, that d'Eon was at last able to make his acquaintance. The Chevalier made up for lost time, and his intriguing skill won over the susceptible Beaumarchais to his cause. The witty author, who seems to have made it his profession to cover his contemporaries with ridicule, became not only his intercessor but his dupe, for d'Eon was clever enough to amuse himself at his expense.

Weepingly the Chevalier made his distressing confession to Beaumarchais, admitting that he was a woman,

and drawing so touching a picture of his misfortunes that no sooner had his interlocutor returned home than he wrote to the King: "When it is considered that this creature, so persecuted, is of a sex to which all is forgiven, the heart is touched with gentle compassion. . . . I venture to assure you, Sire, that by treating this wonderful creature with tact and kindness, even though she be soured by twelve years of adversity, she will be easily prevailed upon to be submissive."

Beaumarchais, then, was completely duped by d'Eon, as his friend Gudin was also. Their mistake makes it easier to understand how the King and his minister could be deceived, in their turn, by the positive assertions made to them in regard to a matter which had already been confirmed in England by public opinion. Besides, had not Drouet, three years previously, made the same surprising communication to the Comte de Broglie, who had attached sufficient importance to it to inform Louis XV. ?

Moved by d'Eon's situation, Beaumarchais, therefore, resolved to intervene in his behalf. He proposed to Vergennes that he should resume the negotiations, which he hoped to bring to a successful issue. The minister gave his consent and specified the conditions of the agreement. With regard to the financial question, he directed Beaumarchais "to let things take their course, so as to be in a position to dictate terms," adding: "M. d'Eon is of a violent disposition, but I believe him to be an honest fellow, and I will do him the justice to say that I am quite persuaded he is incapable of treachery."

The settling of the amount of the indemnity was the

most serious, but not the only, difficulty. For d'Eon had actually claimed the right of obtaining an audience of the King of England on taking leave. Vergennes proved inflexible on that point: "It is impossible," he wrote, "for M. d'Eon to take leave of the King of England; the disclosure of his sex renders such a thing unpermissible; it would be casting ridicule upon the two courts. The substitution of a written attestation will be a delicate matter; it may be granted, however, provided he remains satisfied with the praise that his zeal, intelligence, and loyalty have merited." Relying on his instructions Beaumarchais had not much trouble in convincing d'Eon, who himself was quite willing to come to terms. He obtained a first sign of obedience, and thereupon hastened to proclaim his victory to the minister:

Be that as it may, Monsieur le Comte, I believe I have severed one of the heads of the English hydra. I place at your disposal Captain d'Eon, a brave officer, an accomplished diplomatist, and possessing all the virile qualities of manhood as far as his head is concerned. He brings to the King the keys of an iron safe, securely sealed with my own seal, and containing all the papers it is necessary for the King to recover.

It was, indeed, an important result; but another was necessary, which alone, in Vergennes' opinion, could completely reassure the court in preventing for ever any recurrence of the scandal. Since he was a woman, d'Eon should declare the same officially, and wear in future the attire of his real sex. The Chevalier was

hardly prepared for the last stipulation. He protested and entreated, but, seeing there was nothing to be gained by further resistance, in the end he yielded; apprehending, moreover, that he could not persist in his refusal without exciting suspicions as to the reality of his presumed sex, which would spoil everything. On October 7, 1775, Beaumarchais announced his victory to the Minister for Foreign Affairs: "Written promises to be prudent do not suffice to restrain one whose blood boils at the mere mention of de Guerchy. The positive declaration of her sex, and her engagement to live henceforth in female attire, are the only means of averting scandal and misfortunes. I have been resolute in exacting this, and have succeeded."

The semi-official negotiator had now come to a definite understanding with the strange rebel who had kept in check the French ambassador, the ministers, and the King himself. But it would seem that this affair was destined to be extraordinary from beginning to end, and the climax surpassed all that the most fertile imagination could conceive. In order that he might ratify the agreement concluded between himself and d'Eon, a kind of official character was conferred on Beaumarchais, who was promoted, from the post of secret agent which he had hitherto filled, to the rank of ambassador—ambassador to the Chevalière d'Eon. Invested with full powers, as if the matter in question were the negotiation of some important treaty, Beaumarchais signed, in the King's name, a covenant into which d'Eon entered, thus treating with his sovereign on a footing of equality. The document, in its solemn form, is a comedy unques-

tionably more brilliant than any that Beaumarchais ever composed ; but the merit is not due to the creator of *Figaro*, for only d'Eon could enjoy to the full the humour of the situation. The complete text of this unprecedented diplomatic deed runs as follows :—

We, the undersigned, Pierre-Augustin Caron de Beaumarchais, specially entrusted with the private instructions of the King of France, dated Versailles, August 25, 1775, communicated to the Chevalier d'Eon in London, of which a copy certified by me shall be appended to the present act, on the one part ;

And Demoiselle Charles-Geneviève-Louise-Auguste-André-Timothée d'Eon de Beaumont, spinster of age, hitherto known by the name of the Chevalier d'Eon, squire, formerly captain of dragoons, knight of the royal and military order of Saint Louis, aide-de-camp to Marshal the Duc and to the Comte de Broglie, minister plenipotentiary of France at the Court of Great Britain, late doctor of civil law and of canon law, advocate in the Parliament of Paris, Censor Royal for History and Belles Lettres ; sent to Russia with the Chevalier Douglas, for the purpose of effecting the reconciliation of the two courts, secretary of embassy to the Marquis de L'Hospital, ambassador plenipotentiary of France at the court of her Imperial Majesty of all the Russias, and secretary of Embassy to the Duc de Nivernais, ambassador extraordinary and plenipotentiary from France to England for the conclusion of the late peace, are agreed upon what follows, and have hereunto subscribed our names :

Art. I. That I, Caron de Beaumarchais, do require, in the name of the King, that all official and private papers having reference to the several political negotia-

tions with which the Chevalier d'Eon has been entrusted in England, notably those concerning the peace of 1763, correspondence, minutes, copies of letters, cyphers, etc., at present deposited with Earl Ferrers, Peer of the Realm, and Admiral, of Upper Seymour Street, Portman Square, London, ever a particular friend of the said Chevalier d'Eon in the course of his misfortunes and law-suits in England, that the said papers, enclosed in a large iron safe of which I have the key, be delivered to me after having been initialled by me and by the said Chevalier d'Eon, and of which the inventory shall be added and appended to the present act, as a proof that the said papers have been faithfully delivered.

Art. II. That all papers of the secret correspondence between the Chevalier d'Eon, the late King, and the several persons entrusted by his Majesty to entertain that correspondence, designated in the letters by the names deputy, solicitor, in the same way in which his Majesty himself was styled the counsellor, etc. . . . which secret correspondence was concealed beneath the flooring of the bed-chamber of the said Chevalier d'Eon, whence it was withdrawn by him, on October 5 of the present year, in my presence alone, being carefully sealed and addressed: *To the King only, at Versailles*; that all the copies of the said letters, minutes, cyphers, etc., shall be delivered to me, likewise attested with initials, and with an exact inventory, the said secret correspondence consisting of five portfolios or thick volumes in quarto.

Art. III. That the said Chevalier d'Eon is to desist from every kind of proceeding, judicial or personal, against the memory of the late Comte de Guerchy, his adversary, the successors to his title, the members of his family, etc., and undertakes never to revive any such proceedings under whatsoever form, unless he

be forced thereto by judicial or personal provocation on the part of some relative, friend, or adherent of that family; for which there can no longer be any apprehension, his Majesty having, in his wisdom, taken every necessary precaution to prevent the recurrence, in the future, of any such unseemly quarrels, whether on the one side or on the other.

Art. IV. And to the end that an insurmountable barrier be for ever raised between the contending parties, and that all ideas of law-suits or personal quarrels, no matter whence they arise, be permanently nullified, I require, in the name of his Majesty, that the disguise which has to this day enabled a woman to pass for the Chevalier d'Eon shall entirely cease, and without seeking to blame Charles-Geneviève-Louise-Auguste-Andrée-Timothée d'Eon de Beaumont for a concealment of condition and sex, the responsibility of which rests entirely with her relatives, and whilst rendering justice to the prudent, decorous, and circumspect conduct she has at all times observed in the dress of her adoption whilst preserving a manly and vigorous bearing; I require, absolutely, that the ambiguity of her sex, which has afforded inexhaustible material for gossip, indecent betting, and idle jesting liable to be renewed, especially in France, which her pride would not tolerate, and which would give rise to fresh quarrels that could only serve, perhaps, to palliate and revive former ones; I require, absolutely, I say, in the name of the King, that the phantom Chevalier d'Eon shall entirely disappear, and that the public mind shall for ever be set at rest by a distinct, precise, and unambiguous declaration, publicly made, of the true sex of Charles-Geneviève-Louise-Auguste-Andrée-Timothée d'Eon de Beaumont before she returns to France, and by her resumption of female attire; with all of which she should the more



Gentlemen and Ladies
 I ample
 to with A's
 of Boring
 By George
 & Co.

Nourish Mouth, don't
 in de Eye & don't there you like



you have de Power Stroke

a man of honor of court
 I should not to you you
 you have with my own

MDLE. D'EON "RIPOSTING"
 From a Contemporary Caricature

readily comply just now, considering how interesting she will appear to both sexes, alike honoured by her life, her courage, and her talents. Upon which conditions, I will deliver to her the safe conduct on parchment, signed by the King and his Minister for Foreign Affairs, which allows her to return to France and there remain under the special and immediate protection of his Majesty, who is desirous not only of according protection and security under his royal word, but who is good enough to change the yearly pension of 12,000 livres granted by the late King in 1766, which has been punctually paid to her to this day, into a life-annuity of the same amount, with an acknowledgment that the capital of the said annuity has already been provided and advanced by the said Chevalier d'Eon in furthering the concerns of the late King, *besides other larger sums, the total of which will be remitted by me for the liquidation of her debts in England*, with a copy on parchment of the deed for the said annuity of 12,000 livres tournois, dated September 28, 1775.

And I, Charles-Geneviève-Louise-Auguste-Andrée-Timothée d'Eon de Beaumont, hitherto known as the Chevalier d'Eon, as above styled, submit to the whole of the above conditions imposed in the name of the King, solely that I may afford to his Majesty the greatest possible proofs of my respect and submission, although it would have been far more agreeable to me had he deigned to employ me again in his army or in the diplomatic service, in compliance with my earnest solicitations and in accordance with my seniority. And because, excepting some exhibition of feeling, rendered in a measure excusable by a legitimate and natural desire to defend myself and by the most justifiable resentment, his Majesty is pleased to allow that I have always conducted myself bravely as an officer, and that

I have been a laborious, intelligent, and discreet political agent, I submit to declaring publicly my sex, to my condition being established beyond a doubt, to resume and wear female attire until death, unless, taking into consideration my being so long accustomed to appear in uniform, his Majesty will consent, on sufferance only, to my resuming male attire should it become impossible for me to endure the embarrassment of adopting the other, after having tried to accustom myself to it at the *Abbaye-Royale* of Bernardine Ladies of Saint Antoine-des-Champs, Paris, or at any such other convent as I might select, to which I wish to withdraw for some months on arriving in France.

I declare that I entirely desist from all proceedings, judicial or personal, against the memory of the late Comte de Guerchy and his successors, promising never to renew them unless driven to such a step by judicial proceedings, as above stated.

I further pledge my word of honour that I will deliver to M. Caron de Beaumarchais all official and secret papers, whether concerning the embassy or the aforesaid secret correspondence, without reserving or retaining to myself a single document, upon the following conditions, to which I entreat his Majesty's approval:—

1. Seeing that the letter of the late King, my most honoured lord and master, dated Versailles, April 1, 1766, by which he insured to me the annual pension of 12,000 livres until such time as he should improve my position, is of no further service to me so far as the said pension is concerned, which has been changed, to my advantage, by the King his successor, into a life-annuity of like amount—that the original letter should remain in my possession as testimony of the honour the late King deigned to bestow on my loyalty, my innocence, and my irreproachable conduct during all my mis-

fortunes, and in all matters he deigned to confide to me, whether in Russia, whilst serving in his army, or in England.

2. That the original receipt given to me in London on July 11, 1766, by M. Durand, minister plenipotentary in England, in exchange for the secret order of the late King, dated Versailles, June 3, 1763, delivered to him by me, intact, and of my own free-will, shall remain in my possession, as authentic testimony of the complete submission with which I surrendered the secret order in the own hand of the King my master, which of itself justified my conduct in England, so often described as being obstinacy by my enemies, and which, in their ignorance of my extraordinary situation in relation to the King, they have even dared to qualify as high treason.

3. That his Majesty will deign, as a special favour, to satisfy himself at the expiration of every six months, as did the late King, of my being alive and of my whereabouts, to prevent my enemies from ever again being tempted to undertake anything to the prejudice of my honour, my liberty, my person, and my life.

4. That the cross of Saint Louis, won by me at the peril of my life, in combats, sieges, and battles in which I took part, where I was wounded, and served as aide-de-camp to the general, and as captain of dragoons and of volunteers in Marshal Broglie's army, with bravery to which all the generals under whom I served have borne witness, shall never be taken from me, and that the right to wear it on any garments I may adopt shall be conceded to me for life.

And if I may be permitted to add a respectful demand to these conditions, I would venture to observe that, at the moment I am about to obey his Majesty in consenting to abandon for ever my male attire, I am entirely des-

titute of everything—linen, clothing, and apparel suited to my sex, and that I have no money to procure even ordinary necessaries, M. de Beaumarchais knowing well to whom the amount destined in part payment of my debts is owing, and of which I do not wish to touch one penny myself. Consequently, although I have no right to expect further favours from his Majesty, I do not refrain from soliciting at his hands the gift of a sum of money for the purchase of my female outfit, this unexpected, extraordinary, and compulsory expense not being my own idea, but solely in obedience to his orders.

And I, Caron de Beaumarchais, still as afore styled, do leave with the said Demoiselle d'Eon de Beaumont the original letter conferring so much distinction, which the late King wrote to her from Versailles, April 1, 1766, when granting her a pension of 12,000 livres, in acknowledgment of faithful services.

I further leave with her M. Durand's original document. Neither of these papers can be taken from her by me without a severity that would ill accord with the benevolent and equitable intentions at present entertained by his Majesty towards the said Demoiselle d'Eon de Beaumont. As to the cross of Saint Louis, which she desires to retain with the right of wearing it in female attire, I must admit that, notwithstanding the extreme kindness with which his Majesty has deigned to trust to my prudence, zeal, and intelligence in the conduct of this affair, I am afraid I should be exceeding my powers in determining so delicate a question.

Considering, on the other hand, that the cross of the royal and military order of Saint Louis has ever been regarded solely as the proof of, and reward for, valour, and that several officers who were thus decorated, having abandoned the military career for the church or the law,

continued to wear on their new garments this honourable evidence that they had worthily performed their duties in a calling fraught with great dangers ; I do not think that there can be any objection to a like indulgence being granted to a valorous maiden who, having been brought up in male attire by her parents, and having courageously fulfilled all the perilous duties imposed by the profession of arms, may not have been aware of the impropriety of adopting the attire in which she had been compelled to live, until it became too late to change, and is therefore not in the least to blame for not having done so until now.

Considering, also, that the rare example offered by this extraordinary maiden is not likely to be followed by those of her sex, and can have no consequences ; that had Jeanne d'Arc, who saved the throne and the states of Charles VII., fighting in male attire, obtained during the war, as has the said Demoiselle d'Eon de Beaumont, some military reward or other decoration, such as the cross of Saint Louis, it does not appear that, her task being completed, the King would have deprived her of the honourable reward for valour when requiring her to resume the garments of her sex, nor that any chivalrous French knight would have considered the distinction as being profaned because it ornamented the breast and attire of a woman who, on the field of battle, had ever shown herself worthy of being a man.

I, therefore, venture to take it upon myself, not in the capacity of envoy, lest I should abuse the power confided to me, but as a man persuaded of the rectitude of the principles I have just enunciated ; I take it upon myself, I say, to leave with the Demoiselle Charles-Geneviève-Louise-Auguste-Andrée-Timothée d'Eon de Beaumont the cross of Saint Louis, and liberty to wear it on her female attire, without, however, its being understood

that I bind his Majesty to this act should he disapprove my conduct on this point; promising only, in the event of any difficulty arising, that I will plead with his Majesty on her behalf, and, if necessary, establish her right thereto, which I believe to be legitimate, with all the power of my pen and the strength of my heart.

With regard to the request made by the said Demoiselle d'Eon de Beaumont to the King, for a sum of money to enable her to procure a female outfit—although such a matter is not included in my instructions, I will not delay taking it into consideration, such an outlay being, as a fact, the necessary consequence of the instructions of which I am the bearer, to the effect that she is to assume the garments of her sex. I therefore allow her, for the purchase of a female outfit, a sum of 2000 crowns, on condition that she will not carry away with her from London any of her clothing, arms, or any male apparel, lest the desire to wear them should at any time be stimulated by the sight of them. I consent to her retaining one complete suit of uniform of the regiment in which she has served, the helmet, sabre, pistols, musket, and bayonet, as souvenirs of her past life, just as are preserved the relics of loved ones now no more. Everything else will be given up to me in London, to be sold, the proceeds to be disposed of in such way as his Majesty may direct.

