ANTHONY HAMILTON

THE MEMOIRS OF COUNT GRAMMONT – VOLUME 03

Anthony Hamilton

The Memoirs of Count Grammont – Volume 03

Hamilton A.

The Memoirs of Count Grammont – Volume 03 / A. Hamilton — «Public Domain»,

Содержание

Count Anthony Hamilton
The Memoirs of Count Grammont – Volume 03

CHAPTER SIXTH

HIS ARRIVAL AT THE ENGLISH COURT – THE VARIOUS PERSONAGES OF THIS COURT

Curiosity to see a man equally famous for his crimes and his elevation, had once before induced the Chevalier de Grammont to visit England. Reasons of state assume great privileges. Whatever appears advantageous is lawful, and every thing that is necessary is honourable in politics. While the King of England sought the protection of Spain in the Low Countries, and that of the States-General in Holland, other powers sent splendid embassies to Cromwell.

This man, whose ambition had opened him a way to sovereign power by the greatest crimes, maintained himself in it by accomplishments which seemed to render him worthy of it by their lustre. The nation, of all Europe the least submissive, patiently bore a yoke which did not even leave her the shadow of that liberty of which she is so jealous; and Cromwell, master of the Commonwealth, under the title of Protector, feared at home, but yet more dreaded abroad, was at his highest pitch of glory when he was seen by the Chevalier de Grammont; but the Chevalier did not see any appearance of a court. One part of the nobility proscribed, the other removed from employments; an affectation of purity of manners, instead of the luxury which the pomp of courts displays all taken together, presented nothing but sad and serious objects in the finest city in the world; and therefore the Chevalier acquired nothing by this voyage but the idea of some merit in a profligate man, and the admiration of some concealed beauties he had found means to discover.

Affairs wore quite a different appearance at his second voyage. The joy for the restoration of the royal family still appeared in all parts. The nation, fond of change and novelty, tasted the pleasure of a natural government, and seemed to breathe again after a long oppression. In short, the same people who, by a solemn abjuration, had excluded even the posterity of their lawful sovereign, exhausted themselves in festivals and rejoicings for his return.

The Chevalier de Grammont arrived about two years after the restoration. The reception he met with in this court soon made him forget the other; and the engagements he in the end contracted in England lessened the regret he had in leaving France.

This was a desirable retreat for an exile of his disposition.

Everything flattered his taste, and if the adventures he had in this country were not the most considerable, they were at least the most agreeable of his life. But before we relate them it will not be improper to give some account of the English court, as it was at that period.

The necessity of affairs had exposed Charles II. from his earliest youth to the toils and perils of a bloody war. The fate of the king his father had left him for inheritance nothing but his misfortunes and disgraces. They overtook him everywhere; but it was not until he had struggled with his ill-fortune to the last extremity that he submitted to the decrees of Providence.

All those who were either great on account of their birth or their loyalty had followed him into exile; and all the young persons of the greatest distinction having afterwards joined him, composed a court worthy of a better fate.

Plenty and prosperity, which are thought to tend only to corrupt manners, found nothing to spoil in an indigent and wandering court. Necessity, on the contrary, which produces a thousand

advantages whether we will or no, served them for education; and nothing was to be seen among them but an emulation in glory, politeness, and virtue.

With this little court, in such high esteem for merit, the King of England returned two years prior to the period we mention, to ascend a throne which, to all appearances, he was to fill as worthily as the most glorious of his predecessors. The magnificence displayed on thus occasion was renewed at his coronation.

The death of the Duke of Gloucester, and of the Princess Royal, which followed soon after, had interrupted the course of this splendour by a tedious mourning, which they quitted at last to prepare for the reception of the Infanta of Portugal.

