

ANTHONY HAMILTON

THE MEMOIRS OF
COUNT GRAMMONT –
VOLUME 02

Anthony Hamilton
The Memoirs of Count
Grammont – Volume 02

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Count Anthony Hamilton

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CHAPTER FOURTH

HIS ARRIVAL AT THE COURT OF TURIN, AND HOW HE SPENT HIS TIME THERE

Military glory is at most but one half of the accomplishments which distinguish heroes. Love must give the finishing stroke, and adorn their character by the difficulties they encounter, the temerity of their enterprises, and finally, by the lustre of success. We have examples of this, not only in romances, but also in the genuine histories of the most famous warriors and the most celebrated conquerors.

The Chevalier de Grammont and Matta, who did not think much of these examples, were, however, of opinion, that it would be very agreeable to refresh themselves after the fatigues of the siege of Trino, by forming some other sieges, at the expense of the beauties and the husbands of Turin. As the campaign had finished early, they thought they should have time to perform

some exploits before the bad weather obliged them to repossess the mountains.

They sallied forth, therefore, not unlike Amadis de Gaul or Don Galaor after they had been dubbed knights, eager in their search after adventures in love, war and enchantments. They were greatly superior to those two brothers, who only knew how to cleave in twain giants, to break lances, and to carry off fair damsels behind them on horseback, without saying a single word to them; whereas our heroes were adepts at cards and dice, of which the others were totally ignorant.

They went to Turin, met with an agreeable reception, and were greatly distinguished at court. Could it be otherwise? They were young and handsome; they had wit at command, and spent their money liberally. In what country will not a man succeed, possessing such advantages? As Turin was at that time the seat of gallantry and of love, two strangers of this description, who were always cheerful, brisk and lively, could not fail to please the ladies of the court.

Though the men of Turin were extremely handsome, they were not, however, possessed of the art of pleasing. They treated their wives with respect, and were courteous to strangers. Their wives, still more handsome, were full as courteous to strangers, and less respectful to their husbands.

Madame Royale, a worthy daughter of Henry IV., rendered her little court the most agreeable in the world. She inherited such of her father's virtues as compose the proper ornament of

her sex; and with regard to what are termed the foibles of great souls, her highness had in no wise degenerated.

The Count de Tanes was her prime minister. It was not difficult to conduct affairs of state during his administration. No complaints were alleged against him; and the princess, satisfied with his conduct herself, was, above all, glad to have her choice approved by her whole court, where people lived nearly according to the manners and customs of ancient chivalry.

The ladies had each a professed lover, for fashion's sake, besides volunteers, whose numbers were unlimited. The declared admirers wore their mistresses' liveries, their arms, and sometimes even took their names. Their office was, never to quit them in public, and never to approach them in private; to be their squires upon all occasions, and, in jousts and tournaments, to adorn their lances, their housings, and their coats, with the cyphers and the colours of their dulcineas.

Matta was far from being averse to gallantry; but would have liked it more simple than as it was practised at Turin. The ordinary forms would not have disgusted him; but he found here a sort of superstition in the ceremonies and worship of love, which he thought very inconsistent: however, as he had submitted his conduct in that matter to the direction of the Chevalier de Grammont, he was obliged to follow his example, and to conform to the customs of the country.

They enlisted themselves at the same time in the service of two beauties, whose former squires gave them up immediately

from motives of politeness. The Chevalier de Grammont chose Mademoiselle de Saint-Germain, and told Matta to offer his services to Madame de Senantes. Matta consented, though he liked the other better; but the Chevalier de Grammont persuaded him that Madame de Senantes was more suitable for him. As he had reaped advantage from the Chevalier's talents in the first projects they had formed, he resolved to follow his instructions in love, as he had done his advice in play.

Mademoiselle de Saint-Germain was in the bloom of youth; her eyes were small, but very bright and sparkling, and, like her hair, were black; her complexion was lively and clear, though not fair: she, had an agreeable mouth, two fine rows of teeth, a neck as handsome as one could wish, and a most delightful shape; she had a particular elegance in her elbows, which, however, she did not show to advantage; her hands were rather large and not very white; her feet, though not of the smallest, were well shaped; she trusted to Providence, and used no art to set off those graces which she had received from nature; but, notwithstanding her negligence in the embellishment of her charms, there was something so lively in her person, that the Chevalier de Grammont was caught at first sight; her wit and humour corresponded with her other qualities, being quite easy and perfectly charming; she was all mirth, all life, all complaisance and politeness, and all was natural, and always the same without any variation.