And this act has been made out in duplicate, between us, Pierre-Augustin-Caron de Beaumarchais, and Charles-Geneviève-Louise-Auguste-Andrée-Timothée d'Eon de Beaumont, under private seal, giving to it, on one side and the other, the whole force and assent of which it is susceptible, and we have, each of us, affixed the seals of our arms, in London, the fifth day of October, 1775.

(Signed) CARON DE BEAUMARCHAIS.

D'EON DE BEAUMONT.

The safe deposited with Lord Ferrers was opened and d'Eon added to the bundle of papers five boxes which he had kept hidden beneath his flooring, securely sealed and directed: *Secret papers to be given to the King only*. . . . "I began by taking an inventory of them," says Beaumarchais, who narrates this incident, "and affixed my initials to each sheet so that none could be abstracted; but, to make quite sure that they completed the collection, I hastily glanced through them."

D'Eon did not omit to inform his former chief of his transformation. On December 5, 1775, he wrote to the Comte de Broglie:

MONSIEUR LE COMTE.—It is time to undeceive you. For a captain of dragoons, and aide-de-camp in war and politics, you have had but the semblance of a man. I am only a maiden who would have perfectly well sustained my part until death, had not politics and your enemies rendered me the most unfortunate of women, as you will see by the enclosed documents. . . .

I am respectfully, Monsieur le Comte, your most humble and most obedient servant,

GENEVÈVE-LOUISE-AUGUSTE D'EON DE BEAUMONT.

D'Eon simulated his gratitude to Beaumarchais by prolonging a mystification which must have vastly amused him, and which the author of the wittiest comedies of his day countenanced with astounding ingenuousness. Beaumarchais became the object of the most feminine flattery on the part of d'Eon, who styled himself "his little *dragonne*," and, expressing himself in the same terms as Rosina in the *Barber of*

Seville, wrote to him: "You are made to be loved, and I feel that my greatest anguish would be having to hate you." And on another occasion: "Till now, I only thought of doing justice to your merits, admiring your talents and your generosity; I no doubt already loved you! But the feeling was so novel to me, that I was far from believing that love could be begotten in the midst of distress and pain."

The manœuvre was entirely successful, and Beaumarchais allowed himself to be completely deceived by such declarations, and even appeared to be considerably flattered, although he made a show of taking them as a jest.

Everybody tells me (he wrote to Vergennes) that this crazy woman is in love with me; but who the devil would ever have supposed that in order to serve the King zealously I should have to become the gallant knight of a captain of dragoons? The adventure is so ridiculous that I find it very difficult to write about it seriously.

Although Beaumarchais professed himself weary of such sentimentalism, it was not he, but d'Eon, who put an end to it. The flirtation of the new Chevalière did not go so far as to make her despise money matters, and when the question arose of settling the items of the sums appropriated to the payment of debts there was a struggle between d'Eon's avidity and Beaumarchais' parsimony. The correspondence of the two lovers soon assumed a bitter tone, and d'Eon was thoroughly incensed by a notice which appeared at this time in *The Morning*

Post to the effect that the insurance policies on his sex had been revived, the bets running seven to four that the Chevalier was a woman, and that a nobleman who had taken part in such transactions had undertaken to elucidate the question within a fortnight. D'Eon did not fail to attribute the notice to Beaumarchais, whom he accused of being associated with Morande in scandalous and indecent speculations on his sex. At the same time he challenged Morande to a duel ; but the latter, being well acquainted with d'Eon's renown as a fencer, was only too glad of the excuse that his honour prevented him from fighting a woman. He did not think it unfair, however, to publish a scurrilous libel against the new Chevalière, which caused some sensation. Annoyed by importunate Englishmen, who had been stimulated by such incidents to revive their bets, d'Eon resolved to write to the Comte de Vergennes to inform him of his approaching arrival in France. The reply which he received was most encouraging :

I have received, Mademoiselle, the letter you did me the honour to write on the 1st of this month. Had you not given way to feelings of mistrust, which, I am persuaded, were not expressive of your real sentiments, you might have been enjoying, for some time past, in your native land, that tranquillity which should now, more than ever, be the object of your desires. If you are thinking seriously of returning, the way is still open to you. You know the conditions imposed : the most absolute reserve regarding the past ; every precaution to be taken to avoid meeting those persons whom you regard as being the cause of your misfortunes ; and,

finally, the resumption of the garments of your sex. You can no longer hesitate, seeing the publicity given to this in England. You are, no doubt, aware that our laws do not tolerate such disguises. I have only to add that if, after a trial, you should not feel at home in France, you will be free to proceed elsewhere to suit your own pleasure.

I have written the above in compliance with the King's orders. Let me add that the safe conduct with which you have been supplied suffices, so that you may now do as you please. If you decide upon pursuing a wise course, I will congratulate you; otherwise I shall only be able to pity you for not responding to the kind master who offers you a helping hand. Set your mind at rest, because when in France you will be able to communicate with me directly, without the aid of any intermediary.

D'Eon, however, did not wish to leave England without endeavouring to put an end to the wagers which were being transacted on his sex. He brought an action before Lord Mansfield for the annulment of those disgraceful contracts; but being non-suited by a judgment which considered him to be a woman, since the King of France treated him as such, he contented himself with lodging an appeal, and hastened to return to his native land.

IX

RETURN OF A HEROINE

D'EON left London on August 13, 1777, and embarked for France the same night. However glad he was to return to his native land, and to revisit his home and his fertile, vine-bedecked Burgundy, his meditations cannot have been free from bitterness. Fifteen years had passed since his last journey : at that time he was the Duc de Nivernais' "little d'Eon," the Comte de Choiseul's protégé, and was bringing to Versailles the ratifications of an important treaty. His wallet was not so full of state papers as his heart of dreams and expectations. Fortune smiled upon his ardent youth, bringing him brilliant rewards and giving him glimpses of a promising future. He had been well received at Versailles, honoured with the notice of Madame de Pompadour, and had returned to London wearing the Cross of Saint Louis on his breast. Shortly afterwards he was appointed minister plenipotentiary, and, thanks to a temporary vacancy, had represented his sovereign most pompously for two months at the embassy. He experienced at that time the rapture of triumph, but immediately afterwards all the rancour of a sudden disgrace. First came the harassing proceedings and the disdainful attitude of the Comte de Guerchy ; then a struggle full of snares and subtilties ; and finally the bold

stroke of the action brought against his rival, and his exultation at the scandal caused by the condemnation of the ambassador of France. But it was a perilous victory fraught with danger, which had roused the indignation of Paris and Versailles, and occasioned his desertion by the King and, successively, by all his powerful friends. Struggles and vicissitudes had been his lot, reducing him by degrees to despair, and finally inciting him to that expedient—suggested by the tenacious idea of the public—long contemplated, and more than once rejected before being finally adopted.

He was now returning vanquished. The “little d'Eon,” once so petted by the Marquis de L'Hospital, whom the Duc de Choiseul had introduced to the Duc de Nivernais as a “very good-looking fellow,” on account of his blue eyes with their bold and intelligent look and his slender but supple and well-proportioned figure, was now a man of fifty, with an awkward gait and a harsh voice; his firm chin displayed the stubbly growth of an ill-shaven black beard. He had kept the manners and style of a dragoon as well as the uniform; that beloved grey uniform, with red cuffs and facings, which he never consented to lay aside during his residence in London, and which made him a figure familiar alike to ministers of state and to the man in the street. He was naturally as reluctant to assume feminine attire as he was to resign himself to the manner of life conformable to his new sex. Notwithstanding the strange document in which he had formally acknowledged his womanhood, he desired to remain a man at least in so far as dress was concerned, and endeavoured to induce the Comte de Broglie to relent

on that point. He averred that his fondest hope was to continue his military career in the army, where, thanks to his good conduct, he had never offered a bad example to anybody; but at the same time he expressed his readiness to comply with all the King's orders, whether his Majesty commanded him to live in the world dressed in mob-cap and petticoats, or even to "retire into a convent and cover his dragoon's head with the sacred veil."

How much sincerity was there in these bombastic declarations? Did he realise, in a last lucid interval, that the loss of his dragoon's uniform involved the ruin of all the noble aspirations of his youth, wantonly sacrificed to an inordinate, and henceforward vain, ambition? Does this unwavering attachment to the symbol of discipline and a regular career betoken a last regret for the secure and honourable existence that would have been his had he but bridled his desires? Perhaps; but possibly it was merely another pretence, an indirect means of prolonging an ambiguous situation and of imposing on the world at large. The decision of the English courts and the command of the King of France had made a woman of him; but the reluctance he showed to assuming the garments of his new sex tended to confirm the opinion of those who still considered him a man. By declaring so openly that he was being compelled to wear female apparel d'Eon evidently intended to convey the impression that the sex was as distasteful to him as the garb, and that the King's will, to which he must perforce submit, could in no degree modify nature. He thus averted the difficulties of the moment, while pre-

paring the way for a reappearance in male attire at some future date. Voltaire alone, among his contemporaries, appears to have seen through the pretence, to which he does justice by a somewhat unkind comparison: "I cannot believe," he writes from Ferney to the Comte d'Argental, "that the Chevalier or the Chevalière d'Eon, whose chin is adorned with a very thick and very prickly black beard, is a woman. I am inclined to think that he has carried the eccentricity of his adventures to the point of aspiring to change his sex in order to escape the vengeance of the House of Guerchy, just as Pourceaugnac disguised himself as a woman to escape from justice and the apothecaries."

Moreover, while protesting loudly against the King's command, by which his helmet was converted into a mob-cap, d'Eon strove to turn his new condition to account, and to attain fresh and still greater notoriety by his metamorphosis. He relates himself how, passing through Saint Denis, on his way to Versailles, he made Dom Boudier lead him to the mother-superior of the Carmelite convent, no less a person than Madame Louise de France. Before drawing the curtains of the parlour the daughter of Louis XV. asked, it is said, how Mademoiselle d'Eon was dressed, and on being told that she was still in riding-boots and uniform, having only just arrived from London, "Madame Louise exhorted her invisible interlocutor to assume the attire and to lead the life of a Christian woman." However, notwithstanding the wise counsel of the venerable princess, and in spite of the formal condition imposed by Vergennes in his letter of July 12, it was only at Versailles, where he arrived

?
 This is 1777. The lady's father is so born in 1710. When Eon
 one become venerable?

equipped as a dragoon, that d'Eon finally yielded, and complied with an order which was renewed in the following terms :—

IN THE KING'S NAME

“ Charles-Geneviève-Louise-Auguste-Andrée-Timothée d'Eon de Beaumont is hereby commanded to lay aside the uniform of a dragoon, which she is in the habit of wearing, and resume the garments of her sex, and is forbidden to appear in any part of the kingdom in other garments than those suitable to women.

“ Given at Versailles, August 27, 1777.

“ (Signed) LOUIS GRAVIER DE VERGENNES.”

When the Chevalier, at his wits' end, again objected to the Minister for Foreign Affairs that his modest means did not enable him to procure a suitable outfit, Marie Antoinette, affected by the misfortunes of so intrepid a woman, gave orders (if we are to believe d'Eon and his biographers) for the outfit to be made up at her own expense. It is certain, at all events, that Mademoiselle Bertin, the celebrated milliner and dressmaker to the Queen, was the first to have the singular honour of enveloping the fiery captain of dragoons in the austere and decorous petticoats of an elderly spinster of quality. *now 49!* For the rest of his wardrobe d'Eon had recourse to Mademoiselle Maillot, a humbler milliner, and to Madame Barmant, “ manufacturer of flexible and elastic corsets.” The Sieur Brunet, wigmaker, Rue de la Paroisse, received an order for a “ headdress composed of three tiers.”

While so many nimble fingers were arranging ribbons and laces or stiffening with whalebone the stays destined to cause d'Eon so much discomfort, the Chevalier took advantage of the few days during which he was still at liberty to wear his uniform, and hastened to take the coach which was to bear him to his old mother.

He reached the little Burgundian town on September 2. If it is true that towns have, as it were, faces in which we are pleased to recognise the characteristics of their most famous men, Tonnerre seems wonderfully to symbolise d'Eon's disposition and to illuminate his memory. Rocky and mountainous, it has at first sight a bold and animated air. In a brisk, determined manner the streets scale, as though to storm, the rock whence the church of Saint Pierre commands the town, surrounded by the double zone of the river and a range of pleasantly wooded hills. One might fancy that the little town, shut up in its natural prison, had put on that bluff and rebellious look, that somewhat disorderly and straggling appearance, as a protest against its pleasing but restricted site.

The evening that d'Eon arrived, crossing the bridge over the rushing Armeçon, Tonnerre was illuminated, all the inhabitants rejoicing, as though for the return of a prodigal son, or rather of a prodigal daughter. "More than twelve hundred persons," writes d'Eon (probably not without exaggeration), "came to meet me, with cannon, guns, and pistols. My mother, although informed so long ago of my positive return to France, could not believe it, and fainted away in my arms,

while my nurse burst into tears. The next day the whole town came in a body to my house before I was out of bed. There I was, encamped in a room without any curtains, mirrors, hangings, or chairs. Such a reminder of my former campaigns pleases me more than a palace." The jovial humour displayed by the Chevalier does not appear to have made him forget the distressful tone it is wise to adopt towards a correspondent from whom a favour is expected, and he goes on in his exaggerated way, writing to Vergennes: "I found my patrimonial estate, consisting chiefly of vineyards, in a sadly dilapidated state. One would think that a company of hussars had taken possession of it as well as my house, and the river Armençon has flooded my gardens. But if anything can make my life worth living," he says in conclusion, "it is my enjoyment of the pure friendships which my countrymen, both of the town and of the neighbouring villages, from the greatest to the humblest, have so kindly shown; they have of their own accord paid me the honours which would be due only to you and to Mgr. the Comte de Maurepas if you were to pass through Tonnerre on your way to your country house, and he to his estate of Saint Florentin."

In spite of the great pleasure he undoubtedly felt at being in the midst of his family and of his countrymen, wonder-struck at his adventures and escapades, d'Eon was not the man to content himself long with provincial celebrity. Experience had probably taught him that nobody is a prophet in his own country, and that the comedy which he was about to act required a larger and more magnificent stage, as well as a more

intelligent audience. The Minister for Foreign Affairs was growing impatient at his delay in executing the King's orders, and Mademoiselle Bertin averred that his presence was necessary for the last trying-on of his costume.

He at once left Tonnerre and proceeded to Versailles, whence he hastened to inform the Comte de Vergennes of his return, of his tardy obedience, and the mortification it caused him. "It is about ten days since I returned," he wrote to the minister, "and a week since I complied with your injunctions, as Mademoiselle Bertin must have assured you at Fontainebleau. I am doing my utmost to adapt myself to my sad lot in the privacy of my apartments. Now that I have laid aside my sabre and my uniform, I am as embarrassed as a fox which has lost its tail. I try to walk in pointed shoes with high heels, but I have more than once nearly broken my neck; and instead of making a courtesy I frequently remove my wig and my three-tiered headdress, mistaking them for my hat or my helmet. I am not unlike Catherine Petrovna, whom Peter the Great carried away by force from a guard-house at the siege of Derpt, and exhibited at his court before she had been taught to walk on her two hind legs."

D'Eon, to judge by his contemporaries, did not exaggerate the ridiculous aspect of his new accoutrements, and if, as he himself said, it is difficult to change in a day one's "garments, resolutions, opinions, language, complexion, fashion, tone, and behaviour," he at least found consolation in eccentricity and affectation for the physical discomfort he experienced. Nevertheless, he led a

retired life in the Rue de Conti, at Versailles, having politely declined the invitation of the *Sieur Jamin*, a priest of Fontainebleau, who, "without having the honour of his acquaintance," offered him, "in the event of his coming to court at Fontainebleau, extremely agreeable lodgings, not for gaiety but for walks in the forest," and assured his guest "that his incognito would be respected there, and that he would be at liberty to dress as he thought fit." The kind invitation of this "pious person" did not tempt d'Eon, who was not yet prepared to brave the curiosity of the court. He was anxious, moreover, to make that event as dramatic as possible, and set his wits to work to insure its success. A few months before his arrival in France, he had asked *M. de la Chèvre* to act as "his herald," and the latter boasted of having "prepared the way with the greatest possible enthusiasm and with indefatigable zeal." There was also a certain *Sieur Dupré*, formerly tutor to two English noblemen, who "had opened the eyes of a large number of people, at the *Chevalier Lambert's* and the *Vicomte de Choiseul's*." "They have not yet recovered from their surprise," he wrote to d'Eon, "and come to me for an explanation of this political phenomenon; if I were not so well informed I should frequently be at a loss for an answer." D'Eon, who was now quite enjoying this masquerade, was everywhere, countenancing all reports, discreetly receiving some of his old acquaintances, and informing his influential friends of his return to France.