> [The Princess Royal: Mary, eldest daughter of Charles I., born November 4th, 1631, married to the Prince of Orange, 2nd May, 1641, who died 27th October, 1650. She arrived in England, September 23rd, and died of the smallpox, December 24th, 1660, – according to Bishop Burnet, not much lamented. "She had lived," says the author, "in her widowhood for some years with great reputation, kept a decent court, and supported her brothers very liberally; and lived within bounds. But her mother, who had the art of making herself believe anything she had a mind to, upon a conversation with the queen-mother of France, fancied the King of France might be inclined to marry her. So she wrote to her to come to Paris. In order to that, she made an equipage far above what she could support. So she ran herself into debt, sold all her jewels, and some estates that were in her power as her son's guardian; and was not only disappointed of that vain expectation, but fell into some misfortunes that lessened the reputation she had formerly lived in." History of his Own Times, vol. i., p. 238. She was mother of William III.]
>
> ["The Infanta, of Portugal landed in May (1662) at Portsmouth. The king went thither, and was married privately by Lord Aubigny, a secular priest, and almoner to the queen, according to the rites of Rome, in the queen's chamber; none present but the Portuguese ambassador, three more Portuguese of quality, and two or three Portuguese women. What made this necessary was, that the Earl of Sandwich did not marry her by proxy, as usual, before she came away. How this happened, the duke knows not, nor did the chancellor know of this private marriage. The queen would not be bedded, till pronounced man and wife by Sheldon, bishop of London." – Extract 2, from King James II.'s Journal. – Macpherson's State Papers, vol. i. In the same collection is a curious letter from the King to Lord Clarendon, giving his opinion of the queen after having seen her.]

It was in the height of the rejoicings they were making for this new queen, in all the splendour of a brilliant court, that the Chevalier de Grammont arrived to contribute to its magnificence and diversions.

Accustomed as he was to the grandeur of the court of France, he was surprised at the politeness and splendour of the court of England. The king was inferior to none, either in shape or air; his wit was pleasant; his disposition easy and affable; his soul, susceptible of opposite impressions, was compassionate to the unhappy, inflexible to the wicked, and tender even to excess; he showed great abilities in urgent affairs, but was incapable of application to any that were not so: his heart was often the dupe, but oftener the slave, of his engagements.

The character of the Duke of York was entirely different he had the reputation of undaunted courage, an inviolable attachment for his word, great economy in his affairs, hauteur, application, arrogance, each in their turn: a scrupulous observer of the rules of duty and the laws of justice; he was accounted a faithful friend, and an implacable enemy.

[James, Duke of York, afterwards King James II. He was born 15th October, 1633; succeeded his brother 6th February, 1684-5; abdicated the crown in 1688; and died 6th September, 1701. Bishop Burnet's character of him appears not very far from the truth. – "He was," says this writer, "very brave in his youth; and so much magnified by Monsieur Turenne, that till his marriage lessened him, he really clouded the king, and passed for the superior genius. He was naturally candid and sincere, and a firm friend, till affairs and his religion wore out all his first principles and inclinations he had a great desire to understand affairs: and in order to that he kept a constant journal of all that passed, of which he showed me a great deal. The Duke of Buckingham gave me once a short but severe character of the two brothers. It was the more severe, because it was true: the king, (he said,) could see things if he would: and the duke would see things if he could. He had no true judgment, and was soon determined by those whom he trusted: but he was obstinate against all other advices. He was bred with high notions of kingly authority, and laid it down for a maxim, that all who opposed the king were rebels in their hearts. He was perpetually in one amour or other, without being very nice in his choice: upon which the king once said, he believed his brother had his mistress given him by his priests for penance. He was naturally eager and revengeful: and was against the taking off any, that set up in an opposition to the measures of the court, and who by that means grew popular in the house of commons. He was for rougher methods. He continued many years dissembling his religion, and seemed zealous for the church of England, but it was chiefly on design to hinder all propositions, that tended to unite us among ourselves. He was a frugal prince, and brought his court into method and magnificence, for he had L100,000. a-year allowed him. He was made high admiral, and he came to understand all the concerns of the sea very particularly."]

His morality and justice, struggling for some time with prejudice, had at last triumphed, by his acknowledging for his wife Miss Hyde, maid of honour to the Princess Royal, whom he had secretly married in Holland. Her father, from that time prime minister of England, supported by this new interest, soon rose to the head of affairs, and had almost ruined them: not that he wanted capacity, but he was too self-sufficient.

The Duke of Ormond possessed the confidence and esteem of his master: the greatness of his services, the splendour of his merit and his birth, and the fortune he had abandoned in adhering to the fate of his prince, rendered him worthy of it nor durst the courtiers even murmur at seeing him grand steward of the household, first lord of the bed-chamber, and lord-lieutenant of Ireland. He exactly resembled the Marshal de Grammont, in the turn of his wit and the nobleness of his manners: and like him was the honour of his master's court.

The Duke of Buckingham and the Earl of St. Albans were the same in England as they appeared in France: the one full of wit and vivacity, dissipated, without splendour, an immense estate upon which he had just entered: the other, a man of no great genius, had raised himself a considerable fortune from nothing, and by losing at play, and keeping a great table, made it appear greater than it was.

