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Frailties of fashion, or, the adventures of an Irish smock

interspersed with whimsical anecdotes of a Nankeen pair of breeches

Containing among a great variety of curious connexions between the most celebrated Demi Reps and Beaux Garçons upon the ton, the secret memoirs of Madame D'Eon as related by herself ...

London, 1784

Chap. XVI.

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C H A P. XVI.

Minionette's intimate acquaintance with Madame D'Eon---That celebrated lady's history as delivered by herself, containing many curious particulars that never before transpired.

SOON after Minionette's arrival at Paris, she found means to be introduced to Madame D'Eon, who finding she had lately come from England, was very desirous and inquisitive to be acquainted with the state of gallantry in this kingdom, and particularly of what the world said of her. In these respects Minionette was very capable of gratifying her most extensive curiosity, which so captivated and ingratiated her with Madame D'Eon, that she was invited to an
apartment

apartment in her house, and they became inseparable companions.

In the course of one of their *tete-a-tetes*, Minionette having expressed some desire of being more particularly acquainted with the story of the late nominal chevalier, he or she (though Madame was no longer of the doubtful gender) readily acquiesced to give an outline of her *history*, nearly as follows:

“ My memoirs are, doubtless, very extraordinary, and I shall one day give them to the world, not only as an apology for my conduct, but as a tribute to posterity, for having for such a series of years imposed upon my own country, and the several courts of Europe. I have, however, this to say in my vindication, that I always exerted my greatest abilities, as well in a military as a political capacity, for the service of my king, and the glory of his people.”

After

After this exordiom, Madame D'Eon continued as follows: " My father was an officer of rank in the army, and had distinguished himself upon various occasions in the campaigns of *Louis quatorze*; he had, however, received little other reward than a small pension, which accompanies the order of St. Louis, and was therefore obliged to live in an obscure manner distant from the metropolis. He had a brother, who had never been married, and seemed to have taken an aversion to the fair sex, as it is surmised from some crosses he experienced in love, in his juvenile days, and some difasters he met with from beauty. Thus irritated at the female world, he shunned their company, and acquainted my father he should bequeath all his fortune to his son, in case he should have

have one; but if he unfortunately should have no other than female issue, his thoughts, in this respect, would be directed to another channel. My father having received this information, and being willing to preserve the estate in the family, at my birth concealed my sex, and passed me for a boy. I was cherished as such, and received an education suited to my nominal gender. After having gone through a classical career, and improved myself in the polite exercises, I obtained a commission in the army. About this period my uncle died and left me the promised patrimony, which though not great, enabled me to figure like a gentleman, and preserve the rank I held in the army with propriety and honour.

VOL. I.

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“ My



“ My father’s past services being considered, and without vanity, my military talents being noticed by my superior officers, I was speedily promoted, and obtained the rank of captain of dragoons, in which capacity I acted the last war in Germany.

“ As I had entertained as great a detestation, almost as my uncle, for women, and nearly hated and despised myself for being born one; I endeavoured to combat all those passions that might betray the secret, which I had resolved, if possible, never to reveal. But, as the English poet finely says,

—Nature is Nature, Lælius,

Let the wise say what they will.—

I found I had undertaken a task that it was almost impracticable to perform.

The

The frailties and fatalies of love I soon experienced. A young Lieutenant in our corps, who seemed born to captivate and conquer, as well in the field of Mars as that of Venus, made such an impresson on me, that I was at length compelled to make him my confidant. Whenever I met his eyes, mine were rivetted upon them, and I felt such an apparently electric shock throughout my whole frame, as I thought had so far betrayed me, that I imagined it was needless to keep on the mask any longer.

But before I yielded to his solicitations, upon the discovery I made, I conjured him to the most inviolable secrecy, which he sealed with his fervent vows and protestations almost unparelled. In this respect I had no reason to upbraid him; but he was so inconstant,

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and

and fond of variety, that I soon experienced the effects of his roving. I now called him to account for injuring me in a most essential manner, and compelling me to expose my sex to the surgeon of the regiment. We fought; I wounded him; but not without receiving a wound myself, as (displaying her bosom) you may perceive."

"The campaign soon after closed: I returned to Paris, and was employed in a public capacity at the court of Petersburgh, where I acquitted myself to the satisfaction of that Versailles. I was there, nevertheless, in a very whimsical predicament, as a certain great lady, who considered the *Corps diplomatique*, entirely at her devotion, made such indirect overtures, that I was obliged to call into play all the address

dress that I was then *master* of, to avoid coming to such an *ecclaircissement*, as would have betrayed me in every respect.

Soon after this I was appointed Charge d'Affaires to the Court of England; my reception there, and the dispute I had with Count Guerchy, are recent in every one's memory. Even there I had a very difficult game to play with the ladies, and particularly with the Stable Yard Messalina, who had for some years laid an embargo upon all Foreign Ministers. By a stratagem I escaped detection, in intimating that I found my health was injured, and her ladyship politely thanked me for the generous information.

By this means I avoided making a worse figure, *if possible*, than a certain northern potentate, who was in Eng-

land some years since, and whom she had solicited to her arms ; but upon a fair and amorous trial before the God of Love and herself, he was pronounced *incapable*, or in other words—as her ladyship expressed it, “ *Il ne valoit pas la peine d’être br—lé---car,*
“ *au bout du tout, il n’a rien fait---il*
“ *m’a seulement ratté.*” *

“ I now approach that period which called my sex in question, and gave rise to many Policies that were opened upon that subject. If you recollect, continued Madame E’Eon, I made *un trou a la Lune* for some weeks, and was advertised ; many of my friends thinking some accident had befallen me,
and

* The mere English reader must here be left to his own suggestion, as we cannot find *proper* words in the English language to translate this passage.

and that I might have been robbed and assassinated. The truth is, I was pregnant, and near the time of my delivery; a temporary retreat was therefore necessary, and I took up my residence for some time at a house near Red-lion-square, in consequence of an advertisement that suited my present purpose.

“ Unfortunately, the midwife, who attended me, formerly visited some of the upper servants at Count de Guerchy’s; she recognized my features, and discovered the imposition I had hitherto put upon the public, to my landlady. The affair soon got wind, and I had no sooner recovered from my late indisposition, and appeared again abroad, than the policies I have already mentioned began to be set on foot. Many impertinent questions were even put to me by several of the parties concerned,

cerned, and I failed not to resent them in a proper manner, suitable to the rank I had assumed in life.

“At length, however, a trial took place, and such evidences were subpoenaed as evidently proved my real sex. It was now time to quit England, and I accordingly returned to France, where I was kindly received at Court. The Queen having been informed of what had passed in England, intreated me to reveal the secret, as I might be sure of her protection. It was in vain any longer to continue the disguise, and since that time I have appeared as you see, garbed like a female.”

Madame D'Eon had scarcely reached this part of her narrative, before Count Artois and another nobleman were announced, and presently introduced.

CHAP.

C H A P. XVII.

Minionette enters into the service of Count D'Artois as a procurefs—succeeds in her negociation with Mrs. L-b-rt, is handsomely rewarded—Her intrigue with M. Pouffebien, a musqueteer—Her intrigue with M. Da—l—. The consequences of her itch for pilfering.

MINIONETTE judged this a favourable opportunity of making an acquaintance with the Count, whose amours re-echoed through Paris, and in which she thought she could act a very useful part to his Highness, and a no less beneficial one to herself. With these sentiments she failed not to ingratiate herself as much as possible with