I am delighted to hear, sir, that you are back in France (wrote the *Duc de Broglie* in reply), and that

you are able to enjoy, in the bosom of your family, the tranquillity of which you have been so long deprived.

The Dowager Countess d'Ons-en-Bray, wife of President Legendre, who had known d'Eon from his early childhood, and was naturally one of the first to be informed of his return, could not help smiling when she pictured the man whom she had known as a law student, an expert fencer and a gallant secretary of the embassy in the petticoats of the Chevalière. She consequently received the new adventure, of which the hero gave her an amusing account, with the utmost incredulity.

Your letter (she replied) made me laugh—at your sallies until I cried, and for joy because you had not forgotten me, Mademoiselle or Monsieur—I am afraid of telling a lie. I admit I am still sceptical on the subject of your metamorphosis, and yet I will not take the liberty of clearing my doubts by following the example of the good apostle Thomas. Mademoiselle, be it so ; it makes it easier for me to tell you how eagerly I look forward to seeing you again on your return from Versailles. I am sending these proofs of my gratitude for your remembrance to that town, as I do not know where your feminine charms are residing in Paris. Are they adorned with feathers ? In my opinion the only headdress suitable to you is that of Mars, whom you resemble as far as courage and disposition are concerned. The two rivals whose acquaintance you desire to renew are with me at present. They are more than ever anxious to see you, as you may imagine, and one of them, a big boy who occupies your old apartment, would certainly be pleased to share it with you ; but as a mother of a family who must look after her household I should

have to be quite sure you were a dragoon before inviting you to associate day and night with my children. As it is, they will restrict themselves to the attentions due to the fair sex, and are keeping some sugar-sticks for you, to cure your lungs which are affected at present by atmospheric influences. Take good care of your health, Mademoiselle, and in whatever shape you may make your reappearance in our midst, rest assured that we shall always be greatly interested in your welfare in memory of past proofs of your attachment, which will ever be an earnest of mine.

As incredulous as Madame d'Ons-en-Bray with regard to the change of sex, Madame Tercier, widow of Louis XV.'s former secret minister who had so long corresponded with d'Eon, was surprised not to have seen the Chevalier again since his return, and reproached him sharply for not having yet called on the Comte de Broglie, while apparently guessing the cause of his hesitation.

I am not astonished to hear (she wrote) that you find it so difficult to accustom yourself to the new disguise which you are about to assume, and which inconveniences and embarrasses you, as well it may. In the estimation of your friends you will ever be a brave man and a faithful subject; they will love you equally well, and will value your friendship, no matter how you dress. I beg you will put me at the head of your most devoted friends, and likewise all the members of my family, who send many kind regards.

Madame Tercier's friendly reproaches and affectionate messages had not the desired effect, d'Eon remaining in

his lair, as he said, "like a fox without a tail." Nor did Madame d'Ons-en-Bray's barley-sugar succeed in curing the cold which kept him so opportunely confined to his room. Embarrassed in his petticoats, he remained invisible. Meanwhile, the report of his arrival, his adventures, and his strange transformation rapidly spread beyond the somewhat restricted circle of his intimate friends and soon reached the ears of the Queen, who was immediately seized with a desire to see this modern Amazon. "She sent a footman," relates Madame Campan, "to tell my father to bring the Chevalier to her apartments. My father thought it his duty first to inform the minister of her Majesty's desire. The Comte de Vergennes expressed his approval of this prudent course and bade him accompany him. The minister conferred with the Queen for a few minutes, after which her Majesty left her apartment with him, and, seeing my father in the adjoining room, was good enough to express her regret for having disturbed him to no purpose. She added, with a smile, that a few words which the Comte de Vergennes had just said to her had cured her completely of her curiosity." If, in spite of the King's official recognition of his new sex, d'Eon was not received in private audience by the Queen, he did not hesitate to show his new garments at Versailles, and chanced on several occasions to be in the galleries of the palace when their Majesties passed through. On October 21, 1777, the Feast of St. Ursula, as he takes care devoutly to record, the Chevalier d'Eon, late captain of dragoons and minister plenipotentiary from France to London, "resumed his first

robe of innocence to make his appearance at Versailles, in conformity with the injunctions of the King and his ministers." The entry of this "political phenomenon," or of this "amphibian," as Voltaire most contemptuously called him, created a sensation at court. Everybody wished to see the extraordinary woman, who was plainly dressed and adorned merely with a Cross of Saint Louis, won on the battlefield as well as in embassies.

Some, formerly enemies of Choiseul, delighted in contributing to the success of the Comte de Guerchy's fiery adversary ; but the majority, impelled by curiosity, chiefly showed perplexity at the sight of this pathological wonder, who, with all the appearance and the manners of a man, professed to be a woman. Several contemporaries have described d'Eon as they saw him on that occasion, and it must be admitted that their portraits are far from flattering. "She looks more than ever like a man now that she is a woman," asserted a newspaper of the time, with reference to the Chevalier. "Indeed, it is impossible to believe that a person who shaves and has a beard ; whose proportions and muscular development are herculean ; who jumps in and out of a carriage without assistance and goes upstairs four steps at a time, belongs to the female sex. . . . She dresses in black. Her hair is cut in a circle, like a priest's, and is plastered with pomade, powdered, and surmounted by a black cap, such as pious ladies wear. She still wears flat, round heels, being unaccustomed to the high, narrow ones worn by women." D'Eon, in whom the elegant and fashionable paper recognises none of the

charms of the fair sex, had not wished to carry his masquerade too far; but if he abstained from using rouge, which was still in vogue, he does not appear to have been entirely free from feminine coquetry, sometimes wearing "black dresses *en raz de Saint Maur*," more often "sky-blue skirts with narrow, puce-coloured stripes," or even, "reddish-brown figured twill skirts," as we gather from the accounts of Mademoiselle Maillot, his dressmaker. But in spite of his efforts to attain elegance, d'Eon remained supremely ridiculous. "The long train of his gown and his triple row of ruffles" contrasted so unhappily with "his deportment and behaviour, which were those of a grenadier, that he had an air of unmistakable vulgarity." Such are the unkind terms in which Madame Campan expresses herself in her *Mémoires*, which she wrote after d'Eon's death, at a time when, enlightened as to the Chevalier's real sex, she could not entirely conceal her vexation at having been hoaxed by one whom she and her family had befriended.

The opinion of d'Eon's contemporaries on his appearance, his attire and his manner is, moreover, as unanimous as it is unflattering. "However plain, however prudish her large black head-dress may be," says Grimm in his *Correspondance Littéraire*, under date of October 25, 1777, "it is difficult to conceive anything more extraordinary, and, if it must be said, more indecent, than Mademoiselle d'Eon in petticoats." The Abbé Georgel, secretary to the famous Cardinal de Rohan, who was introduced to the Chevalière, sketches her portrait in his *Mémoires* with a few touches of the pen.

“ Her garments, to which she could not accustom herself,” he writes, “ gave her so awkward and embarrassed an appearance, that she only made one forget that defect by her flashes of wit and her very humorous account of her adventures.”

The transformation naturally created great astonishment ; but, apart from a few inhabitants of Tonnerre, who had excellent reasons for not changing their first opinion, did not meet with obstinate incredulity. The sex henceforth official of the Chevalière d'Eon was accepted and respected. The person most interested lent himself, moreover, to corroborating it, and the very embarrassment which he affected, as well as his reluctance to adapt himself to his new life, were but masterly artifices for further concealing his subterfuge. Besides ensuring his safety in France and the payment of a pension which was now his only resource, his masquerade obtained for him a revival of that popularity of which he had always been passionately fond. From the day of his presentation at court his popularity steadily increased, growing to that extraordinary celebrity which, at the present day, still preserves his name from oblivion. He became at this time the subject of every conversation, exciting universal curiosity. The most inflated letters of congratulation and the most extravagant tokens of admiration reached him from strangers, wonder-struck by his amazing adventure, while his old friends assailed him with extremely humorous notes. One of them, the Duc de Chaulnes, who had known him in London in the heat of his contentions with Guerchy, wrote to him, with reference to the latest events :

I do not know if the Chevalière d'Eon recollects having seen the Chevalier d'Eon, surrounded by grenadiers, giving, in 1764, a page of the *Guerchiade* to the Duc de Picquigny; but I *do* know that the Duc de Chaulnes remembers it full well, and likewise his or her—for I no longer know where I am—handsome behaviour towards him. I am very much inclined to think, for instance, that your mutual friend will find much more of the Chevalier in the Chevalière than he desires. As for me, who am only a good-natured man, and your neighbour, I would fain know at what hour I may come and talk with Mademoiselle for a few moments, as I was wont to talk with Monsieur. As you have quite recently retired from politics, perhaps you will prefer to come to my house, which is only a few steps distant from yours. But I would rather spare you the trouble, provided, however, it be neither to-morrow, Saturday, nor Monday. I hope you will excuse these ifs and buts, which are quite out of place in a letter destined to express my profound gratitude for all the kindness you have shown me and for the friendship of the late Chevalier. I trust, Mademoiselle, you will do justice to my respect.

D'Eon's friends did not, indeed, know "where they were," nor what style to assume. In a gracious letter of invitation to supper, the Marquise Le Camus, deeming his "society unquestionably desirable," began as follows:—

Brave Being, had I your facility for writing, I should not be in difficulties at the first word. I have, therefore, sought for the epithet which I think most suitable to what you deserve. I hope you will approve of my attributing to you no precise sex, by placing you above both, for fear of making a mistake.

Those who had known d'Eon from his early childhood, and had never lost sight of him during his adventurous career, were still more embarrassed. Such was the case of Madame Campan's father, M. Genêt, chief clerk at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, who confessed with kindly irony that the French language was wanting in epithets adapted to the condition of his strange correspondent. "In order to avoid styling cardinals *Monseigneur* as they demand," he says, "dukes write to them in Italian; and I, unique being, whose model I find only among the gods of the ancients, will make use of the English tongue, the appellatives of which have no precise gender, and which scarcely acknowledges any female besides a cat and a ship, to address you in a manner worthy of you and the sublime mysteries of which you are the emblem. I will therefore call you: *My Dear Friend*, meaning thereby: *mon cher ou ma chère amie, ad libitum.*"

Those who had met "little d'Eon" at the Prince de Conti's, in the fine reception rooms of the Temple, when he was seeking his fortune and his fate, reminded the illustrious Chevalière of their acquaintance in begging to be received. He himself, still imperturbable, continued to play his part of fashionable phenomenon, and felt a supercilious satisfaction in duping his contemporaries, or, at least, in exciting their astonishment. Some he beguiled by his account of the dramatic events in which he had been implicated; others he captivated by racy stories told with inexhaustible animation. His odd manners never became tiresome, and he was ever in request, his friends finding it difficult to tear themselves away.

I am leaving with the regret of not having been able to offer you my tribute of admiration (wrote the Chevalier de Bonnard, tutor to the Duc de Chartres' children). I enclose a letter from my aunt, your cousin. I shall tell her, in three days' time, that I have seen you, and that you surpass your great reputation. She will congratulate herself, no doubt, and will be distressed on my account that I have not availed myself longer and more often of a piece of good fortune which I fully appreciate.

The interest and curiosity which d'Eon had aroused had not won for him merely success at court. The report of his adventure had carried his name far beyond the frontiers. In England, where he had particularly attracted attention, the public were curious to know every detail. Miss Wilkes, who, in an interesting note which has already been reproduced, had asked d'Eon from the first to let her know the truth, inquired of the Baron de Castille what sort of reception the celebrated Chevalière had met with at Versailles, and the baron in sending "extremely tender messages" to d'Eon, from the Lord Mayor's daughter, added: "I have replied to Miss Wilkes, my dear heroine; I interpreted your sentiments and, as a witness of your success at court, I told her many things about you."

The echoes of the affair coming from London and Paris had aroused the sceptical curiosity "of the old valetudinarian of Ferney," who anxiously questioned his faithful friend, the Comte d'Argental, concerning the true condition of a guest who had very indiscreetly announced his intention of paying a visit to the famous patriarch of French literature.

I absolutely must speak to you about the amphibious creature who is neither male nor female, and is at the present moment, I am told, dressed as a woman, wearing the order of Saint Louis on her bodice, and enjoying, like yourself, a pension of 12,000 francs. Is all that quite true? I do not think you are likely to be one of his friends if he be of your own sex, nor one of his lovers if he be of the other. You are better able than anybody else to explain this mystery to me. He or she has sent me word by an Englishman of my acquaintance, that he or she is coming to Ferney, and I am much embarrassed in consequence. I entreat you to solve this enigma for me.

D'Eon's old comrades in the dragoons had not shown any particular incredulity, though he had led their life in the army, and they heartily welcomed the new heroine. The Baron de Bréget, at one time captain in d'Autichamp's regiment, who had campaigned with him on the Rhine, asked him, a few months after the change, if he might "flatter himself that he still lived in the remembrance of his former brother-in-arms."

I only returned from the seat of war a week ago (he wrote), and I hasten to beg my good friend to allow me to call and pay my renewed homage. I most respectfully entreat Mademoiselle d'Eon to permit me frankly and heartily to embrace my old comrade in the regiment.

In a letter written at the same time, the Comte de Chambry, another captain in the same regiment, bitterly reproached d'Eon for not having informed him of his return.

I hope (he added) to find in the Chevalière d'Eon the same feelings of friendship as in the captain of dragoons. . . . As for me, in whatever form he appears, I shall always take the same interest in him, and am eager to assure him myself of the fact.

The Marquis d'Autichamp, colonel and owner of the regiment in which d'Eon had served, had been one of the first to be apprised by the latter of his metamorphosis.

It is but too true, my dear and gallant Colonel (the Chevalier had written), that, compelled to obey the command of the King and of the law, I have resumed my gown, for the edification of weak-minded persons who were scandalised by the great liberty taken by a young girl who, from prudence, had hidden and entrenched her virtue in your regiment of dragoons, in order that it might be better protected. My stratagem having been discovered, proved, and made public in a Court of Justice, people were surprised to find that I am still a woman. Consequently, the Court, as a reward or punishment, forces me to end my days as I began them, *en cornette* (mob-cap).

Whereupon the gallant colonel at once answered :

I was much attached to you when you were a captain of dragoons. The new form you have assumed has never prejudiced you in my estimation, and although it forces me to respect you all the more, it does not deprive me of the pleasure of loving you, and I hasten to assure you of both these sentiments.

The same feeling of kindly credulity, the same affectionate expressions are found in the letters of all d'Eon's

old brother officers, and bear witness to the pleasant impression he had made on them. The case, though extraordinary, had seemed to them credible ; moreover, it was not without a precedent, as the Baron de Castille hastened to inform the Chevalière in the following letter :

Madame de Laubespain will tell you of the girl-dragon of the regiment of Belzunce, who has again been to see me this morning. He is most anxious to be introduced to you, and I am convinced that you will find him interesting. He is twenty-seven years old, is nearly five foot five, and has a pleasant face and a beautiful, well-dressed head of hair. He is a junior officer at the Invalides, and wears the insignia of a veteran. The Duc d'Aiguillon gave him the two crossed swords when he was discovered upon receiving a sword-thrust in his hip. He was presented by the Prince de Beauvau to the late King, when hunting at Fontainebleau, and he asked him many questions.

It seems, too, that the adventure of the famous Chevalière had turned the heads of several ladies. Among his papers d'Eon left a whole bundle of letters written to him by "young women of exceptional height," desirous "of changing their sex as far as appearance was concerned," in order to be able to enlist and serve in the army. The bundle also included the epistles addressed to him by a few madmen, disturbed, as often happens, by the revelation of a curious personality.

This odd collection, together with notes from his friends, his old comrades, and even strangers who wrote to him directly after his return, leaves no doubt whatever

as to the astonishment which the affair excited, and the amazing credulity with which it was generally accepted.

While d'Eon's unbounded vanity found endless satisfaction in this unhopèd-for welcome, the ministers who had flattered themselves that the avowal of his sex and his compulsory change of attire would be accompanied by the resumption of all needful propriety and consideration, were obliged to acknowledge that they had been strangely mistaken. Not only did d'Eon, in his new costume, attract everybody's attention; but, unable to accustom himself to headdresses, stays and petticoats, he began, notwithstanding the King's prohibition, to dress frequently as a man again. To prevent a fresh scandal, M. de Vergennes decided to give to the extravagant Chevalière a vigilant guardian. M. Genêt, chief clerk at the Foreign Office, a friend of d'Eon's and also a Burgundian, seemed the very person for this difficult task. On his estate at Petit-Montreuil, in the immediate neighbourhood of the Comte de Polignac and of M. de Vergennes, he happened to have a pretty cottage, where the petulant Chevalière might be able to resign herself to the quiet existence which she was expected to lead. It was thought that she would find the society of Madame Genêt and her daughters, all attached to the service of the Queen, less austere than that of the Ursuline, Bernardine or Augustine sisters, into one of whose convents she had offered to retire in the first joy of her return. Genêt, therefore, urged her to join his family, and had the quarters of his "illustrious heroine" repaired in great haste. There being prospects of a severe winter, he tried to tempt her by the promise

of "very warm rooms" in her little house. "How I dislike to see you," he said, "boxed up as you are!" Such tender pressure did not easily overcome d'Eon's reluctance to submit to a guardianship in which he recognised the will of the minister. Consequently he hesitated a long time, and only decided towards the middle of December to accept the hospitality of the kindly Burgundian family, in whose midst he was received with cordiality.

