

we understand it without search ; or that nature has not since recast any of those sublime geniuses with which she once illuminated the world.

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CHEVALIER D'EON.

FROM A LATE LONDON PAPER.

In the vast rage of biographical history, from the earliest period down to the present time, there never perhaps, has been found a combination of events so remarkable—an assumption of character so various, and in many cases directly opposite, as in the life of this most extraordinary personage. After having sustained for the first fifty years, and in the most distinguished manner, the character of a scholar, a soldier and statesman, we suddenly and unexpectedly find M. D'Eon assuming the dress, and apparently with great reluctance submitting to be taken for a woman ; and it is not till upwards of thirty years afterwards, that, on his death bed, are verified, beyond the possibility of doubt, his claims to the personal as well as mental distinctions of a man. As some of the account of the principal events which have marked the life of this mysterious being, may not be unacceptable to the public, the following brief sketch is submitted, and its authenticity may be relied upon :—

“ Charles Genevien Louise Auguste Andree Timothee D'Eon de Beaumont, was born at Tonnere, in Burgundy, on the 27th October, 1727, of an ancient family. He received his education at the College Mazarin, at Paris. After the death of his father, he was patronized by the Prince of Conti, and was presented by Louis XV. with a cornetcy of Dragoons.



“ In the year 1755, he was employed under the Chevalier Douglas, in transacting a negociation of a most delicate and important nature at the court of St. Petersburg, which by their means was reconciled to France.

“ The Chevalier at the time of his first coming over to England, was captain of dragoons in the French service, and secretary to the duke de Nivernois, in which character he behaved so much to the duke's satisfaction, that that nobleman, upon his departure for France, got M. D'Eon appointed minister plenipotentiary in his room. In this situation he remained until superceded by the count de Guerchy.

“ From this period until the death of Louis XV. M. D'Eon continued to reside in England, destitute, it is true, of any official character, but honoured with the notice and friendship of the most distinguished persons in this country.—And here we enter upon a circumstance of D'Eon's life now rendered as mysterious in its origin, as it is wonderful in its successful concealment for so many years. Some faint rumours had spread at various preceding periods, that M. D'Eon was a woman, and, in addition to certain feminine appearances in his voice and person, still stronger surmise was indulged, especially at Petersburg, on account of the total indifference, and even aversion as to all affairs of gallantry constantly exhibited by D'Eon towards the females of that voluptuous court, where amorous intrigue is well known to have mixed itself on most occasions with political events. Not that the manners or deportment of D'Eon were either harsh or forbidding towards women, but the extreme caution with which he always avoided any private or particular intercourse with them, gave strength to the doubts excited as to his sex; and other circumstances concurring (the detail of which our present limits forbid,) at this time to place the sexual claim of D'Eon, as a woman, on the most absolute footing of proof both in France and England, he assumed the female dress, and from the year 1777, down to his death was universally regarded as



a woman. The first few years after this metamorphosis were passed by, M. D'Eon arrived in France, where if the merits of the newly established Demoiselle are to be estimated by the reception she met at the court of Louis XVI. and the expressions of esteem made to her by almost every person in the kingdom—she was deserving of the highest praise.—About the year 1785, M. D'Eon returned to England, where he has resided ever since.

“ In the year 1777, we find such strong doubts entertained of his sex as to produce wages to a large amount, and a curious trial before lord Mansfield. \*

“ It is now evident that the fraud of the Gambling Policies was the result of a direct conspiracy, to which the Chevalier himself must have been a party. On the above trial, it was sworn by M. de Morande and M. le Goux, on the testimony of *ocular demonstration*, that the Chevalier was a female. He affected to quarrel with M. de Morande for the discovery, but finally acquiesced in the falsehood, and put on the female habit. The verdict on the case tried was afterwards set aside, upon the act requiring an interest in cases of assurance for life. But many thousand pounds were paid by gentlemen, who considered the debts as *debts of honour*.—It now becomes a question, whether in point of honour, the sums ought not to be refunded, as we presume there is no *prescription* in debts of honour.