The Marchioness de Senantes was esteemed fair, and she

might have enjoyed, if she had pleased, the reputation of having red hair, had she not rather chosen to conform to the taste of the age in which she lived than to follow that of the ancients: she had all the advantages of red hair without any of the inconveniences; a constant attention to her person served as a corrective to the natural defects of her complexion. After all, what does it signify, whether cleanliness be owing to nature or to art? it argues an invidious temper to be very inquisitive about it. She had a great deal of wit, a good memory, more reading, and a still greater inclination towards tenderness.

She had a husband whom it would have been criminal even in chastity to spare. He piqued himself upon being a Stoic, and gloried in being slovenly and disgusting in honour of his profession. In this he succeeded to admiration; for he was very fat, so that he perspired almost as much in winter as in summer. Erudition and brutality seemed to be the most conspicuous features of his character, and were displayed in his conversation, sometimes together, sometimes alternately, but always disagreeably: he was not jealous, and yet he was troublesome; he was very well pleased to see attentions paid to his wife, provided more were paid to him.

As soon as our adventurers had declared themselves, the Chevalier de Grammont arrayed himself in green habiliments, and dressed Matta in blue, these being the favourite colours of their new mistresses. They entered immediately upon duty: the Chevalier learned and practised all the ceremonies of this species

of gallantry, as if he always had been accustomed to them; but Matta commonly forgot one half, and was not over perfect in practising the other. He never could remember that his office was to promote the glory, and not the interest, of his mistress.

The Duchess of Savoy gave the very next day an entertainment at La

Venerie, where all the ladies were invited.

The Chevalier was so agreeable and diverting, that he made his mistress almost die with laughing. Matta, in leading his lady to the coach, squeezed her hand, and at their return from the promenade he begged of her to pity his sufferings. Thus was proceeding rather too precipitately, and although Madame de Senantes was not destitute of the natural compassion of her sex, she nevertheless was shocked at the familiarity of this treatment; she thought herself obliged to show some degree of resentment, and pulling away her hand, which he had pressed with still greater fervency upon this declaration, she went up to the royal apartments without even looking at her new lover. Matta, never thinking that he had offended her, suffered her to go, and went in search of some company to sup with him: nothing was more easy for a man of his disposition; he soon found what he wanted, sat a long time at table to refresh himself after the fatigue, of love, and went to bed completely satisfied that he had performed his part to perfection.

During all this time the Chevalier de Grammont acquitted himself towards Mademoiselle de Saint Germain with universal

applause; and without remitting his assiduities, he found means to shine, as they went along, in the relation of a thousand entertaining anecdotes, which he introduced in the general conversation. Her Royal Highness heard them with pleasure, and the solitary Senantes likewise attended to them. He perceived this, and quitted his mistress to inquire what she had done with Matta.

"I" said she, "I have done nothing with him; but I don't know what he would have done with me if I had been obliging enough to listen to his most humble solicitations."

She then told him in what manner his friend had treated her the very second day of their acquaintance.

The Chevalier could not forbear laughing at it: he told her Matta was rather too unceremonious, but yet she would like him better as their intimacy more improved, and for her consolation he assured her that he would have spoken in the same manner to her Royal Highness herself; however, he would not fail to give him a severe reprimand. He went the next morning into his room for that purpose; but Matta had gone out early in the morning on a shooting party, in which he had been engaged by his supper companions in the preceding evening. At his return he took a brace of partridges and went to his mistress. Being asked whether he wished to see the Marquis, he said no; and the Swiss telling him his lady was not at home, he left his partridges, and desired him to present them to his mistress from him.

The Marchioness was at her toilet, and was decorating her

head with all the grace she could devise to captivate Matta, at the moment he was denied admittance: she knew nothing of the matter; but her husband knew every particular. He had taken it in dudgeon that the first visit was not paid to him, and as he was resolved that it should not be paid to his wife, the Swiss had received his orders, and had almost been beaten for receiving the present which had been left. The partridges, however, were immediately sent back, and Matta, without examining into the cause, was glad to have them again. He went to court without ever changing his clothes, or in the least considering he ought not to appear there without his lady's colours. He found her becomingly dressed; her eyes appeared to him more than usually sparkling, and her whole person altogether divine. He began from that day to be much pleased with himself for his complaisance to the Chevalier de Grammont; however, he could not help remarking that she looked but coldly upon him. This appeared to him a very extraordinary return for his services, and, imagining that she was unmindful of her weighty obligations to him, he entered into conversation with her, and severely reprimanded her for having sent back his partridges with so much indifference.