From that day the relations between d'Eon and the Genêts and Campans naturally became more intimate, and led to a daily exchange of kind offices, which we find mentioned in d'Eon's papers. One day M. Campan thanked him very pompously for an essay on natural history, which he considered "pleasantly conceived, but rather long"; d'Eon, it is true, was not addicted to brevity. Another time, Madame Campan asked d'Eon, in a most affected style, for a simple remedy against deafness for the princes. The Queen's woman of the bedchamber, who had not yet the grievance against d'Eon of having been duped by him, overwhelmed him with invitations. "On April 24, 1778, the whole Genêt family," she writes, "are coming to spend the evening at M. Campan's. She would be overjoyed if Mademoiselle d'Eon would do them the honour of accompanying them; she would only meet her old friends at supper, and Madame Campan begs that she will come without the least ceremony."

D'Eon was present at all the parties arranged by the Queen's women of the bedchamber. If, perchance, he refused to accompany them, Sophie Genêt would des-

patch a note to him, in her schoolgirlish hand, to entreat him to reconsider his decision ; at the same time she dreaded being importunate, "for that would mean sadness to her hosts." When they went on a visit to their Uncle Genêt de Charmontaut at his charming seat at Mainville, near Melun, word was at once sent to d'Eon, who allowed himself to be persuaded by such pressing invitations. So entirely did he captivate the modest lord of the manor, that the latter could not find words flattering enough to thank him for coming, nor terms humble enough to excuse his frugal hospitality.

D'Eon always showed gratitude to the family which had received him so cordially. Very faithful in his friendships, he was equally generous, notwithstanding his small means. He was constantly sending to them various Burgundian produce from Tonnerre ; truffles, at that time highly prized and not much known ; venison, and especially wine from his own vineyards, which M. Amelot, the Comte de Vergennes, and the Duc de Chaulnes, as they themselves admitted, liked particularly.

I have received, my dear friend (wrote Genêt), two delicious presents from you in one week, both calculated to rejoice the heart—namely, your portrait as a dragoon, which M. Bradel has sent to me, and with which I am much pleased, and a cask of your excellent wine. We shall place the portrait on the table while drinking your health. You are aware of our devotion to you, and we rely on your friendship, knowing, as we do, the kindness of your heart.

But d'Eon was able to prove his attachment better than by these small attentions ; for with the prudence and authority of a dowager, who takes pleasure in the part she is acting, he succeeded in bringing about the happiness of one of his young friends, Adelaide Genêt, if we may rely on a letter which she wrote to him the day after her marriage with M. Auguié. According to M. Genêt, it was "a successful piece of work, which was crowned beyond all expectation" by the Queen herself.

D'Eon must have found his patriarchal life very monotonous, and after a few weeks "the charm of Petit-Montreuil covered with snow" vanished. He could think of nothing but fame, success and publicity, and avoided with difficulty the attention of these unimportant people who wished to meet this strange prodigy. His fame was then universal, and everywhere people were courting a heroine who was as modest as she was brave, and whom her contemporaries could only compare to Joan of Arc or Jeanne Hachette.

D'Eon had so ardently wished for and so cleverly planned this apotheosis that, of course, he meant to play a part in it. So he never missed an opportunity of escaping from his retreat ; and, as Genêt said of him, "he was as fond of Paris as any dandy." Among his old acquaintances, the Comtesse de Boufflers, the witty mistress of the Prince de Conti, "the idol of the Temple," as Madame du Deffand called her, had been one of the first to express a wish to meet again the former minister plenipotentiary by whose side she had done the honours of the embassy in London :

M. d'Usson has told me, Mademoiselle, that you have not forgotten that we had the pleasure of meeting you in England, and that you seemed anxious to renew the acquaintance then begun. I, too, am most anxious to see again one who will be for ever famous on account of the remarkable events of her life as well as her many great qualities, and I shall be delighted if you will come and dine with me at the Temple next Friday.

In truth the audacious adventurer had become the favourite guest, the "lion" for whose presence at their receptions hostesses contended. On the little invitation-cards, which d'Eon religiously kept, appear the names of the cleverest women and the most distinguished people. The most inaccessible drawing-rooms opened their doors to this phenomenon, and not one of the least curious signs of the levity of the eighteenth century may be found in this childish credulity of a society which openly paraded its scepticism. The decadent and exhausted intellects of that period, divorced from all serious ideas and indifferent to both the advancement of science and to the beauty of art, concerned themselves with nothing but the bizarre. At a time when they were unable to read the signs of the tremendous social upheaval which was germinating around them, idlers at the court and unattached officers made *bon-mots* and told highly spiced stories for the amusement of the ladies who held what was known as a *bureau d'esprit*.

D'Eon excelled in this kind of thing ; his imagination, his inexhaustible spirits, his unexpected sallies made his audience forget the occasional coarseness of his oft-

told tales. He attracted, in short, by a carefully guarded and mysterious eccentricity. He was even liked for the admirably feigned modesty which made him appear only at small social gatherings; for he prided himself on avoiding inquisitive people, and on being so indifferent to the attention he attracted that his friends found it necessary to press him to keep his engagements.

“The Duc de Luynes is longing to see you, and so is his father-in-law, M. de Laval,” wrote his friend Reine. “He told me he had asked you to dine with him; since you are in Paris, do go to see the Duchess, and be so good as to present our respects to her.”

If it seems strange that he should have received invitations, couched in most courteous terms, from the Comte de la Rochefoucauld, M. de Villaine, the Marquis de Chaponay, the Vicomtesse de Breteuil; that he should have become the assiduous guest of the Duchesse de Montmorency and the Vicomte de la Ferté, is it not stranger still that this extraordinary person had the entry of the drawing-rooms of the upper middle classes and of the legal notabilities, who formed at that time a very cultured and exclusive society? He excited the same curiosity among these people; and Talon, Fraguier, Tascher, Tanlay, Nicolai, d’Agnesseau were all anxious to entertain him and sent their coaches to fetch him.

One day the Comte de Polignac “begs him to come to his garret in the Tuileries and share an informal meal in military fashion. The Chevalière,” he adds, “will find there some good coffee preceded by cutlets, also a man of her acquaintance whom she will be glad to see.

Everything will be served to the minute and without any fuss." Another time the Baron de Castille tells him of the famous Cardinal de Rohan's desire to know the Chevalière.

"I have given your address to Prince Louis," he informs him; "he will either call on you while you are at Versailles, or request you to call on him; the short time he had at his disposal in Paris did not allow of his going to see you." On Wednesday, March 11, 1778, as he carefully enters in a diary most scrupulously kept from day to day, d'Eon lunched with Voltaire. The day which he began with such a curious interview was strangely crowded with engagements, for he dined with the Comtesse de Béarn, and then proceeded to Madame de Marchais for supper. At this time he had already left Petit-Montreuil and settled down in the Rue de Conti, where he found it easier to lead the life which he neither could nor wished to avoid. His reception at court was as flattering as his reception in town. He attended the gala performances, which he watched from the box of Madame de Marchais, whose husband had been formerly gentleman of the bedchamber to Louis XV. Judging by the portrait he has left, d'Eon particularly admired her:

"She is an amiable little woman," he says, "very witty, extremely pretty, and well made, with fair hair that reaches down to her heels, large blue eyes, and teeth as white as ivory. She was," he goes on to say, "the friend of the late Marquise de Pompadour. She is a candlelight beauty who spends her days in the bath, in reading or writing, in her boudoir or at her toilet. She

is only to be seen at night, or after the play at Court is over, when company meets at her house to partake of a delicious supper."

D'Eon seems, in fact, as his little diary shows, to have admired the charming hostess no less than he appreciated her suppers. He spent most of his evenings at her house, and when, occasionally, he did not make his appearance, the little coterie which he enlivened by his gaiety was quite anxious about his health. If news reached them that he was ill, all the ladies hastened to his house. "Princess Sapieha, inquiring after him, sends to him the calabash syrup which she has recommended to him, and she sincerely hopes it will help to cure him." On another occasion the Marquis de Comeiras, major-general of the King's armies, acted as spokesman for d'Eon's intimate friends, and expressed their anxiety in the following terms :—

I was more grieved than astonished, dear comrade, to hear, yesterday, that your throat was bad, that you had asked to be excused from going to Madame de Brige's, and that she had sent you some broth. I told all that to Madame de Marchais last night : she at once wanted to send you some soup, another lady some beef-tea. . . . The Princesse de Montbarrey is very anxious to see you at her house ; I have promised to mention this to you. They flatter me very much, my dear old comrade, by thinking that you are at my disposal. The fair sex, wishing to see their heroine, is constantly speaking to me of her.

Indeed d'Eon's popularity was at its height, and he did his best to sustain it. Conceiving the idea of handing

down to posterity the record of his exploits, he set about composing a series of fantastic accounts of his resumption of feminine dress, and also some important notes relating to the negotiations in which he had taken part. These various projects were not published, and are contained in the voluminous collection of his papers, d'Eon contenting himself with offering to the admiration of his contemporaries *The Military, Political, and Private Life of Mademoiselle d'Eon, known until 1777 by the Name of Chevalier d'Eon*. He himself edited the greater part, which appeared in the *Fastes Militaires*; but the signature of M. de la Fortelle, which figures on the title-page of the work, enabled the Chevalier to sing his own praises—praises to which he considered himself honestly entitled—without infringing the laws of modesty. Three thousand copies were specially printed off and sold in England, or distributed among friends, to whom the donor also sent his portrait, either engraved or etched.

All the engravers of the time were anxious to reproduce the features of the heroic Chevalière, who, of course, took good care not to refuse them such a favour. D'Eon was portrayed as a dragoon, with a helmet or a cocked hat; half-length, full-length or on horseback; as a woman, supplied with an elegant bust, bedecked with lace, and wearing a very fascinating cap; or as a dowager, soberly dressed in a tight-fitting black bodice, relieved by the Cross of Saint Louis. Other prints represent him as Minerva, wearing a sort of morion which is anything but antique, and on which the owl, the goddess's emblem, has been replaced by the cock, which figures in the coat-of-arms of the d'Eon family. But equally inter-

esting are the emblems, the inscriptions and the mottoes that surround these portraits. D'Eon, who prided himself on his learning as well as his courage, borrowed from antiquity the most pompous allusions from the classics, boldly inscribed round his own portrait the lines that the Latin poets had consecrated to the most redoubtable heroes and to the most fiery amazons of Greece and Rome. These prints, of which there were many and various, met with great success and are still much sought after.

They were to be found at Bradel's studio, or at the shop of Esnault and Rapilly ; but the hero himself circulated them with the utmost liberality. He had one engraved for his old comrades : "Dedicated to the Dragoons," ran the inscription, and they delighted in studying the features of the illustrious captain, and in making of his exploits an inspiring example. At least that is what was asserted by the Abbé Moullet de Monbar, chaplain of the regiment of Ségur's dragoons.

I have not the happiness of seeing you, Mademoiselle (he wrote to d'Eon), but I enjoy seeing your portrait, which attracts many visitors to my room, where it is the only ornament. This portrait penetrates my very soul when I gaze upon it. I see before me a heroine greater than the amazons and all the celebrated women of antiquity, a soldier full of spirit and daring, a faithful and patriotic minister plenipotentiary, who commands respect for his king and himself ; I see before me an illustrious and interesting character, who will prove a perplexing phenomenon for the ages to come.

The thanks received from persons of high rank, though

expressed in a less pompous style, were not less ardent or less flattering. Chancellor Maupeon wrote: "This attention from you has given me great pleasure; be assured, Mademoiselle, that nothing could exceed the esteem and affection I feel for you."

The Duc de Guines, former ambassador of France in London, received "with much gratitude the present" which he had asked of d'Eon through the medium of the Comtesse de Broglie, his sister-in-law. As for the personal friends of the Chevalier, they never tired of the prints which he heaped on them, and praised to the full the charm of Latour's pastel or the bold grace of Bradel's engraving. "Your print is superb," exclaimed Genêt, "particularly about the eyes, which are those of Bellona herself. The look is as haughty as if you were face to face with Beaumarchais. I defy him to bear it. Truth and honesty shine from it, and it is the thunderbolt which will annihilate him."

Since death had delivered him from de Guerchy, d'Eon had found in Beaumarchais a new and no less determined adversary. Their quarrel had arisen just as that to which the ambassador had fallen a victim—out of a question of money. D'Eon did not hesitate to proclaim aloud that he had been duped by Beaumarchais, and that at the time of their covenant the latter had appropriated a sum of 60,000 livres, which was to have been set apart for indemnifying Lord Ferrers. This allegation, to which d'Eon gave considerable publicity, was welcomed by the enemies of the author of *The Barber of Seville*, who, naturally enough, were many. The complacently-told story of the ridiculous romance by which he allowed

himself to be carried away for a time, set court and town shaking with laughter. For once the celebrated pamphleteer was obliged to admit that the laughter was not with him, and, after having so often diverted himself at the expense of his contemporaries, he had to endure their raillery. Certain impromptu comedies which were performed at that time in fashionable circles, and some burlesques inspired by the carnival, which represented him as engaged in making love to the virile Chevalière, exasperated him beyond measure. The point was all the more telling as d'Eon amused himself by acting his own part—that of an artless maiden—with an improvised Beaumarchais. Seeing himself held up to ridicule in this manner, and accused of such incredible blindness, Beaumarchais was put out of countenance, and completely lost his temper. Not knowing how to retaliate, he complained to M. de Vergennes, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, begging him to vindicate his character from the calumnies that were being publicly circulated about him :

As long as the Demoiselle d'Eon contented herself with writing ill of me to you in reference to the services I rendered her in England, or of sending word to you to the same effect, I treated her ingratitude with silent contempt, as you are aware, regretting her folly without complaining. I concealed her faults and attributed them to the weakness of a sex to which all is forgiven. . . . Now she no longer tries to injure me from a distance, nor in writing ; but in Paris, in the best houses, where she is received out of curiosity, and even at dinner, before lacqueys, she is base enough to accuse me of having

appropriated 60,000 livres, which sum, she says, was a portion of the money confided to me for her use. . . . I do not wish the Demoiselle d'Eon to be punished, I pardon her ; but I entreat his Majesty to permit me to make my justification as public as the insult which has been offered to me.

Beaumarchais had no trouble in obtaining the vindication which he desired. M. de Vergennes wrote to him a most flattering letter, giving him permission to publish it ; making acknowledgments to the great scrupulousness of the negotiator who "without claiming the reimbursement of his personal expenses, had, throughout the transaction, shown no other interest than that of facilitating the Demoiselle d'Eon's return to her native land."

Beaumarchais was too well pleased with this testimony not to hasten to publish it, adding thereto, by way of postscript, an open letter addressed to d'Eon, in which he showed himself disdainful if generous :

May this gentle treatment, which you so little deserve, make you reflect seriously and teach you to govern yourself, since the many services rendered by me have neither inspired you with justice nor with gratitude. Such a change of conduct is necessary to your own peace of mind, believe me, who while pardoning would rue the day when first I met you, if it were possible to regret having placed ingratitude personified under obligation.

The author of *The Barber of Seville* had only sought to justify himself before the public by issuing those documents, for he knew his adversary too well to entertain the hope of reducing him so easily to silence. Brought

before the tribunal of public opinion, whose approval he had ever courted, stung to the quick by Beaumarchais' disdain, humiliated by the minister's offensive language, d'Eon replied at once with malicious irony. His letter to the Comte de Vergennes is too long to be cited here in full ; but a few passages will be sufficient to indicate the tone :

Now that I have obeyed the King's commands by resuming female attire on the feast day of St. Ursula ; now that I am living in tranquillity and peace in the habit of a vestal, and that I have completely forgotten Caron and his boat, judge of my surprise in receiving an epistle from the said Caron, enclosing copies, duly certified, of a letter he addressed to you, and of your reply.

Although I know my Beaumarchais by heart, I must admit, Monseigneur, that his imposture and the way he sets about causing its acceptance have nevertheless astonished me.

Was it not M. de Beaumarchais who, unable to persuade me to be dishonest and to support him in his speculations on my sex, spread the report all over Paris that he was to marry me after I had spent seven months at the Abbey of the Ladies of St. Anthony, when, as a fact, he was within an inch of being espoused to my cane, while in London ? But his name alone is a remedy against nuptial love ; the acheronic ring about it would frighten any *dragonne*, however resolute she might be.