["The Duke of Buckingham is again one hundred and forty thousand pounds in debt; and by this prorogation his creditors have time to tear all his lands to pieces." – Andrew Marvell's Works, 4to. edit., vol. i. p. 406.]

Sir George Berkeley, afterwards Earl of Falmouth, was the confidant and favourite of the King: he commanded the Duke of York's regiment of guards, and governed the Duke himself. He had nothing very remarkable either in his wit, or his person; but his sentiments were worthy of the fortune which awaited him, when, on the very point of his elevation, he was killed at sea. Never did

disinterestedness so perfectly characterise the greatness of the soul: he had no views but what tended to the glory of his master: his credit was never employed but in advising him to reward services, or to confer favours on merit: so polished in conversation, that the greater his power, the greater was his humility; and so sincere in all his proceedings, that he would never have been taken for a courtier.

The Duke of Ormond's sons and his nephews had been in the king's court during his exile, and were far from diminishing its lustre after his return. The Earl of Arran had a singular address in all kinds of exercises, played well at tennis and on the guitar, and was pretty successful in gallantry: his elder brother, the Earl of Ossory, was not so lively, but of the most liberal sentiments, and of great probity.

The elder of the Hamiltons, their cousin, was the man who of all the court dressed best: he was well made in his person, and possessed those happy talents which lead to fortune, and procure success in love: he was a most assiduous courtier, had the most lively wit, the most polished manners, and the most punctual attention to his master imaginable: no person danced better, nor was any one a more general lover: a merit of some account in a court entirely devoted to love and gallantry. It is not at all surprising, that with these qualities he succeeded my Lord Falmouth in the King's favour; but it is very extraordinary that he should have experienced the same destiny, as if this sort of war had been declared against merit only, and as if this sort of combat was fatal to none but such as had certain hopes of a splendid fortune. This, however, did not happen till some years afterwards.

The beau Sydney, less dangerous than he appeared to be,

> [Robert Sydney, third son of the Earl of Leicester, and brother of the famous Algernon Sydney, who was beheaded. This is Lord Orford's account; though, on less authority, I should have been inclined to have considered Henry Sydney, his younger brother, who was afterwards created Earl of Rumney, and died 8th April, 1704, as the person intended. There are some circumstances which seem particularly to point to him. Burnet, speaking of him, says, "he was a, graceful man, and had lived long in the court, where he lead some adventures that became very public. He was a man of a sweet and caressing temper, had no malice in his heart, but too great a love of pleasure. He had been sent envoy to Holland in the year 1679, where he entered into such particular confidences with the prince, that he had the highest measure of his trust and favour that any Englishman ever had." – History of his Own Times, vol. ii., p. 494.
>
> In the Essay on Satire, by Dryden and Mulgrave, he is spoken of in no very decent terms.
>
> "And little Sid, for simile renown'd,
> Pleasure has always sought, but never found
> Though all his thoughts on wine and women fall,
> His are so bad, sure he ne'er thinks at all.
> The flesh he lives upon is rank and strong;
> His meat and mistresses are kept too long.
> But sure we all mistake this pious man,
> Who mortifies his person all he can
> What we uncharitably take for sin,
> Are only rules of this odd capuchin;
> For never hermit, under grave pretence,
> Has lived more contrary to common sense."

These verses, however, have been applied to Sir Charles Sedley, whose name was originally spelt Sidley. Robert Sydney died at Pensburst, 1674.]

had not sufficient vivacity to support the impression which his figure made; but little Jermyn was on all sides successful in his intrigues. The old Earl of St. Albans, his uncle, had for a long time adopted him, though the youngest of all his nephews. It is well known what a table the good man kept at Paris, while the King his master was starving at Brussels, and the Queen Dowager, his mistress, lived not over well in France.