She did not understand what he meant; and highly offended that he did not apologize, after the reprimand which she concluded him to have received, told him that he certainly had met with ladies of very complying dispositions in his travels, as he seemed to give to himself airs that she was by no means accustomed to endure. Matta desired to know wherein he could

be said to have given himself any. "Wherein?" said she: "the second day that you honoured me with your attentions, you treated me as if I had been your humble servant for a thousand years; the first time that I gave you my hand you squeezed it as violently as you were able. After this commencement of your courtship, I got into my coach, and you mounted your horse; but instead of riding by the side of the coach, as any reasonable gallant would have done, no sooner did a hare start from her form, than you immediately galloped full speed after her; having regaled yourself, during the promenade, by taking snuff, without ever deigning to bestow a thought on me, the only proof you gave me, on your return, that you recollected me, was by soliciting me to surrender my reputation in terms polite enough, but very explicit. And now you talk to me of having been shooting of partridges and of some visit or other, which, I suppose, you have been dreaming of, as well as of all the rest."

The Chevalier de Grammont now advanced, to the interruption of this whimsical dialogue. Matta was rebuked for his forwardness, and his friend took abundant pains to convince him that his conduct bordered more upon insolence than familiarity. Matta endeavoured to exculpate himself, but succeeded ill. His mistress took compassion upon him, and consented to admit his excuses, for the manner, rather than his repentance for the fact, and declared that it was the intention alone which could either justify or condemn, in such cases; that it was very easy to pardon those transgressions which arise from

excess of tenderness, but not such as proceeded from too great a presumption of success. Matta swore that he only squeezed her hand from the violence of his passion, and that he had been driven, by necessity, to ask her to relieve it; that he was yet a novice in the arts of sollicitation; that he could not possibly think her more worthy of his affection, after a month's service, than at the present moment; and that he entreated her to cast away an occasional thought upon him when her leisure admitted. The Marchioness was not offended, she saw very well that she must require an implicit conformity to the established rule of decorum, when she had to deal with such a character; and the Chevalier de Grammont, after this sort of reconciliation, went to look after his own affair with Mademoiselle de St. Germain.

His concern was not the offspring of mere good nature, nay, it was the reverse; for no sooner did he perceive that the Marchioness looked with an eye of favour upon him, than this conquest, appearing to him to be more easy than the other, he thought it was prudent to take advantage of it, for fear of losing the opportunity, and that he might not have spent all his time to no purpose, in case he should prove unsuccessful with the little St. Germain.

In the mean time, in order to maintain that authority which he had usurped over the conduct of his friend, he, that very evening, notwithstanding what had been already said, reprimanded him for presuming to appear at court in his morning suit, and without his mistress's badge; for not having had the wit or prudence to pay

his first visit to the Marquis de Senantes, instead of consuming his time, to no purpose, in inquiries for the lady; and, to conclude, he asked him what the devil he meant by presenting her with a brace of miserable red partridges. "And why not?" said Matta: "ought they to have been blue, too, to match the cockade and sword-knots you made me wear the other day? Plague not me with your nonsensical whimsies: my life on it, in one fortnight your equal in foppery and folly will not be found throughout the confines of Turin; but, to reply to your questions, I did not call upon Monsieur de Senantes, because I had nothing to do with him, and because he is of a species of animals which I dislike, and always shall dislike: as for you, you appear quite charmed with being decked out in green ribands, with writing letters to your mistress, and filling your pockets with citrons, pistachios, and such sort of stuff, with which you are always cramming the poor girl's mouth, in spite of her teeth: you hope to succeed by chanting ditties composed in the days of Corisande and of Henry IV., which you will swear yourself have made upon her: happy in practising the ceremonials of gallantry, you have no ambition for the essentials. Very well: every one has a particular way of acting, as well as a particular taste: your's is to trifle in love; and, provided you can make Mademoiselle de St. Germain laugh, you are satisfied: as for my part, I am persuaded, that women here are made of the same materials as in other places; and I do not think that they can be mightily offended, if one sometimes leaves off trifling, to come to the point: however, if the Marchioness is not

of this way of thinking, she may e'en provide herself elsewhere; for I can assure her, that I shall not long act the part of her squire."