I must warn you, Monseigneur, that fictitious Demoiselles d'Eon, wearing the order of Saint Louis, have made their appearance in more than one fashionable house in Paris. They were jesters who said the most absurd things about all the acquaintances of the real Chevalière

d'Eon, but chiefly with reference to the agreeable, honourable, and courageous Pierre-Augustin-Caron de Beaumarchais. . . . This scene, of which there have been an infinite number of variations, was repeated, I am told, last week, while I was quietly working and sleeping in my retreat at Petit-Montreuil. Does M. de Beaumarchais, so fond of hoaxing others, desire to have the monopoly of such a privilege ? . . .

Let me tell you, Monseigneur, that all the integrity of the four ministers joined to your own, even adding to it that of the chief clerks, would fail to make an honest man of M. de Beaumarchais in this business. The searching light which his past conduct throws on his character has compelled me much to my regret to class him with those by whom one must be hated in order to retain any self-respect.

To add further to the irony of this curious epistle, and to win over to his cause the sex whose heroine he flattered himself he had become, d'Eon, assuming the tone of an outraged woman, ended the letter with a most fantastic invocation which he entitled :

The Appeal of Mademoiselle d'Eon to her Contemporaries

M. de Beaumarchais has sought to deprive me of that consideration so conducive to my peaceful existence. I put him to confusion by ridiculing his impotent rage. He is a Thersites who should be whipped for having dared to be insolent to his betters, whom he ought to respect. I denounce and abandon him to the whole feminine sex of my time, as one who would fain have exalted himself at the expense of a woman, and avenged his frustrated hopes by humiliating a woman, who, of all others, has at heart the glory of her sex.

This appeal to the feelings and pride of her feminine contemporaries met with a ready response, and d'Eon, who had not failed to scatter broadcast the newspapers which published this strange polemic, received the heartiest congratulations from far and near. "The elevation of her sentiments" were contrasted with "the horror with which her antagonist fills all thinking and sentient persons." "Unaware of the motives which prompt the Minister for Foreign Affairs to employ such an agent," wrote a contemporary of d'Eon, "I think it desirable that he should at least prevent his encouraging imitators. Mankind were too much to be pitied if Beaumarchais should form others after his own pattern."

At Caen, "where all the honest folk of the province wished to see him," his malicious appeal met with great success. "I received it at the house of the Comtesse de la Tournelle," wrote a certain Count d'Ormesson, "where all the nobility of the neighbourhood were assembled, as there have been balls and theatrical performances for four successive days. I cannot describe the effect it produced. Everybody was delighted with your style and the simple and straightforward way in which you tell your adversary his faults."

The bitter enmity which Beaumarchais had brought down on himself in every quarter had doubtless contributed to d'Eon's success; yet that would not of itself entirely explain the interest which attached to the most insignificant doings of the Chevalière. In spite of his eccentric behaviour, and the scandal he created, d'Eon had succeeded in pleasing serious and soberminded people, while at the same time he won over the populace

by his art of self-advertisement. His keen perception had gauged the power of the press, then still in its infancy, and since his residence in England he had not ceased to exploit himself in the newspapers. No doubt he shared with many others the merit of having bravely done his duty on the field of battle; but such modest deeds, already made much of when they were known to have been accomplished by a woman, had become exaggerated, in the flattering brilliancy of enthusiastic accounts, into veritable triumphs. "The Chevalière was a unique heroine, whose whole life belonged to her contemporaries." Such was certainly d'Eon's opinion. Accordingly, no sooner had his dispute with Beaumarchais subsided than he thought it necessary to announce in a rhodomontade, which now appears absurdly pompous, the verdict of the Lord Chief Justice, annulling the decision as to the validity of the wagers regarding his sex. Men of affairs and scholars even did not hesitate to congratulate the illustrious Chevalière. M. de Lalande, with the gravity befitting an astronomer and an academician, wrote to her :

I heartily rejoiced when I saw that you had subjected England to the laws of honour, while at the same time punishing in France the rashness of the man who would have feared the Chevalier, but thought he might brave the Chevalière. Your jests are at once as bitter and amusing as your style is noble and majestic when you write to a minister. Permit me, Mademoiselle, to send this letter to you by one of my friends who has never seen a heroine, and is longing to pay his respects to you; allow him to present mine also, with this tribute of admiration, gratitude, and esteem.

Another member of the French Academy, the Comte de Tressan, whom d'Eon had thanked for a book that had recently appeared by sending two of her works, replied in the same eulogistic vein, adding :

The letter with which you have honoured me fills me with gratitude : it is an equal distinction to merit your approbation, whether as a soldier or as an academician.

Your letter, Mademoiselle, having been forwarded on Tuesday last to Paris, I would have hastened to call on you, to thank you in person ; but being seized that day with a sort of catarrh accompanied by fever, I wrapped myself up well and returned at once to my hermitage. Feeling better, I seize the first opportunity of telling you how extremely touched I am by the kindness of the one person in the world whom I have always admired, whether wielding the sword or the pen. You have realised in your person the valour of both Morphiso and Bradamante, so nobly sung by Ariosto. But you have done more, you have parried the attacks of the spoiled child to whom everybody yields, and you set an example to the world of a mind which is proof against every form of weakness. You were born, Mademoiselle, to vanquish the warrior, the diplomat, and love itself, and deserve the worship of the friends who have the honour of living with you and of enjoying the charm as well as the advantage of listening to you. There is no one of either sex who does not feel some emulation when listening to you, no one who is not moved by your speech and encouraged by your example to become still braver or more virtuous. As soon as I am able to return to Paris, Mademoiselle, I will hasten to assure you of the regard, the attachment, and the admiration which I have for you.

While welcoming these polite speeches with all the

sensibility of a woman of his time, d'Eon had already thought of an excellent way of "vanquishing love," and was forming projects for retiring into a convent for a few months. Full of his part, and taking a malicious pleasure in the comedy, he chose the most equivocal situations, and amused himself in playing the cynical dilettante. Having obtained permission, through M. de Reine, to retire to the convent of Saint Louis, at Saint Cyr, he had been obliged to give up the idea, "as the Bishop of Chartres, who was then in Rome, could alone grant so rare a favour." On being acquainted with the Chevalière's desire, the nuns had, without the slightest hesitation, admitted her to their parlour for want of the coveted cell, and d'Eon, short as had been his visit, had left among the venerable dames a pleasant impression which is expressed in the following note :—

Our Mother-Superior, Madame de Montchevreuil, has given me a most agreeable commission, Mademoiselle, in charging me to assure you once more of the pleasure which your visit has afforded us, and also to express the esteem with which you have inspired all the inhabitants of our house. She wishes to convince you of the sincerity of these sentiments, and she suggests Monday or Tuesday next as the day for the second visit with which you propose to honour us. But, Mademoiselle, as it is always well to hasten the enjoyment of that which affords us legitimate pleasure, we trust that your choice will fall on Monday. . . . I remind you of your promise, which you cannot fail to fulfil without being untrue to yourself. As for myself, who had the honour of being in attendance on you and of seeing you more frequently, I beg to assure

you that to my esteem and admiration for the Chevalier d'Eon I add my attachment to Mademoiselle. . . .

On reading this letter d'Eon was full of gratitude to these saintly women and of humility towards himself. He remembered that in his youth his knowledge of Holy Writ had won for him the degree of Doctor of Canon Law, and his answer to the invitation he had received was couched in the language of an earnest, devout and repentant person. In a few pages, the writing of which must have afforded him the keenest enjoyment (he kept three copies of this letter), d'Eon succeeded in judging himself with an impartiality that would have been meritorious in any other circumstance.

. . . I purpose going alone (he wrote), so that nothing shall divert my attention whilst on my way to the house of the Lord's elect, and that I may be the better able to benefit by the holiness of your discourse, which is the living expression of the purity of your lives, and of the peace that reigns in your hearts.

When I compare the happiness of the solitude you enjoy, which I have ever delighted in without being able to experience its pleasure, with my terribly restless life in the world and in the various armies and courts of Europe during the last forty years, I feel how far I have been removed from the God of humility and consolation by the demon of glory. Like a foolish virgin I have been running after the shadows of things, while you, wise virgins, possess the substance through steadfastly abiding in the house of the Lord, and in the path of virtue. *Erravi a viâ justitiæ et sol intelligentiæ non luxit in me.* I pray that God may preserve all our sex from the passion of vainglory. I alone know what it has cost me to rise

above myself ! Alas ! what restless nights I have passed for the sake of a few brilliant and happy days ! It is better to admire from afar the example I have set than to imitate it. . . .

Together with this lengthy homily, and as if to counterbalance the effect produced by such humble declarations, d'Eon was careful to send his own portrait and his pamphlets. He also promised to read to his correspondent a few letters addressed to his uncle "by Madame de Maintenon and her bosom friend, the Comtesse de Caylus," of which he possessed the originals. Sister de Durfort replied immediately :

You are to be admired in everything, Mademoiselle, whether wielding the pen or the sword ; your letter is delightful, and I shall keep it as carefully as a miser keeps his hoard. It reveals the treasures of your inner life, which are still more precious than your well-known moral, political, and martial virtues, to which I pay the homage they deserve. Our Mother Superior and all the ladies here thank you, Mademoiselle, for the engraving you have sent. Your features cannot be too often portrayed in an age when heroic deeds are few and when heroines would be unknown but for you.

Two days later the mother-superior invited d'Eon to witness a taking of the veil at the convent. Hearing that d'Eon was unwell she expressed the hope that the illustrious patient's fever would soon abate, and, with a view to her recovery, she sent some leverets and partridges "from the preserves of the community."

Such delicate attentions, and above all the fervent

admiration of these saintly ladies, embarrassed d'Eon, who sank under the burden of his remorse in this onset of courtesy and humility.

I am leaving, Madame, the Abbey of Haute-Bruyère, where Mademoiselle de Torigny, after having refused a most advantageous marriage, from a worldly point of view, has left all in order to espouse the poverty and sufferings of the cross of Jesus Christ, and lead the life of the holy women who, by the purity and sweetness of their lives, render their solitude and their religion as attractive as their society. This spectacle, almost incredible, which I had never before witnessed, has saddened me and stirred my soul more than anything, however marvellous, that I ever beheld in my campaigns.

It is no doubt to humble my pride, and to confound my worldly courage, that you wish me to witness again, on Monday next, the touching sacrifice of the two royal victims of your convent, who, like two innocent white doves, are to be plucked and immolated before my eyes on the altar of the King of Kings.

Notwithstanding the martial spirit with which men and soldiers credit me, I cannot but feel from the bottom of my heart that I am a coward, when I behold the greatness and extent of the sacrifice you offer up to God. Until now I have only sacrificed my body in serving my King and my country, that is in serving my own ends; the horse I mounted in the combats and battles in which I have fought has done as much as I, while you, Mesdames, have offered to God and to your community the entire sacrifice of yourselves, body and soul; you have kept back nothing save your innocence and submission.

It is very kind of Madame de Montchevreuil to send me leverets and partridges for my dinner; one fish and some salad constitute a good meal in my opinion.

Happily I am not addicted to sensual pleasures. I can sleep on straw on the ground, and can live on bread and water. Our Lord said that man does not live by bread alone, but by the word of God ; I will therefore strive to feed my soul with His word while listening attentively to the excellent sermon that will be preached in your church, on Monday next, at the holy sacrifice of your two victims.

After reading d'Eon's works "with dragoon-like voracity," Sister de Durfort began to realise that the remorse of the author of *Lettres, Mémoires et Négociations* was far from being groundless. Without deceiving herself as to the difficulty of transforming this "hero in the eyes of the world" into a "heroine of religion," she strove, with touching simplicity, to bring him to repentance. "You are right," she wrote, "in saying that I should have more trouble in bringing you back to a state of grace than Madame d'Eon had in bringing you into the world. However, I do not despair: with so much courage, firmness, constancy, valour, and intrepidity—in short, great as you are—it needs but one effort to make a saint of you. . . ."

D'Eon appears soon to have realised how ungenerous it was of him to take advantage of her credulity, for he put a stop to the pious correspondence. Far from entertaining the idea of taking the veil, as his venerable correspondent had hoped, the Chevalière had no more ardent desire than to doff the mob-cap and resume the soldier's helmet. Too active for the part which he was reduced to play, for the life of the court, the visits and entertainments, the tedium of which he tried to forget by writing

incessantly ; tired, also, of the perpetual mystery of which he was at once the author and the victim, d'Eon regretted his old life of adventure. The American War appeared to him a favourable opportunity for resuming it, and no sooner had hostilities begun with England than he solicited de Sartine and de Vergennes for permission to re-enter the army. But he met with a positive and quite comprehensible refusal on the part of the two ministers, who desired nothing better than to hear the last of him.

He entreated the Comte de Broglie to support his petition, which the count declined to do, rather ungratefully reproaching d'Eon—who had never ceased to be faithful to him and had defended him in awkward situations—for having referred to him.

I have received, Mademoiselle (he replied), the letter you have taken the trouble of writing to me, together with the copy of M. de Sartine's letter. I must point out to you with regard to the latter that, although I fully appreciate the motives which have actuated you in so far as I am concerned, it would undoubtedly have been better had you abstained from mentioning my name.

I hope that you may obtain the permission which you require, but I think it extremely unlikely. In that case I trust you will never do anything that may be construed into the least resistance to the King's will.

Embittered by such fresh disappointments, and irritated by his sedentary life, which was beginning to tell upon his health, d'Eon resolved—notwithstanding the refusal he had already met with—to write a letter to

M. de Maurepas, which he was foolish enough to publish, and also an open letter to several great ladies at court. The two documents brought down upon the author prompt retribution which, it must be admitted, their extravagant tone fully justified.

I would not for an instant encroach on the valuable time that you devote to the glory and welfare of France; but, animated by the desire to contribute to both myself, in so far as my humble position allows, I must represent to you most firmly and respectfully that the year of my female novitiate having expired, it is impossible for me to pass on to a full profession. The expenses are beyond my means, and my income is too limited. Such being the case, I can neither be of use to the King, nor to myself, nor to my family, and my sedentary life is ruining the buoyancy of my body and mind. From my youth up I have always led a most active life and, whether in the army or in diplomacy, inaction is fatal to me.

I renew, Monsieur, my entreaties that you will obtain the King's permission for me to re-enter his service, and, as there is no fighting on land, that I be allowed to serve as a volunteer in the fleet of the Comte d'Orvilliers. I have managed to live in petticoats in time of peace, from a desire to obey the orders of the King and of his ministers, but I find it impossible to do so in time of war. I am sick with vexation, and ashamed to be in such a position when I might be serving my King and country with the zeal, the courage, and the experience that God and my own efforts have granted me. I am ashamed and distressed to be quietly living in Paris on the pension which the late King deigned to give me, when there is fighting to be done elsewhere. I am always ready to sacrifice

both my pension and my life to his august grandson. I returned to France under your auspices, Monseigneur, I therefore confidently commend my present and future fate to your generous protection.

An Open Letter addressed by the Chevalière d'Eon to several Great Ladies at Court

MADAME LA DUCHESSE,—Foreseeing that there will be less fighting on land this year than last, I earnestly entreat you to use your influence with the ministers, in favour of my petition (as stated in the enclosed copy of my letter to the Comte de Maurepas) to serve as a volunteer in the fleet of the Comte d'Orvilliers. Your name, Madame, is one to which military glory is familiar, and, as a woman, you must love the glory of our sex. I have striven to sustain that throughout the late war with Germany, and in negotiating at European courts during the last twenty-five years. There is nothing left for me to do but to fight at sea in the Royal Navy. I hope to acquit myself in such a way that you will not regret having fostered the good intention of one who has the honour to be, with profoundest respect, faithfully yours,
LA CHEVALIÈRE D'ÉON.

Tired of d'Eon's eccentricities, weary of his attacks on Beaumarchais, and informed, moreover, that he had laid aside his female clothes, the ministers took strong measures.

On Saturday, March 20, at an early hour and without any warning, Mademoiselle d'Eon was arrested at her house in the Rue de Noailles, by two officers of police, and invited to enter a coach, which started off at once.

While the Sieur Clos, equerry and counsellor of the King, assisted by his clerk, searched his house in vain, d'Eon was being driven, by easy stages, towards Dijon Castle, where, by a royal decree, he remained for a whole month.

TONNERRE ONCE MORE

NOW that the archives of the Bastille are accessible to historians, prison life in the eighteenth century is no longer enveloped in mystery, and this famous fortress, looked upon as the symbol of despotism, appears rather to have been a sort of hostelry where the best society was temporarily and involuntarily brought together. In spite of the meagre comforts that the abode could offer, the inmates were almost free to keep up their customary style of living. The most favoured, waited upon by their valets, had their regular reception days, entertained at supper, and were at liberty to pass through the prison-gates on merely pledging their word that they would return before sunset. The less important inmates were tolerably well catered for on payment of ten francs a day, visited their neighbours in their respective cells, and found sufficient relaxation in games of *faro*, *bouillotte* or *biribi*. Those of a more serious turn of mind, who soon tired of such a regimen, whiled away the time in contriving plans of escape, which were often crowned with success.