[To what a miserable state the queen was reduced may be seen in the following extract from De Retz. – "Four or five days before the king removed from Paris, I went to visit the Queen of England, whom I found in her daughter's chamber, who hath been since Duchess of Orleans. At my coming in she said, 'You see I am come to keep Henrietta company. The poor child could not rise to-day for want of a fire.' The truth is, that the cardinal for six months together had not ordered her any money towards her pension; that no trades-people would trust her for anything; and that there was not at her lodgings in the Louvre one single billet. You will do me the justice to suppose that the Princess of England did not keep her bed the next day for want of a faggot; but it was not this which the Princess of Conde meant in her letter. What she spoke about was, that some days after my visiting the Queen of England, I remembered the condition I had found her in, and had strongly represented the shame of abandoning her in that manner, which caused the parliament to send 40,000 livres to her majesty. Posterity will hardly believe that a Princess of England, grand-daughter of Henry the Great, hath wanted a faggot, in the month of January, to get out of bed in the Louvre, and in the eyes of a French court. We read in histories, with horror, of baseness less monstrous than this; and the little concern I have met with about it in most people's minds, has obliged me to make, I believe, a thousand times, this reflection, – that examples of times past move men beyond comparison more than those of their own times. We accustom ourselves to what we see; and I have sometimes told you, that I doubted whether Caligula's horse being made a consul would have surprised us so much as we imagine." – Memoirs, vol. i., p. 261. As for the relative situation of the king and Lord Jermyn, (afterwards St. Albans,) Lord Clarendon says, that the "Marquis of Ormond was compelled to put himself in prison, with other gentlemen, at a pistole a-week for his diet, and to walk the streets a-foot, which was no honourable custom in Paris, whilst the Lord Jermyn kept an excellent table for those who courted him, and had a coach of his own, and all other accommodations incident to the most full fortune: and if the king had the most urgent occasion for the use but of twenty pistoles, as sometimes he had, he could not find credit to borrow it, which he often had experiment of." – History of the Rebellion, vol. iii., p. 2.]

Jermyn, supported by his uncle's wealth, found it no difficult matter to make a considerable figure upon his arrival at the court of the Princess of Orange: the poor courtiers of the king her brother could not vie with him in point of equipage and magnificence; and these two articles often produce as much success in love as real merit: there is no necessity for any other example than the present; for though Jermyn was brave, and certainly a gentleman, yet he had neither brilliant actions, nor distinguished rank, to set him off; and as for his fibre, there was nothing advantageous in it. He was little: his head was large and his legs small; his features were not disagreeable, but he was affected in his carriage and behaviour. All his wit consisted in expressions learnt by rote, which he occasionally employed either in raillery, or in love. This was the whole foundation of the merit of a man so formidable in amours.

The Princess Royal was the first who was taken with him: Miss Hyde seemed to be following the steps of her mistress: this immediately brought him into credit, and his reputation was established in England before his arrival. Prepossession in the minds of women is sufficient to find access to their hearts: Jermyn found them in dispositions so favourable for him, that he had nothing to do but to speak.

It was in vain they perceived that a reputation so lightly established, was still more weakly sustained: the prejudice remained: the Countess of Castlemaine, a woman lively and discerning followed the delusive shadow; and though undeceived in a reputation which promised so much, and performed so little, she nevertheless continued in her infatuation: she even persisted in it, until she was upon the point of embroiling herself with the King; so great was this first instance of her constancy.

Such were the heroes of the court. As for the beauties, you could not look anywhere without seeing them: those of the greatest reputation were this same Countess of Castlemaine, afterwards Duchess of Cleveland, Lady Chesterfield, Lady Shrewsbury, the Mrs. Roberts, Mrs. Middleton, the Misses Brooks, and a thousand others, who shone at court with equal lustre; but it was Miss Hamilton and Miss Stewart who were its chief ornaments.

> [Lady Shrewsbury: Anna, Maria, Countess of Shrewsbury, eldest daughter of Robert Brudenel, Earl of Cardigan, and wife of Francis, Earl of Shrewsbury, who was killed in a duel by George, Duke of Buckingham, March 16, 1667. She afterwards re-married with George Rodney Bridges, Esq., second son of Sir Thomas Bridges of Keynsham, in Somersetshire, knight, and died April 20, 1702. By her second husband she had one son, George Rodney Bridges, who died in 1751. This woman is said to have been so abandoned, as to have held, in the habit of a page, her gallant, the duke's horse, while he fought and killed her husband; after which she went to bed with him, stained with her husband's blood.]

The new queen gave but little additional brilliancy to the court, either in her person or in her retinue, which was then composed of the Countess de Panetra, who came over with her in quality of lady of the bedchamber; six frights, who called themselves maids of honour, and a duenna, another monster, who took the title of governess to those extraordinary beauties.