This was an unnecessary menace; for the Marchioness in reality liked him very well, was nearly of the same way of thinking herself, and wished for nothing more than to put his gallantry to the test. But Matta proceeded upon a wrong plan; he had conceived such an aversion for her husband, that he could not prevail upon himself to make the smallest advance towards his good graces. He was given to understand that he ought to begin by endeavouring to lull the dragon to sleep, before he could gain possession of the treasure; but this was all to no purpose, though, at the same time, he could never see his mistress but in public. This made him impatient, and as he was lamenting his ill-fortune to her one day: "Have the goodness, madam," said he, "to let me know where you live: there is never a day that I do not call upon you, at least, three or four times, without ever being blessed with a sight of you." "I generally sleep at home," replied she, laughing; "but I must tell you, that you will never find me there, if you do not first pay a visit to the Marquis: I am not mistress of the house. I do not tell you," continued she, "that he is a man whose acquaintance any one would very impatiently covet for his conversation: on the contrary, I agree that his humour is fantastical, and his manners not of the pleasing cast; but there is nothing so savage and inhuman, which a little care, attention, and complaisance may not tame into docility. I must repeat to you some verses upon the subject: I have got them by heart, because

they contain a little advice, which you may accommodate, if you please, to your own case."

RONDEAU

Keep in mind these maxims rare,
You who hope to win the fair;
Who are, or would esteemed be,
The quintessence of gallantry.

That fopp'ry, grinning, and grimace,
And fertile store of common-place;
That oaths as false as dicers swear,
And Wry teeth, and scented hair;
That trinkets, and the pride of dress,
Can only give your scheme success.
Keep in mind.

Has thy charmer e'er an aunt?
Then learn the rules of woman's cant,
And forge a tale, and swear you read it,
Such as, save woman, none would credit
Win o'er her confidante and pages
By gold, for this a golden age is;
And should it be her wayward fate,
To be encumbered with a mate,
A dull, old dotard should he be,

That dulness claims thy courtesy.
Keep in mind.

"Truly," said Matta, "the song may say what it pleases, but I cannot put it in practice: your husband is far too exquisite a monster for me. Why, what a plaguey odd ceremony do you require of us in this country, if we cannot pay our compliments to the wife without being in love with the husband!"

The Marchioness was much offended at this answer; and as she thought she had done enough in pointing out to him the path which would conduct him to success, if he had deserved it, she did not think it worth while to enter into any farther explanation; since he refused to cede, for her sake, so trifling an objection: from this instant she resolved to have done with him.

The Chevalier de Grammont had taken leave of his mistress nearly at the same time: the ardour of his pursuit was extinguished. It was not that Mademoiselle de Saint Germain was less worthy than hitherto of his attentions: on the contrary her attractions visibly increased: she retired to her pillow with a thousand charms, and ever rose from it with additional beauty the phrase of increasing in beauty as she increased in years seemed to have been purposely made for her. The Chevalier could not deny these truths, but yet he could not find his account in them: a little less merit, with a little less discretion, would have been more agreeable. He perceived that she attended to him with pleasure, that she was diverted with his stories as much as he could wish,

and that she received his billets and presents without scruple; but then he also discovered that she did not wish to proceed any farther. He had exhausted every species of address upon her, and all to no purpose: her attendant was gained: her family, charmed with the music of his conversation and his great attention, were never happy without him: in short, he had reduced to practice the advice contained in the Marchioness's song, and everything conspired to deliver the little Saint Germain into his hands, if the little Saint Germain had herself been willing: but alas! she was not inclined. It was in vain he told her the favour he desired would cost her nothing; and that since these treasures were rarely comprised in the fortune a lady brings with her in marriage, she would never find any person, who, by unremitting tenderness, unwearied attachment, and inviolable secrecy, would prove more worthy of them than himself. He then told her no husband was ever able to convey a proper idea of the sweets of love, and that nothing could be more different than the passionate fondness of a lover, always tender, always affectionate, yet always respectful, and the careless indifference of a husband.

Mademoiselle de Saint Germain, not wishing to take the matter in a serious light, that she might not be forced to resent it, answered, that since it was generally the custom in her country to marry, she thought it was right to conform to it, without entering into the knowledge of those distinctions, and those marvellous particulars, which she did not very well understand, and of which she did not wish to have any further explanation; that she had

submitted to listen to him this one time, but desired he would never speak to her again in the same strain, since such sort of conversation was neither entertaining to her, nor could be serviceable to him. Though no one was ever more facetious than Mademoiselle de Saint Germain, she yet knew how to assume a very serious air, when ever occasion required it. The Chevalier de Grammont soon saw that she was in earnest; and finding it would cost him a great deal of time to effect a change in her sentiments, he was so far cooled in this pursuit, that he only made use of it to hide the designs he had upon the Marchioness de Senantes.

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