The prison in the castle of Dijon, though equally formidable in appearance, was not less hospitable, and the recalcitrant Chevalière found herself even better placed than on her first arrival in Burgundy, when, crowned with

the aureole of misfortune, she had received the warmest reception. The Abbé Pioret, senior priest at St. John's, the prisoners' parish church for the time being, was one of the first to inquire after his old comrade, and to offer her such consolations as were in keeping with her condition and her present circumstances. He reminded her of the days of her childhood and of their intercourse at Versailles, and ended as follows :—

As it is the duty of a pastor to seek his sheep, particularly when they are, like yourself, inclined to wander from the fold, I hope you will allow me to call upon you ; kindly let me know the hour which will be most convenient to you.

On the following day visitors streamed into the castle in such numbers that the governor was obliged to give the sentinel "instructions not to admit anybody to the Chevalière's cell." So unusual and unexpected an order astonished M. Calon, former councillor of parliament, and M. Buchotte de Vermond, who at once complained to the Chevalière of having been brutally dismissed. In lieu of visitors d'Eon received letters of condolence or of congratulation from all quarters, and his old comrades in the dragoons, who had followed his adventures step by step, sent a fresh token of their affection by Major d'Arras, "begging to be reassured as to the prisoner's fate." As a matter of fact, the rigour of his confinement was diminishing every day, and before a week was over d'Eon was not only permitted to receive in his cell the leading citizens of Dijon and the numerous visitors who had solicited an audience out of curiosity, but even to

entertain a few friends at dinner. While he was cheerfully resigning himself to his misfortune, and relishing "the trout, crayfish, chickens, woodcocks, and snipe," washed down with the venerable *Clos-Vougeot* supplied by the *Sieur Gaudalet*, innkeeper and purveyor to the castle, his brother-in-law was endeavouring to shorten his detention.

O'Gorman had been the more surprised and disquieted by the *Chevalière's* disappearance, as on coming to Versailles on the very day of her arrest, to accompany her to Tonnerre, he had found the door of the house sealed up and the maid still "upset by the shock caused by the arrest." *La Grenade*, d'Eon's valet, having been unable to tell him whither his master had been taken, O'Gorman proceeded at once to the audience-chamber of *M. Amelot*, where the chief clerk informed him that d'Eon was a prisoner at Dijon. He was assured, however, "that neither the King nor his ministers had any desire to harm the *Chevalière*, and that her resistance to and disregard of the King's orders had alone given rise to such violent measures." She would even be at liberty "to retire to her paternal home," as soon as she should show a "submissive disposition to live quietly and unostentatiously in her own province."

Before long d'Eon himself seemed to wish for what was required of him. He did nothing further to foster the disturbance caused by his every movement, and submitted quietly to his punishment. Such a satisfactory frame of mind revived the good-will of his powerful friends. The *Marquis de Vergennes* advised him to write a humble letter to his brother, the minister, and

added thereto "his most urgent recommendation." But his most able defender was the Bishop of Mâcon, who cleverly pleaded his protégé's cause by representing to the ministers that "too great a sensation" was being caused at Dijon by the presence of the Chevalière. Lastly, the search made at her house, far from confirming the insinuations of her enemies, who were disposed to accuse her of being a spy in the service of England, had on the contrary proved nothing but "facts redounding to her credit." Accordingly the ministers granted a pardon after a month's imprisonment, enjoining her to repair immediately to Tonnerre and not to leave the town without the King's permission.

D'Eon hastened to obey; but before leaving Dijon he did not omit to give Marlet, the sculptor, on order for several little medallions to commemorate his residence in the capital of Burgundy.

Quieted by his long series of adventures, and dreading no doubt the bitterness of his enemies, who wished for nothing better than to see him "confined in a convent for the rest of his days," d'Eon made up his mind to lead, in Burgundy, the quiet life of a maiden lady of quality—a life "he had so often envied," he said, with more resignation than sincerity. The small pension from the King enabled him to put his house at Tonnerre in repair; he added a wing to it, embellished his park, through which the river Armençon ran, with "terraces and flower-beds," and even managed to have a chapel pulled down which intercepted the view from his windows, "without falling out with Holy Mother Church." He exchanged "a box-tree for a marjoram" with the

prior of Saint Martin, planted new vines, and superintended the gathering of the grapes, the wine from which reached the capital in due course and graced the board of M. Amelot and of the Marquis de Vergennes. He kept his best vintages for his old protectors, who were both touched by the attention and appreciative of the gift.

I have received, Mademoiselle, the sixty-five bottles of wine from Tonnerre, which you mentioned in your letter. I would rather you had not deprived yourself of them, for I did not need this token of your sentiments to be convinced of your attachment to M. de Broglie. The proofs which you have never ceased to give him, persuade me that they will never change. I accept the assurance with the deepest gratitude.

This note seems to have been the last that d'Eon received from this influential family, whose dependant he had been in his youth, and whose zealous champion he had afterwards become. The Broglies were by this time so completely neglected that their state was worse than disgrace, and the death of the count, whose health had been undermined by injustice and disappointments, dealt a blow to his house from which it was slow to recover. It was this painful moment that d'Eon had chosen for proving that he had not forgotten the minister's patronage during a career so sadly and prematurely brought to a close. His new life left him time for reflecting on his past errors, and although he endeavoured to appear content with his lot, he could not conceal his regrets or convince his correspondents. On the same

day, January 1, 1780, General de Monet, who knew all his adventures, wrote to him :

I envy the tranquillity you must enjoy with your Penates. I trust that you look upon it with your habitual philosophy, of which your life has given you so many opportunities of making good use. Your leisure hours are probably well employed for the benefit of posterity, and the thoughts which fortunate or unfortunate circumstances (it is difficult to say which) give you time to leave in writing, will be a great boon for instruction, and also a means of adding new lustre to the interesting history of your life. But be that as it may, to tell you the truth, I would rather you were in Paris than at Tonnerre, although you would only see there many people agitated by the reforms which our ministers have wisely deemed necessary and just for procuring funds to continue the war without the imposition of new taxes. It is preferable at such critical moments to be far from the tumult.

D'Eon was indeed thinking of following the advice of his correspondent, and leaving to posterity a detailed account of his exploits. The short sketch which he had written of his life on his return to France seemed to him insufficient, for it contained no reference to the chief event in his career, his contentions with de Guerchy, and also his secret mission in England ; but the moment would have been ill-chosen, and might have furnished his enemies with fresh grounds for complaint. He therefore occupied himself with less dangerous works, planning a book on agriculture, and continually corresponding on this subject with M. de Buffon, who sent

his works to him, discussed with him the merits of new treatises, and even consented to provide him with the documents that he lacked. The Marquis de Poncins submitted to him his new book on "agriculture and war," saying that his glory would be complete "if to the approbation of the greatest of kings, were added that of the most illustrious woman who had ever figured in the annals of the world." De Lalande and Cassini kept him informed of their discoveries. But such interesting correspondence being insufficient, in d'Eon's opinion, "to dispel the stupefying fumes which one inhales in the country," he worked assiduously at drawing up, with the help of M. de Palmus, the d'Eon family tree. He set about this with the smallest display of modesty, or rather with the fertile imagination of which he had already given so many proofs. After having exhausted the lineage of his immediate ancestors, who during the two preceding centuries had done little to prove their nobility in Burgundy, he unearthed far more remote forebears in Brittany, and even claimed alliance with the greatest houses of that province. Among those families a few had survived who did not seem very flattered at the relationship claimed by the illustrious Chevalière, and, indeed, declined his offer somewhat insistently. D'Eon consequently found himself engaged in a lengthy law-suit against M. de Kergado, on which occasion he distributed, as was his wont, a great many notes and pamphlets; but the case went against him. No sooner was this affair ended than d'Eon again began to feel, with increasing intensity, the burden of his idleness, of which he could not rid himself, and he was once more

seized with the nostalgia of adventure. He tried to escape from the province to which he was confined by order of the King, as in a prison, and renewed his entreaties for permission to place at the disposal of America a sword which, though rusty, could still render useful service. As before, he met with the same unqualified refusal, and although his petition obtained for him the liberty of returning to Paris and Versailles, when he should desire to do so, he was much depressed by his failure. But he was not the man to own himself beaten, and though he was prevented fighting in person he was determined, nevertheless, to find means of distinguishing himself in the coming campaign. He could not go to the war, but he would send a representative, and his scheme for fighting by proxy consisted in equipping a frigate which was to bear the name of the *Chevalière d'Eon*.

The *Journal de Paris* published, on September 8, 1780 and January 8, 1781, letters exchanged between Messrs. Le Sesne, shipowners in Paris, and the Chevalière d'Eon. In their first letter these gentlemen begged to be allowed to give the name of the illustrious Chevalière to one of the two vessels which they were fitting out at Granville as privateers, at England's expense. This frigate was built to carry forty-four cannon, eighteen and twenty-four pounders, broadside, and fourteen eight-pounders on her quarter-deck and forecastle, eighteen howitzers and twelve swivel guns, with a crew of four hundred and fifty picked men under the command of an experienced and distinguished captain, who would take charge of the whole expedition.

“We feel sure, Mademoiselle,” continued Messrs. Le Sesne and Co., “that once so commendable a name has been submitted to the promoters of this enterprise everyone will endeavour to share the glory attached to it, and to imbue himself with the spirit that animates you for the advantage and prosperity of the State.”

The tone of d'Eon's reply to this flattering request was proud, dignified and patronising.

I received this morning the letter which you did me the honour of writing to me yesterday, for the purpose of obtaining my permission to give my name to the frigate which you are building at Granville.

I am too sensible of the honour that you pay me, and too deeply impressed by the patriotic sentiments that stimulate your spirit, zeal, and courage for the service of the King, against the enemies of France, not to do on this occasion all you wish, so as to contribute promptly and efficaciously to the beneficial and glorious end which you have in view.

I am aware, too, Gentlemen, of the care you will devote to the selection of a good captain, of experienced officers, and of the brave volunteers they will take with them.

With such wise precautions, economy in your finance, and great intrepidity in action, your enterprise should be crowned with success.

All I regret is that I am unable to accompany the expedition either as combatant or as spectator; but if my personal esteem can increase your zeal, the sparks emitted from my eyes and the fire from my heart should mingle with your cannon at the first call of glory.

Together with this reply, Messrs. Le Sesne published

another letter, in which they expressed their great gratitude to the "heroic Chevalière" for the invaluable patronage which she deigned to confer upon them, and declared that they could not find a better way of showing their appreciation than by submitting to Mademoiselle d'Eon the choice of the captain, officers and volunteers of the frigate which was to bear her name.

This letter was followed by another reply from d'Eon, stamped with the humility that befits a hero.

I have to answer the last letter with which you honoured me on December 4.

Had I foreseen the consequences that resulted from the reply which I thought it my duty to give to your flattering request that I should name one of your frigates, I would carefully have refrained from accepting such an honour.

The praise which that compliance causes you to bestow upon me, gives an idea of my talents and my merit which is quite at variance with the opinion I ought to have of them.

As to the choice of the captain, the officers, and the volunteers who are anxious to distinguish themselves on the vessel which you are fitting out, I believe, Gentlemen, that once a career so glorious and so useful to the government is open to our soldiers and sailors, they will come in crowds to risk their fortunes and their lives for the right of pursuing it. I therefore consider this choice much more difficult on account of the great number of competitors than on account of their courage and merit, such qualities being natural to all French soldiers, whom I am better able to applaud and imitate than I am to criticise.

There was, indeed, no lack of men in quest of adventures who applied for posts on the *Chevalière d'Eon*. D'Eon's papers include numerous letters of application, and there was a rumour even that the Chevalière herself would embark on the vessel which was to bear her name.

Unfortunately, the shareholders' money did not flow into the offices of Messrs. Le Sesne and Co., Rue de Bailleul, at the same rate as the offers of service. An extract from the *Journal de Paris*, containing the letters exchanged between the shipowners and the Chevalière d'Eon, had been issued in form of a prospectus and addressed to all persons thought likely to take an interest in the matter. Even the vignette representing the *Chevalière d'Eon* surrounded by the enemy's vessels, and firing two broadsides at once, did not induce people to subscribe, and the undertaking had to be abandoned. Such a turn of affairs did not answer the purpose of those to whom d'Eon had already distributed appointments on the frigate. A certain "mestre de camp de dragons," who signs only with his initial, and had been chosen to command the ship, wrote to him on July 14, 1781, from Granville, where he had gone to watch the preparations for the expedition :

The equipment of the *Chevalière d'Eon*, my faithful old friend, is not taking the turn that I would have wished for your sake, as well as for M. Le Sesne's and mine, notwithstanding all the efforts I have made and am still making. I must not conceal from you the fact that the vessel destined to bear your name exists as yet only in M. Le Sesne's imagination, and that there

is not in the dockyard at Granville a single foot of timber for the framing of the ship. M. Le Sesne, it is true, had bought a certain quantity of wood for that purpose, which was seized, as it had not been paid for, and in order to avoid disagreeable consequences a certain M. Agaste has lately been sent here to prevent legal proceedings; but all that does not, and will never, further the building of the vessel *La Chevalière d'Eon*.

The scheme formed by Messrs. Le Sesne and Co. failed, therefore, for want of money, and d'Eon found himself obliged to disband the officers and crew whom he had enlisted to fight under his colours. The idea, however, was not lost; for a few months later, other shipbuilders, Messrs. Charet and Ozenne, of Nantes, gave the name of *Chevalière d'Eon*—a name which they considered, no doubt, a symbol of successful audacity—to one of the vessels they were fitting out to convey the commodities which, in spite of the naval war, were being exchanged with the French colonies in America and India.

D'Eon, discouraged doubtless by the failure of the first enterprise, does not appear to have concerned himself about this fresh undertaking; but he remained in Paris whither this business had called him. He did not return to court, and only resided in the capital during the winter of 1780-81. At that time he was living in the house of Madame de Brie, in the Rue de Grenelle-Saint-Germain, leading a quiet life with his friend Drouet, formerly secretary to the Comte de Broglie. His old acquaintances came to call upon him. Madame Tercier invited him to dinner, promising "to talk of

secret affairs until they should be obliged to stop for want of breath." The Marquis de Courtenvaux, a relative of Louvois, who called him "sa chère payse," would send his coach to fetch the Chevalière "at the swing-bridge of the Tuileries." They would go together to visit the Abbey of Port Royal des Champs and the Château of Bagatelle, the property of the Comte d'Artois; or else, crossing the much-frequented Bois de Boulogne, they would go to hear the beautiful singing of the Ladies of the Abbey of Longchamp, who, during Lent, attracted the most fashionable and, it would seem, the least devout society. D'Eon led the life of a tourist, being eager to see the beauties and the curiosities of a town which he had left more than twenty years before, and which he had not been able to explore on his return from England, occupied as he then was with his disguise. The diary which he kept at that time leads us to suppose that he was not indifferent to the attractions, new to him, of the boulevards. Although he did not frequent the *Café Turc*, the *Babillards* and the *Café Sergent*, where an elderly spinster of quality would have felt out of place, he greatly enjoyed the *Théâtre des Danseuses du Roi*, where Nicollet had lately made changes, and instead of pantomimes, real plays were being performed. He even visited Curtius' famous shop, where the "*mannequins illuminés*" could be seen, the figures in wax of the royal family and of the leading people of the day. On being informed of his arrival, the impresario wished to avail himself of the opportunity for taking his portrait. But we must conclude that d'Eon did not care to appear in effigy amidst the illus-

trious company assembled in the *Salons du Boulevard du Temple*, for Curtius wrote, some time after, begging him to grant him this favour. D'Eon was unable to fall in with these renewed entreaties, for he had already left Paris. Curtius' letter followed him to Tonnerre, whither he had retired at the beginning of spring, to look after his small property.

From that date to the year 1785 nothing worthy of note occurred to disturb, or even to relieve, the monotony of his life. Famous travellers did not fail to call upon him on their way through Tonnerre; they devoted the time of changing horses to conversation with the Burgundian heroine, admiring this odd phenomenon, by no means the least interesting curiosity on their route. Prince Henry of Prussia, whose acquaintance d'Eon had made in Germany, wished to meet the former captain of dragoons again. He did not think it beneath his dignity to have supper with the Chevalière and her aged mother, who was very nervous in the presence of so illustrious a guest. The Comte d'Albon, an intrepid traveller who had the gift of shrewd observation as well as a rare talent for telling stories, scribbled on a sheet of paper, which he hastily sealed with a crown-piece, the following laconic note of regret:—

The Comte d'Albon greets, embraces, and loves Mademoiselle d'Eon with all his heart. He is passing through Tonnerre in a post-chaise and is in despair at being in so great a hurry as to be unable to see her and tell her once more how sincere are the sentiments that he has avowed to her for life.