> [Lord Clarendon confirms, in some measure, this account. "There was a numerous family of men and women, that were sent from Portugal, the most improper to promote that conformity in the queen that was necessary for her condition and future happiness that could be chosen; the women, for the most part, old, and ugly, and proud, incapable of any conversation with persons of quality and a liberal education: and they desired, and indeed had conspired so far to possess the queen themselves, that she should neither learn the English language, nor use their habit, nor depart from the manners and fashions of her own country in any particulars: which resolution," they told, "would be for the dignity of Portugal, and would quickly induce the English ladies to conform to her majesty's practice. And this imagination had made that impression, that the tailor who had been sent into Portugal to make her clothes could never be admitted to see her, or receive any employment. Nor when she came to Portsmouth, and found there several ladies of honour and prime quality to attend her in the places to which they were assigned by the king, did she receive any of them till the king himself came; nor then with any grace, or the liberty that belonged to their places and offices. She could not be persuaded to be dressed out of the wardrobe that the king had sent to her, but would wear the clothes which she had brought, until she found that the king was displeased, and would be obeyed; whereupon she conformed, against the advice of her women, who continued their opiniatrety, without any one of them receding from their own

mode, which exposed them the more to reproach." – Continuation of Clarendon's Life, p. 168. In a short time after their arrival in England, they were ordered back to Portugal.]

Among the men were Francisco de Melo, brother to the Countess de Panetra; one Taurauvedez, who called himself Don Pedro Francisco Correo de Silva, extremely handsome, but a greater fool than all the Portuguese put together: he was more vain of his names than of his person; but the Duke of Buckingham, a still greater fool than he, though more addicted to raillery, gave him the additional name of Peter of the Wood. He was so enraged at this, that, after many fruitless complaints and ineffectual menaces, poor Pedro de Silva was obliged to leave England, while the happy duke kept possession of a Portuguese nymph more hideous than the queen's maids of honour, whom he had taken from him, as well as two of his names. Besides these, there were six chaplains, four bakers, a Jew perfumer, and a certain officer, probably without an office, who called himself her highness's barber. Katharine de Braganza was far from appearing with splendour in the charming court where she came to reign; however, in the end she was pretty successful.

[Lord Clarendon says, "the queen had beauty and wit enough to make herself agreeable to him (the king); and it is very certain, that, at their first meeting, and for some time after, the King had very good satisfaction in her… Though she was of years enough to have had more experience of the world, and of as much wit as could be wished, and of a humour very agreeable at some seasons, yet, she had been bred, according to the mode and discipline of her country, in a monastery, where she had only seen the women who attended her, and conversed with the religious who resided there; and, without doubt, in her inclinations, was enough disposed to have been one of that number: and from this restraint she was called out to be a great queen, and to a free conversation in a court that was to be upon the matter new formed, and reduced from the manners of a licentious age to the old rules and limits which had been observed in better times; to which regular and decent conformity the present disposition of men or women was not enough inclined to submit, nor the king enough disposed to exact." – Continuation of Lord Clarendon's Life, p. 167. After some struggle, she submitted to the king's licentious conduct, and from that time lived upon easy terms with him, until his death. On the 30th March, 1692, she left Somerset-house, her usual residence, and retired to Lisbon, where she died, 31st December, 1705, N. S.]

The Chevalier de Grammont, who had been long known to the royal family, and to most of the gentlemen of the court, had only to get acquainted with the ladies; and for this he wanted no interpreter: they all spoke French enough to explain themselves, and they all understood it sufficiently to comprehend what he had to say to them.

The queen's court was always very numerous; that of the duchess was less so, but more select. This princess had a majestic air, a pretty good shape, not much beauty, a great deal of wit, and so just a discernment of merit, that, whoever of either sex were possessed of it, were sure to be distinguished by her: an air of grandeur in all her actions made her be considered as if born to support the rank: which placed her so near the throne.

["The Duchess of York," says Bishop Burnet, "was a very extraordinary woman. She had great knowledge, and a lively sense of things. She soon understood what belonged to a princess, and took state on her rather too much. She wrote well, and had begun the duke's life, of which she showed me a volume. It was all drawn from his journal; and he intended to have employed me in carrying it on. She was bred in great strictness in religion, and practised secret confession. Morley told me he was her confessor. She began at twelve years old, and continued under

his direction till, upon her father's disgrace, he was put from the court. She was generous and friendly, but was too severe an enemy." – history of his Own Times, vol. i., p. 237. She was contracted to the duke at Breda, November 24, 1659, and married at Worcester-house, 3rd September, 1660, in the night, between eleven and two, by Dr. Joseph Crowther, the duke's chaplain; the Lord Ossory giving her in marriage. – Kennet's Register, p. 246. She died 31st March, 1671, having previously acknowledged herself to be a Roman Catholic. – See also her character by Bishop Morley. – Kennet's Register, p. 385, 390.]

The queen dowager returned after the marriage of the princess royal, and it was in her court that the two others met.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.