“ Since the year 1778, little has been heard of the Chevalier. The French revolution, fatal to so many establishments, deprived him also of a pension granted by Louis XVth, and confirmed by his successor. For a few subsequent years, the sale of part of his effects, and the profits of a publick fencing exhibition in various parts of the United Kingdom, enabled M. D'Eon to subsist with decency, but the increasing weight of age, and infirmities, gradually rendered him incapable of these exertions, and for many years past he has been struggling with poverty and distress.

\* Vide Cowp. 729. *Da Costa v. Jones*.



“ For these two years past, **M. D'Eon** scarcely ever quitted his bed, though it was only within these few months that he has laid aside the pen. His health gradually grew weaker, and at length an extreme state of debility ensued, which terminated in his death on Monday se'nnight, about 10 o'clock.—It was not till after his decease that **Madame Cole**, the old and respected friend of the Chevalier, whose fortunes, or rather misfortunes, she had shared for many years, on performing the last sad office to her friend, of laying out the corpse, found it was that of a man. After the first surprise had subsided, the discovery was the next morning communicated to some of the Chevalier's intimate friends, who judged that it would be proper to ascertain all points relative to so singular an occurrence ; and accordingly on Wednesday last, in the presence of the **Pere Elize**, who had attended the Chevalier in his last illness, **Mr. Wilson**, the professor of anatomy, **Mr. Ring**, and **Mr. Burton**, two respectable surgeons, **Sir Sidney Smith**, the hon. **Mr. Littleton**, the hon. **Mr. Douglas**, **Mr. Hoskins**, a respectable solicitor, **Mr. Richardson**, bookseller, of Cornhill—the body was examined, and proved beyond a doubt, by the certificate of **Mr. T. Copeland**, the surgeon, to be a male. That all doubt of the identity of the person might be removed, some persons of the first respectability were called upon, who gave their positive testimony that the person then before them was the same who had always passed for the Chevalier or the Chevaliere **D'Eon**. **M. D'Eon** has left two if not three nephews, of the name of **O'Gonman**, related, also, we believe, to the noble family of **Thomond**, in *Ireland*. None of those gentlemen are however in *England* at this time.

“ This body of this extraordinary character has undergone not the only anatomical inspection of the whole faculty, but also of many hundreds of the most distinguished *Curiosity* of the metropolis. Strange to say, the *female* visitants have exceeded those of the other sex as three to one. His



highness, the Duke of Gloucester, and several other persons of distinction, were among the latter. It lies in a handsome oak coffin, covered with black cloth, and a black velvet cross on the lid, at the house of Mrs. Cole, in New Milliman st. to whose benevolent kindness and attention, the Chevalier was indebted for the principal comforts of his latter days. A cast was taken from the face on Friday. It is proposed to inter the body in St. Pancras Church-yard the day after to-morrow. The Chevalier had completed the 84th year of his age.

“The declaration now made of the sex of this generally supposed *female* character, is likely to give rise to several actions, for the recovery of sums unjustly paid by various underwriters on the faith given to a certificate, after an examination of surgeons, 33 years ago ; several of these duped paymasters being still alive to reclaim such sums, and many of the *payees* also remaining in existence to answer such demands of re-payment. It may be remembered, that immediately after this pecuniary speculation was decided, the Chevalier assumed the female habit ; which to keep up the imposture, was worn to the day of death.

TRANSLATED FROM A PARIS PAPER.

*To the Conductors of the Gazette de France.*

GENTLEMEN,

The Journals of Paris have extracted from the English papers an article on the death of La Chevaliere D'EON, which I cannot view in any other light than as an attempt at mystery. This article, which gives an account of a pretended inspection and anatomical operation on the body after her decease (the result of which goes to establish that she was of the male sex) contains as many lies as lines ; and I shall proceed to lay before you, in opposition to that account, unsupported as