D'Eon was received with cordiality in neighbouring country houses: at Persey, by the Comte d'Ailly; at Croûtes, by the Vicomte de Lespinasse; and especially at Anci-le-Franc, where all the members of the Louvois family met in summer—the Marquis and the Marquise de Louvois, the Marquis de Courtenvaux and Madame de Souvré. Entertainments, balls and theatricals, in which every guest was called upon to take part, followed one another in rapid succession. D'Eon supplied costumes, "some laced coats of brown camlet," and he himself, whose life was one long comedy, was one of the actors, though the part was a small one for so great a virtuoso.

Ever in great request at the châteaux of the neighbourhood, he was in the eyes of the inhabitants of Tonnerre, and of all Burgundians, the distinguished countryman, the provincial celebrity, whose undisputed privilege it was to preside at all public gatherings. Thus Father Rosman invited him to witness the distribution of prizes at the Royal Military College of Auxerre. "Your presence," he wrote, "can but stimulate the zeal and the emulation of our pupils preparing for the army, in which you have distinguished yourself. I add my entreaties to those of your admirers (that is to say to those of the whole town)."

The officers of the Languedoc dragoons, whose regiment had crossed the Weser by the side of the squadron commanded by d'Eon, came in a body from Joigny to visit him at Tonnerre, and a few months afterwards invited him to take part in an entertainment which they were giving in honour of their colonel's

wife. D'Eon sent the following reply to the Comte d'Osseville, major and secretary of the regiment :—

It is with the feelings of the heart of a young woman grafted on that of an old captain of dragoons, that I received yesterday the very kind invitation with which you have honoured me, in your name as well as in that of all your brother officers. It would have been a great pleasure for me to place myself under the colours of Languedoc on the day of the entertainment which you have organised for the Comtesse d'Arnouville, who, while allowing only her husband to enchain her heart, has nevertheless succeeded in captivating all the dragoons as well as all those who have the good fortune to know her. It is indeed much to my regret and vexation that I am obliged to remain at home, on account of a kind of sunstroke that seized me while watching the making of a terrace on the bank of the river Armençon during the great heat we had a week ago. I am in the doctor's hands, and extremely sorry to have met with this disappointment. I trust that after your entertainment and the review by the inspector you will find time to visit some of the country-houses in the neighbourhood of Tonnerre, and that you, or some of the officers, will avail yourselves of the opportunity for spending a few days with Mademoiselle d'Eon, who will ever consider it an honour to receive and entertain her old brother officers to the best of her ability.

I earnestly beg you will express to the Comte and Comtesse d'Arnouville, and to all the officers of the Languedoc regiment, my deep regret on this occasion.

Not only was the Chevalière the patroness of the dragoons, but she also held a rank among the Free-

masons, and, in spite of her sex, which should have excluded her, was summoned to the solemn assemblies of the Lodge of the Nine Sisters.

I consider myself happy (wrote the F— to her) to act as mouthpiece for the sisters of the R—, L—, who beg that you will favour them by your presence at the funeral service in memory of their deceased brothers. I enclose the invitation card for this ceremony, in which you have a prominent place as a mason, as an author, and as one who is now the glory of her sex, and was once the pride of ours.

Mademoiselle d'Eon alone has the right of crossing the barrier which excludes the more beautiful half of the world from our labours. The exception begins and ends with you ; do not neglect to avail yourself of the privilege, and if you do us the favour of complying with my wishes, add a second favour by arriving early, so as to see the whole ceremony, which would not be complete without you.

So firmly established was d'Eon's popularity in Burgundy, that the poets who sang the charms of this fertile province would have considered they had forgotten its chief attraction had they omitted to celebrate the achievements of their strange countryman. The Prior of Chablis composed a little poem in Latin on Tonnerre, drawing a flattering portrait of the Chevalière, while acknowledging, however, that her martial gait was not in keeping with her virginal attire.

So much celebrity led his fellow-citizens and his old comrades to suppose that his influence was equally great, and never doubting that he was in high favour

at court, and with men in office, they hoped to obtain through him every kind of favour. Naturally a great many dragoons sought his aid. They aspired to an order or a pension, a pass or a furlough. D'Eon was flattered by such requests and received them with untiring good grace, laying his numerous acquaintances under contribution and even applying to persons whom he did not know, but who, in his opinion, could not fail to know him. Answers such as that of the Marquis de d'Espinay Saint-Luc, who assured him that "the regard due to his celebrity was a sure guarantee of the effect of his protection," confirmed d'Eon in his favourable appreciation of himself. So in one year, 1783, he endeavoured to obtain for his protégés appointments in the navy, in the administration of taxes, and even in the King's household.

The religious orders ever found in him a kindly advocate. The Abbé de Molly-Billorgues, on hearing that Madame Elizabeth, the King's sister, was to have a household of her own, begged him to obtain from M. Amelot the title of chaplain to the Princess. The Abbé de Lacy requested to be attached to a certain regiment. On another occasion d'Eon applied directly to the Bishop-Duke of Langres, Mgr. de la Luzerne, in favour of a prior who was afraid of being dispossessed of a living obtained by a "surreptitious decree." A little later he wrote to the Archbishop of Paris, recommending to him a curate of Epineul, who was uncongenially situated in his present position.

At this time, too, when all his follies appear to have been blotted out from the memory of his contemporaries

by the celebrity he had attained, d'Eon thought of his relatives who were then in a poor plight. His brother-in-law was penniless, having contracted numerous debts at Tonnerre; and d'Eon, who was obliged to devote several payments of his pension to meeting them, solicited for O'Gorman first an inspectorship of post-houses, then a consulate in America. He took particular interest in his eldest nephew, and intended adopting him; meanwhile he allowed him to bear the name of d'Eon. On leaving the Military College the Chevalier O'Gorman d'Eon, on the advice of his uncle, volunteered for the American War. D'Eon gave him 700 livres for his equipment, and, his services being accepted by the Comte de la Bretonnière, he embarked on board the *Ceres*. "M. de Treville promised to do all he could to contribute to the promotion of the young officer"; and M. d'Estaing "took as much interest in him as in the modern Joan of Arc," whose "loyal knight" the intrepid sailor would have desired to be. No sooner had the young man arrived in America than he gave proofs of his bravery, and Count Macnamara hastened to let the Chevalière know how happy he was "to have such a comrade with him." The future seemed to smile on this young officer whom his chief treated so familiarly, and d'Eon, who had afforded him an opening, followed him, in imagination, into those distant countries which he longed to visit himself. The heroine of Tonnerre, shut up in her humble abode, saw in her nephew the realisation of her hopes. She paid but little heed apparently to the storm that was brewing in France, and was so soon to burst out. She entertained

a regular correspondence with the generals and admirals who were fighting in the Colonies ; and they felt flattered when she congratulated them upon their victories.

Every letter that you are kind enough to send to me, Mademoiselle, fills me with new joy (writes the Marquis de Bouillé). I take the keenest possible interest in your relations and protégés, who, as such, could not have better claims on my notice.

M. Rougeot is at present in command of the artillery in the regiment of Martinique ; it was not possible to find a better post for him. Young O'Gorman has been very ill ; I have obtained a reward for him, which is all I can do for the present. Later on perhaps some favourable opportunity may offer.

I have been very successful hitherto ; Fortune has treated me with special favour ; but if you were not the Chevalière d'Eon I would say that Fortune is a woman and consequently addicted to caprice. Poor Grasse has had a terrible proof of this ; he is old, it is true, and I am still young, and she loves youth ; I will therefore continue to court her, and should she prove obdurate I must use violence. You see I think like an old soldier.

Young O'Gorman being no longer able to support the brave marquis in his hand-to-hand fight with fortune, d'Eon wrote at once, inquiring anxiously about his return, and, thanks to M. de Sartine, obtained for him a commission as lieutenant.

I am delighted to hear, Mademoiselle, that your nephew is included in the list of promotions in the navy ; I congratulate you and am pleased to have been able to use my influence on his behalf. I have no doubt but that

he will follow the good example set by his family. His elder brother's success does not surprise me. They will both win distinction if they follow your advice.

While d'Eon was making these successful efforts to launch his nephews in an honourable career, he contemplated quitting not only Tonnerre but France. The peace which had just been concluded with England enabled him to return to that country, where he had learned to love liberty. Besides, business of an urgent nature called him there: his extensive library and his valuable collection of weapons had remained in the hands of creditors whom he had been unable to indemnify, and who kept threatening to sell the property left as security. He appealed once more to the Comte de Vergennes for assistance, and, in spite of a peremptory refusal, persisted in his determination.

In the middle of the summer of 1785 he returned to Paris, where the Duchesse de Montmorency offered him hospitality. He saw his old and faithful friends again—the Campans, the Fraguier, the Tanlays, and made the acquaintance of a family destined for a brilliant future, being introduced to the Comtesse de Beauharnais, who soon became infatuated with him. There seems, at this time, to have been a revival of that same curiosity which he had formerly excited; but the urgent affairs which called him to London obliged him to disregard it, and on November 25, 1785, he left his native country, to which he never returned.

LONDON AND THE END

THE business which called him to London was, indeed, a complicated one. For several years one of his creditors, to whose care he had confided his library and papers on leaving England, a man named Lautem, claimed from his debtor, who turned a deaf ear, the payment of a sum of £400. Obtaining nothing from d'Eon himself he had applied to the Comte de Vergennes, and had not omitted to enforce his request by a gentle threat: "D'Eon's effects," he said, "are a security and not a deposit; I could therefore have them sold, but I do not wish to sell state papers. Born at Brussels, a subject of his Imperial Majesty, an ally of the King of France, I have no desire to amuse Englishmen at the expense of a Frenchman who has been my tenant; but Mademoiselle d'Eon no longer deserves any consideration on my part." The Minister for Foreign Affairs replied through the chief clerk, Durival, that "the arrangements which the King had deigned to authorise, in Mademoiselle d'Eon's favour, for facilitating her return to France, and the fact that she had then surrendered her political correspondence, did not allow of the supposition that she had left any of value" in the keeping of the Sieur Lautem. It would seem, however, that the Comte de Vergennes was not

quite sure, for though he did not send the £400 demanded he at least offered 200 louis. But Lautem did not accept these terms, and proceeded to advertise the sale by auction, in London, of all the papers belonging to the Chevalier. The effect of this announcement was immediate. D'Eon at once received permission to visit England in person for the purpose of winding up his affairs, and a sum of 6000 livres was given to him, for the payment of his creditors. He returned to London on November 18, 1785, and took up his old quarters in the house of the Sieur Lautem, displaying so little ill-feeling that it is difficult to believe that debtor and creditor had not come to an understanding on the matter. Besides his landlord, Lautem, d'Eon paid his most exacting creditors. Having recovered his books and documents, he was able to resume his literary labours, for to the end of his days he was an inveterate scribe. The events in which he had been mixed up increased in importance, in his accommodating imagination, as they became more remote, and formed the basis of statements constantly laid aside and then resumed, in a fresh, more grandiloquent and more elaborate form. He again issued pamphlets broadcast in English society, and entertained the public through the columns of the papers, which found in him at the same time a fertile and ingenious correspondent and an attraction to please readers eager for something out of the common. So anxious was he to bestir himself that he even consented to employ the adventurer Morande once again, though he had formerly treated him with scant courtesy. The latter, however, did not

seem to bear him any malice. "I loved you sincerely," he wrote, "and you seemed to be attached to me; an ill wind has passed over us, tossing us hither and thither for a space; but after ten years of calm we should be quite ourselves again."

Morande was indeed quite himself again, for intrigue was his natural element, and he had lost nothing but dignity in his successive gyrations. It was he who acted as middleman between d'Eon and the London publishers, business men, and, occasionally, moneylenders. Not that the Chevalière d'Eon was bereft of acquaintances; she had many in good society, and even among people of high rank. Upon arriving in London d'Eon was received by M. Barthélemy, chargé d'affaires during the absence of the French ambassador, the Marquis de la Luzerne, to whom the Comte de Vergennes had especially recommended him. It would seem that honest Barthélemy never for a moment entertained a doubt upon the subject of d'Eon's personality. Throughout his residence in London, he was particularly gallant and attentive to his illustrious countrywoman, continually sending his coach to fetch her to dine at the embassy, waiting upon her when she accepted the invitation of some member of the English nobility, and calling on her several times a week "to pay his court to her." Between the years 1785-89 he wrote no fewer than a hundred and seventy-eight notes and letters to her, which were all found among the papers left by the Chevalier. The invitations are all couched in amiable and respectful terms, such as the following, addressed to "Mademoiselle la Chevalière d'Eon":—

The Duc de Piennes and the Chevalier de Caraman, who have just returned from Newmarket, are coming to dine with me to-morrow. I cannot tell you, Mademoiselle, how anxious I am to hear that you are free and that you will be kind enough to join us. No entertainment is complete without you. We shall be a small party, for there is no time to invite others of our mutual acquaintance.

Moreover, the Bishop of Langres had recommended d'Eon very warmly to his brother, the Marquis de la Luzerne, the French ambassador, who, by a strange coincidence, happened to have met the Chevalier when in the army with Marshal de Broglie. The following letter, addressed to the Chevalière on her return to London, refers to their old intercourse in the days of their youth :—

The Bishop of Langres has been absent a long time in the country, Mademoiselle, and only delivered your letter to me when I was on the point of starting for England. I was much gratified to see that you thought of me, and that you remembered our youth. Be assured that I have followed your career since then with much interest, and that I have always deeply regretted that our different occupations have kept us apart. I shall be delighted to see you again in London, and to express to you by word of mouth my feelings of old and tender attachment.

Either at the house of his friend, Barthélemy, or at the ambassador's, with whom he always kept up the pleasant intercourse so strangely renewed after an interval of several years, d'Eon met all the distinguished

Frenchmen living in London or passing through it. Among them were the Duc de Chaulnes and the Marquis du Hallay, the Prince de la Trémoille and the Marquis d'Hautefort, Prince Rezzonico, nephew of Pope Clement XIII., M. de Calonne, and the former Abbé du Bellay, vicar-general of the diocese of Tréguier. He thus kept in touch with the best French society. Never neglecting an opportunity for putting pen to paper, he kept up, besides, a most voluminous correspondence. Several of his friends also informed him regularly of what was passing in France. Thus Drouet, his old colleague in the secret service, confided to the Comtesse Potocka a letter in which, after expressing his ardent desire to see him back again in France, tells of the great scandal of the day, the trial of Cardinal de Rohan—"l'affaire du collier":

This important case has never been so much discussed as at the present moment. M. Cagliostro is making many partisans by a memorandum he has published. As many people regard him as a swindler, a charlatan, an empiric, and judge him by his conduct at Warsaw where he was staying in 1777, I went yesterday to see Count Rzewusky, who that same year was all-powerful in Poland. He told me that when Cagliostro arrived he did not conceal the fact that he had some knowledge of physics and medicine, and even of alchemy. A certain Prince Poninsky, experimenting in the latter, became very intimate with him, and having seen his wife he fell in love with her. Shortly afterwards he offered her some diamonds, which she refused. Thereupon he appealed to her husband, and succeeded, by dint of entreaties, in inducing him to allow his wife to accept

the diamonds. Having failed to obtain what he desired from Madame de Cagliostro, and not wishing to be a dupe, Poninsky denounced Cagliostro as a swindler, and obtained permission to take back his diamonds which would have been returned to him had he asked for them.

A few days before the arrival of Cagliostro at Warsaw the sister of Count Rzewusky, fearing lest she should lose her sight on account of an eye-complaint which completely baffled the doctors, consulted Cagliostro, who cured her entirely in the course of a few days. This lady, who is very rich, offered him two thousand ducats, which he refused. She renewed her offer through her brother, who met with no better success ; and neither the one nor the other has been able to persuade Cagliostro to accept the smallest token of gratitude.

The worthy Drouet concluded with Count Rzewusky, who declared that he was ready to sign a statement of all these facts with his own blood, that Cagliostro might well have been the victim of some plot ; a hypothesis calculated to please d'Eon, who had become more and more inclined to see snares and pitfalls everywhere.

A little later the same Drouet sent news of his family : his brother-in-law, O'Gorman, had obtained the Cross of Saint Louis ; his eldest nephew was doing very well. " Before long," Drouet adds, " he will be promoted to the rank of lieutenant-colonel ; and in three years' time he will make a good marriage, which will render him independent. His two younger brothers went abroad last October for a two years' cruise ; at the end of the expedition they will both receive their commissions as lieutenants in the navy." And Drouet exhorts " sa chère amie " to love her nephews as they thoroughly

deserve it. He also begs her to be patient in the settlement of her affairs.

