

OMNIUM GATHERUM



MADemoiselle de BEAUMONT, or the
CHEVALIER D'EON.

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

Wightman Sc.

OMNIUM GATHERUM.

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BIOGRAPHY.

MADemoiselle LE CHEVALIER D'EON.

[With a full-length Portrait.]

THIS great personage, who has made so much talk and bustle in the world, lately died in England. To shew the different opinions, which have been entertained respecting *his* sex, we copy the following biographick sketches—one from the British Magazine of 1793, and the other from a London paper of May, 1810. The former represents him of the *feminine*, and the latter of the *masculine* gender; which last will be found most correct.

From the British Magazine, of 1793.

“CHARLOTTE GENEVIEVE LOUISE AUGUSTE AFDRÉ TIMOTHEE D'EON DU BEAUMONT, doctor of civil and canon law, advocate of the parliament of Paris, censor for belles lettres and for history in that metropolis, captain of dragoons, and aid du camp royal to the count and field marshal Broglio, knight of the royal and military order of St. Louis, secretary of embassy to the marquis de l'Hopital, minister plenipotentiary to the court of Russia, secretary of embassy to the duke de Neversois, ambassador from the court of France to that of England, and afterwards minister plenipotentiary herself at the same court, was born Oct. 4, 1728, at Tonnerre, in Burgundy.

“ Her family is mentioned as an ancient one, in the Genealogical Dictionary of De Bois de la Chesnaye. Her grandfather and

father were successively under-intendants to the generality of Paris ; and her mother was Francoise du Charenton, daughter of M. du Charenton, ecuyer, who was commissaire ordonnateur de guerre to the French armies in Spain and Italy. At a very early age, for reasons not yet divulged, her parents made her assume the dress of a boy. At six years of age she was sent to her aunt at Paris, where she began to receive an education suitable to her supposed sex. In her fourteenth year, she was sent to the college Mazarin, in that city, as a day scholar, where she was no less distinguished for her proficiency in literature, than for the regularity of her conduct. When she had completed her education at that seminary, she learned to ride the great horse, and to fence, which latter exercise has been always one of her favourite pursuits. She then became doctor of civil and of canon law, and was received advocate of the parliament of Paris.

“ Her love of literature still did not forsake her, and she found time to publish many small miscellaneous pieces, orations, eulogiums, &c. both in French and in Latin.

“ The prince of Conti (who knew the secret of her sex) introduced her, in 1755, to Louis XV. (to whom he communicated the secret) as a person very capable of conducting a business he had much at heart, a reconciliation between his court and that of Russia.

“ Mademoiselle D'Eon having succeeded in this arduous undertaking, (in which she was engaged as a woman) was again sent to that court, in 1757, with chevalier Douglas, as a man. Their negotiations were so powerful, that they prevailed upon the empress Elizabeth to join the armies of France and Austria, with 80,000 troops, who were originally destined to assist the king of Prussia.

“ On her return to Paris, the same year, she was commissioned to communicate the plan of the Russian military campaigns to the court of Vienna ; and while she was at that court, the news arrived of the famous battle of Prague.

“ The count de Broglio entrusted her with despatches to the court of France, giving an account of the victory over the Prussians. Charged with these despatches, and with the treaty concluded between Russia and France, she set out in a stage waggon

for Paris. She had not, however, proceeded above 15 leagues on her journey, when at the famous mountain of Melch, in Lower Austria, and late at night, her carriage was overturned, and she broke one of the bones of her ankle. She stopped merely to have it set, and pursued her journey with such expedition, that she reached Versailles 36 hours sooner than the courier despatched from the court of Vienna to that of France; and without getting out of her carriage she delivered her despatches into the hands of the secretary of the state. The king ordered lodgings to be prepared and sent one of his surgeons to attend her. She was confined to her bed for three months, and on her recovery was presented by her sovereign with a lieutenancy of dragoons, and was sent a third time on an embassy to Petersburg. She returned from that court in 1759, and being desirous to distinguish herself in the military profession, she was permitted to join her regiment in Germany, as captain des dragoons et des volontiers de l' armee, and as aid du camp to the count and marshal de Broglio.

“At the engagement of Ultrop our heroine was twice wounded. At that of Ostervich, at the head of eighty dragoons and forty hussars, she charged the battalion Prussen de Rhes, which she completely routed, and took the commanding officer prisoner.

“In 1762, her sovereign intended to have sent her ambassador to Russia, to replace le Baron de Breteuil; but the death of the emperor Peter the third having occasioned some change in the politicks of that court, this appointment did not take place. In Sept. of the same year she was sent to London, as secretary of embassy to the Duc de Nivernois, ambassador from France to that court, to conclude the peace of 1763. Her conduct in this business was so agreeable to the king of England, that he desired that she might carry to France the ratification of the treaty of peace concluded between his court and that of Versailles: and her own sovereign, as a mark of his approbation, honoured her with the order of St. Louis.

“When M. de Nivernois quitted his embassy, Mademoiselle D'Eon was appointed minister plenipotentiary to the court of London. Her disputes with M. de Guerchy, who succeeded M.

de Nivernois, are told with great spirit in one large volume quarto, entitled, "Lettres, Memoires, et Negociations particulaires du Chevalier D'Eon ; Londres, 1764." Whatever part the French ministry might chuse to take in these disputes, her sovereign still continued to honour her with his protection and confidence, and she remained in epistolary correspondence with him till the time of his death.

"Louis XV. had from time to time given her pensions of different values ; one of three thousand livres in 1757 ; another of two thousand livres, in 1760 ; and in 1766, a third, from his own private purse, of twelve thousand livres.

"This pension was continued to Mademoiselle D'Eon by the late king of France, with an express order for the resumption of her sex, and on condition that she wears the dress of a woman. He permitted her, at her own particular request, to retain the cross of St. Louis."

From the London Paper.

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

"It appears 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 XV. 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.

“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. 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 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 Chevalier D'Eon. M. D'Eon has left two or three nephews, of the name of O'Gonman, related also, we believe, to the noble family of Thomond, in Ireland. None of these gentlemen are, however, in England at this time.

“The body of this extraordinary character has undergone not only the 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 three to one. His Highness the Duke of Gloucester, and several other persons of distinction, were among the lat-

ter. 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-Millman-street, 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 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 *fayees* also remained 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 his death.”

DOMESTICK DISCOVERIES.

OBSERVATIONS

Made in a voyage commencing at St. Catharine's landing, on the east bank of the Mississippi, proceeding downwards to the mouth of Red river, and from thence ascending that river, the Black river, and the Washita river, as high as the hot springs in the proximity of the last mentioned river ; extracted from the Journals of William Dunbar, Esq. and Doctor Hunter..... *Concluded.*

The Red and Arcansa rivers, whose courses are very long, pass through portions of this fine country. They are both navigable to an unknown distance by boats of a proper construction ; the Arcansa river is, however, understood to have greatly the advantage with respect to the facility of navigation. Some difficult places