This liquidation was indeed a long business. No sooner had d'Eon arrived in London than he entered an action against the heirs of Lord Ferrers. He accused the late earl of not having employed for the payment of his debts, as stipulated by special mandate, the money remitted to him in exchange for the papers of the secret correspondence, in execution of the covenant signed, on October 5, 1775, by the *Sieur Caron de Beaumarchais* and the *Demoiselle d'Eon*. He won his suit as far as the main point was concerned, but the judgment could not be carried into effect on account of the impediments of every description raised by the heirs. Consequently d'Eon wrote, on April 1, 1787, to his friend *M. de la Flotte*, chief clerk at the Foreign Office, complaining that "this restitution of money which was to have made her happy and serene was becoming the worry of her life." He expressed himself extremely sorry to be still living in England; but added that, as long as he could not return to France with honour, he would not return at all.

While waiting for the money that was owing to him he endeavoured to earn his living—for he must live—by some other means. In the intervals between the receptions to which he was invited, and at which he mixed in the best society, he occupied himself with every kind of business. Once he traced a young man who had run away to London; another time he assisted by his support and letters of introduction a countryman of his, the *Sieur Petit*, who wished to start a business house in the city. Shortly afterwards he devoted his attention to the sale

of an estate, the marquisate of Cailly, in Normandy, which the Duchesse de Montmorency-Boutteville wished to part with, and for which d'Eon hoped to find a purchaser among his English friends. His intercourse with the duchess was quite of a friendly character, the latter writing to him, on March 30, 1788, that she kept a room ready for him in her house at Petit-Montreuil when he should return to France. A few months later d'Eon wrote to Barantin, the Keeper of the Seals, offering for sale a number of valuable manuscripts collected by himself during the course of his chequered life. The nucleus of the collection consisted of a valuable series of the Maréchal de Vauban's papers, for which d'Eon asked so high a price that in 1791 he had not yet found a purchaser. He had somewhat exaggerated notions as to the interest and importance of the manuscripts.

But the correspondence of the versatile Chevalière was not connected only with money matters, for d'Eon had too complex a nature not to rise on occasion above material questions. Even during the time that he was struggling against misfortune he daily exchanged most humorous letters with all sorts of people. Some items of his correspondence were charming; it may suffice to quote that of the Abbé Sabatier de Castres, attached to the household of the Dauphin. It is not perhaps free from affectation, but is a perfect example of the style used between themselves by the most polite society of the time :

MADemoiselle,—M. de Lançon, who has been so good as to bring me your charming letter himself, will be

rewarded for it by the pleasure of delivering my reply to you. He has just told me that he is going to leave for London to-morrow, and I hasten to take advantage of his journey to tell you how flattered I feel, and how grateful I am to you, for the ten pages to which you have treated me. I should complain less bitterly of your absence if it procured for me from time to time such epistles. Never has so sad a nation as the English been spoken of more gaily, neither has a gay and light-hearted nation such as ours been discussed more rationally and philosophically. You alone, Mademoiselle, possess the gift of expressing humorously profound and earnest thought. It is indeed a pity that you have not practised the art of Thalia! You would have been more successful than most of our present writers of comedy, who only excite the hilarity of the ignorant and the vicious, such as the author of the *Marriage of Figaro*, who (speaking of marriage) has just married his mistress in order to legitimatise a girl six or eight years old whom she had borne him. Now that he is rich, people assert that his wife, who, they say, is his fourth, will be happier with him than her predecessors.

I am sorry, but not surprised, that the brother and heir of Lord Ferrers is not like him as far as honesty is concerned; *sorry* because it makes you suffer; *not surprised* because of three of my brothers, whose fortunes I have made at the expense of my own, not one would sacrifice so much as a sovereign to oblige me, such is their ingratitude and love of money.

M. de Chalut, who enjoys good health and is in excellent spirits, notwithstanding his eighty-two years, was greatly touched by your kind offer, and would avail himself of it, if he did not know that the pictures he could sell are not worth half the money it would cost, in carriage

and duty, to send them to England. The last time I saw him, he asked me to thank you again and pay his respects to you. No doubt you know that he has married his adopted daughter to M. Deville, who was formerly private secretary to the Comte de Vergennes and is now farmer-general, and that by the marriage settlement he gives him a hundred thousand crowns. M. de Lançon will tell you the rest, in case you are not acquainted with this event. I envy him, since he will see you in five or six days, and it follows that I should set out for England too were I not detained here by the necessity of supervising the illustrations and the printing of the work with which I have been entrusted for the Dauphin. I flatter myself that I shall not be forgotten in your libations. On Monday M. de Lançon and M. Le Vasseur dine with me, and it is to your health and that of the inestimable traveller that we shall quaff the champagne which I keep for great occasions. Sell your library at once, you have no need of it; your own ideas are better than those found in books. Try to get as much money as you can for it—money is necessary to those who make so noble a use of it as you do—and then come back to Paris where, no doubt, you will not find Princes of Wales to court you, but many persons who, without being heir-apparents, are none the less fully aware of your worth, and love you better than the best princes could.

Excuse this scribble. My wish to avail myself of M. Lançon's departure has made me write in a hurry and with a bad pen, but it is thoughtfully and with all my heart that I repeat to you the assurance of the feelings of esteem, admiration, attachment, and respect which I have dedicated to you for life, and with which I am your most humble obedient servant,

THE ABBÉ SABATIER DE CASTRES.

D'Eon was busy paying off his last creditors, and preparing for his return to France, when grave news reached London. The Revolution was beginning, that at least was the general opinion in England, for in France many of those destined to fall victims of the emancipation of the people were still under the greatest illusions about it. A curious letter addressed to d'Eon, July 2, 1789, by M. de Tanlay, parliamentary councillor, supplies proof of it.

So you would make war on us again in England? It would be very ill-advised. I think the English people need peace as much as we do, and we are taking measures which will give France more national energy than she has ever had, for we shall manage our affairs and those of the King for ourselves. I can understand that others may base their hopes upon a momentary revolution of our system of government, but when the nation has everything to gain by it, when it is seen to be animated by patriotism such as is guiding us at the present moment, when a monarch makes so many sacrifices of his glory for the welfare of his people, it is in no wise the time to think of obtaining an advantage over us. I trust that this temporary effervescence will subside, and that we shall be permitted peacefully to establish a form of government which will for ever ensure the happiness of France, provided the work of reform be well directed, as there is good reason to believe it will be.

M. de Tanlay's idyllic dreams were not realised: the Bastille was taken, the Tuileries invaded, and war declared. His correspondent did not fail, however, to applaud "the victories of liberty." The Chevalière d'Eon

became the Citoyenne Geneviève, and—whether from conviction or, perhaps, too, with a view to increasing her fame by this new means of courting popularity—posed on every occasion as the most ardent Jacobin.

At her instigation a great number of Frenchmen living in London assembled at Turnham Green, on July 14, 1790, “to celebrate publicly the anniversary of the glorious Revolution, and to take the civic oath.” D’Eon read a speech written in the declamatory and sentimental style of the time, and his harangue was so highly appreciated that all the English papers reproduced it immediately.

At the same time as the French gathering over six hundred Englishmen met under the auspices and presidency of Lord Stanhope, to celebrate the glorious anniversary and to express “their desire for an eternal alliance between the English and French nations, which would for ever ensure peace, liberty, and happiness throughout the whole world.”

D’Eon was unable to attend the English meeting, being detained among his countrymen, but he sent a present, the arrival of which excited the greatest enthusiasm. It consisted of “a stone taken from the arch of one of the principal gates of the Bastille, which has endured the musketry volleys of our brave Parisians.”

The very next day he received a most grateful acknowledgment from Lord Stanhope.

I have to return you many thanks for your valuable gift and the kind letter which you have done me the honour of writing to me. We held a meeting

yesterday of six hundred and fifty-two friends of the indefeasible rights of man, to celebrate the brilliant victory which liberty has lately won in France over despotism and tyranny. By a unanimous resolution we expressed the desire which has animated us, ever since your glorious Revolution, to ally ourselves with France. Nothing was wanting yesterday but a stone from the Bastille ; we became aware of our need only when we had the pleasure of receiving it from you, and our satisfaction was all the greater in that it was sent from one so famous in history.

By such striking proofs of civism d'Eon felt sure of concentrating upon himself the attention of French patriots. He had also sent his nephew to offer his services to the Legislative Assembly, and had entrusted him with the presentation of a petition. The "Citoyenne d'Eon" stated that although she had worn the dress of a woman for fifteen years, she had never forgotten that she was formerly a soldier ; that since the Revolution she felt her military ardour revive and that, ready to abandon her cap and petticoats, she demanded her helmet, her sword, her horse, and her rank in the army.

In my eager impatience (she wrote) I have sold everything but my uniform, and the sword which I wore during my first campaign. My library is reduced to manuscripts by Vauban, which I have preserved as an offering to the National Assembly, for the glory of my country, and the instruction of the brave generals employed in her defence.

The reading of the above was interrupted several times by bursts of applause, and, mention having been made of it in the minutes, the petition was referred to the War Committee, where it has remained buried for ever.

But if d'Eon appealed in vain to the Republic to accept his services, he was, on the other hand, urgently invited to side with the King and to join at Coblenz the army of those emigrants among whom the ungrateful Convention had included him. He received from one of the faithful royalists who had followed the princes beyond the frontiers the following curious letter :—

Is it possible, my dear heroine, that you still hesitate to join the French nobility who are gathering together from Coblenz to Houdenarde? At the moment of writing there is nobody left in France but infirm old nobles and children. What will all the others say if they do not see you arrive either at Mons, Ath, Brussels, or Coblenz? If you wait much longer you will not come in time to reap much glory, and then all the brave knights of France will say to you what Henri IV. said to Crillon: "Go hang yourself, brave Crillon!" Many are surprised not to see you where true honour leads, and among those who do not know you some call you a demagogue. Upon hearing such an odious accusation I laid my hand on the sword which you had made for me, and told them that I answered for it on the said weapon which you gave me, that they would see you ere long, and if not, the same weapon would be sent to you together with a spindle. I do not tell you that, my dear heroine, in order to excite your enthusiasm, for I believe you to be too well disposed to require it, but really to assure you that I am and wish ever to be your valiant knight.

On reaching Coblenz, where I am going, call upon my friend, M. de Preaurot, to whom the princes have confided the duty of receiving all new arrivals. Before long no honest folks will stay in France except those who cannot do otherwise, whether on account of their infirmities or their want of means. Many are helped by those who are in a position to do so. I think we have reached the time when you can outshine the Maid of Orleans herself : what a distinction for our good town of Tonnerre, whence I have heard that knowing your sound principles they rely upon your not abandoning the cause of honour.

And lower down, in another hand, we learn :

The old-fashioned baroness can add nothing to the style of the brave knight who writes this letter, except the wish to see her heroine arrive soon. She begs her to direct her reply to M. Mazorel, post-office, Tournay, who will take charge of it.

D'Eon wrote in the margin of this letter that he did not answer it. But it was in vain that he avoided compromising himself with royalists and aristocrats; the loyalism of his republican sentiments did not obtain for him from the Convention the recovery of the pension which royalty had conferred upon him, and which had not been paid to him since 1790.

In order to procure the bare necessaries of life he was obliged to resort to the sword which he was no longer permitted to use in the service of his country, and was reduced to taking part in public fencing competitions. In default of glory on the field of battle, he attained, at all events, real fame in the schools. He had as adver-

saries the best fencers in England, the Chevalier St. George himself, and beat them all on more than one occasion. D'Eon was far from being a novice in the art, having distinguished himself therein as far back as the year 1750, when he was a young advocate, and was writing learned historical treatises and essays on political economy, in order to attract notice. His adventurous life and his military career had led him to develop the science of fencing, and consequently his already advanced age did not prevent his justifying a reputation which his adopted sex rendered piquant and unusual. Although d'Eon generally wore his old uniform of the dragoons when fencing in public, yet at several matches he appeared in a semi-feminine costume. In this odd accoutrement he took part, in September 1793, in a tournament at which the Prince of Wales presided in person ; he gained a brilliant victory over an English officer. Some prints, which are now much sought after, perpetuated the memory of this curious match. So profitable did he find these exhibitions of his rare skill that he resolved to undertake a series of tours in the provinces. The English papers report his victories at Dover, Canterbury and Oxford. In the course of one of these journeys there occurred, at Southampton, on August 26, 1796, the unlucky accident which brought a sudden end to the fencing-matches in which the Chevalière d'Eon still distinguished herself at the age of sixty-nine. Her adversary's foil broke off, wounding her severely. D'Eon published in the papers the certificate of the physicians who attended him, together with an address in which, after thanking the public for the interest they had taken

in him, he declared with bitterness that henceforth he would be reduced "to cut his bread with his sword."

His wound kept him confined to his bed for four months. As soon as he could be moved, he was taken back to London, where he had still to go through a long convalescence. An old English lady, Mrs. Mary Cole, a friend of his, received him into her house, and tended him to the end of his life with the most touching devotion. D'Eon's sensational career was now at an end, and his life terminated in the quietest way possible. He himself remarks, with a touch of melancholy: "My life is spent in eating, drinking, and sleeping; praying, writing, and working with Mrs. Cole, repairing linen, gowns, and head-dresses."

Still, in spite of age and sickness, d'Eon never quite resigned himself to his sad lot, and remained to the end as indomitable in his energy as he was tenacious in his hope of better days to come, renewing his appeals for permission to return to France and preparing for his departure. He succeeded in interesting in his cause the Citoyen Otto, the Commissioner of the Republic in London, through whom he sent, on June 18, 1800, to Talleyrand, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, a lengthy petition in which he recapitulated his services and enumerated his misfortunes.

I have fought the good fight; I am seventy-three years of age; I have a sabre-cut on my head, a broken leg and two bayonet-thrusts. In 1756 I contributed largely to the reunion of France and Russia. In 1762 and 1763 I laboured night and day to establish peace between France and England. I was in direct and secret corres-

pondence with Louis XV. from 1756 to the year of his death. My head belongs to the war department, my heart to France, and my gratitude to Citizen Charles Max Talleyrand, the worthy minister for foreign affairs, who will do me justice, and will not leave me to die of despair and starvation.

Despair was not a salient feature in d'Eon's character, for at the moment he sent this doleful letter he was engaged in preparing an edition of Horace, and an Englishman offered him, with a view to this work, a collection of all the old editions of the Latin poet from 1476 to 1789. His poverty was such, however, that he was reduced to pawning his Cross of Saint Louis and his jewels; but at the same time he obtained from Citizen Otto a passport to Paris and Tonnerre. His friends in France did not fail to encourage him in his projects, and promised him their support.

Barthélemy, formerly chargé d'affaires in London during the Revolution and now a senator highly esteemed by Bonaparte, offered to present to the all-powerful First Consul the Chevalière, famous of yore, who had assisted him more than once to do the honours of the French embassy. This is what his friend Falconnet wrote to him, on September 13, 1802 :

But you, my illustrious friend, what will you do? I still advise you to set out. The longer you wait the harder you will find it. Remember the man in Horace :

Rusticus expectat dum defluat amnis ; at ille
Labitur, et labetur in omne volubilis ævum.

Make a bundle of your valuables, and take them with you. Arrange for the other things to follow you as you require them. Mrs. Cole will see that they are sent, and you will receive everything. Senator Barthélemy will only be too happy to present you to the First Consul, and I have no doubt but that you will obtain, if not the whole, at least part of your pension. When you are here everything will go well. At a distance nothing goes as it should. Come, and to begin with take furnished lodgings; even this circumstance may not be indifferent to your success. The world will be more ready to pity the lot of a heroine whom no party can reproach, when she is seen, at her age, deprived of all resources.

But whether old age and sickness prevented his departure, or whether he was discouraged by so many vain efforts and expected nothing from the change, d'Eon remained in London. He went through a time of great need, although several of his old friends, and even some members of the English aristocracy, continued to take an interest in him and to help him until the end of his days. The Marchioness of Townshend, the Duke of Queensberry, and Mrs. Crawford regularly provided him with money. His infirmities compelled him to keep his bed during the last two years of his life, and throughout that sad time he was tended affectionately by Mrs. Cole, the friend whose house he shared. Several months before his death he sent for a French physician, Dr. *Élisée*—formerly attached to the “*Pères de la Charité*” at Grenoble. When, on May 21, 1810, d'Eon breathed his last, the doctor was not less surprised than Mrs. Cole on discovering the real sex of this extraordinary individual,

who, notwithstanding old age, want and sickness, had taken a pride in playing his part to the bitter end. A certificate of the post-mortem examination made it possible to record officially the answer to this singular problem, which for forty years had excited so much curiosity and given rise to so many disputes. But, published at a time when public attention was being claimed by so many great contemporary events, this document, which definitely settled a point of dispute in the annals of the eighteenth century, was scarcely noticed. It is only in our time that patient scholars have unearthed it from the depths of English archives. Mystery no longer enshrouds the enigma that baffled even the perspicacity of a Voltaire or of a Beaumarchais.

Freed from the disguise which she had assumed, and to which tradition still faithfully adheres, the legendary Chevalière d'Eon resumes his true aspect in the form of the daring and brilliant adventurer, ruined by his inordinate pride, whose life will remain for all time as one of the strangest challenges that history has ever offered to fiction.

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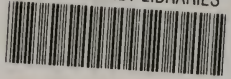
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