

ANTHONY HAMILTON

THE MEMOIRS OF
COUNT GRAMMONT –
VOLUME 04

Anthony Hamilton

**The Memoirs of Count
Grammont – Volume 04**

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Count Anthony Hamilton

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CHAPTER EIGHTH

FUNNY ADVENTURE OF THE CHAPLAIN POUSSATIN – THE STORY OF THE SIEGE OF LERIDA – MARRIAGE OF THE DUKE OF YORK, AND OTHER DETAILS ABOUT THE ENGLISH COURT

"Sir," said the Chevalier de Grammont, "the Prince de Conde besieged Lerida: the place in itself was nothing; but Don Gregorio Brice who defended it, was something. He was one of those Spaniards of the old stamp, as valiant as the Cid, as proud as all the Guzmans put together, and more gallant than all the Abencerrages of Granada: he suffered us to make our first approaches to the place without the least molestation. The Marshal de Grammont, whose maxim it was, that a governor who at first makes a great blustering, and burns his suburbs in order to make a noble defence, generally makes a very bad one, looked upon Gregorio de Brice's politeness as no good omen for us; but the prince, covered with glory, and elated with the campaigns of Rocroy, Norlinguen, and Fribourg, to insult both the place and the governor, ordered the trenches to be mounted at noon-day by his own regiment, at the head of which marched four-and-twenty fiddlers, as if it had been to a wedding.

"Night approaching, we were all in high spirits: our violins were playing soft airs, and we were comfortably regaling ourselves: God knows how we were joking about the poor governor and his fortifications, both of which we promised ourselves to take in less than twenty-four hours. This was going on in the trenches, when we heard an ominous cry from the ramparts, repeated two or three times, of, 'Alerte on the walls!' This cry was followed by a discharge of cannon and musketry, and this discharge by a vigorous sally, which, after having filled up the trenches, pursued us as far as our grand guard.

"The next day Gregorio Brice sent by a trumpet a present of ice and fruit to the Prince de Conde, humbly beseeching his highness to excuse his not returning the serenade which he was pleased to favour him with, as unfortunately he had no violins; but that if the music of last night was not disagreeable to him, he would endeavour to continue it as long as he did him the honour to remain before the place. The Spaniard was as good as his word; and as soon as we heard, 'Alerte on the walls,' we were sure of a sally, that cleared our trenches, destroyed our works, and killed the best of our officers and soldiers. The prince was so piqued at it, that, contrary to the opinion of the general officers, he obstinately persisted in carrying on a siege which was like to ruin his army, and which he was at last forced to quit in a hurry.

"As our troops were retiring, Don Gregorio, far from giving himself those airs which governors generally do on such occasions, made no other sally, than sending a respectful compliment to the prince. Signor Brice set out not long after for Madrid, to give an account of his conduct, and to receive the recompense he had merited. Your majesty perhaps will be desirous to know what reception poor Brice met with, after having performed the most brilliant action the Spaniards could boast of in all the war – he was confined by the inquisition."

"How!" said the Queen Dowager, "confined by the inquisition for his services!" "Not altogether for his services," said the Chevalier; "but without any regard to his services, he was treated in the manner I have mentioned for a little affair of gallantry, which I shall relate to the King presently.

"The campaign of Catalonia being thus ended, we were returning home, not overloaded with laurels; but as the Prince de Conde had laid up a great store on former occasions, and as he had still great projects in his head, he soon forgot this trifling misfortune: we did nothing but joke with one another during the march, and the prince was the first to ridicule the siege. We made some of those rhymes on Lerida, which were sung all over France, in order to prevent others more severe; however, we gained nothing by it, for notwithstanding we treated ourselves freely in our own ballads, others were composed in Paris in which we were ten times more severely handled. At last we arrived at Perpignan upon a holy-day: a company of Catalans, who were dancing in the middle of the street, out of respect to the prince came to dance under his windows: Monsieur Poussatin, in a little black jacket, danced in the middle of this company, as if he was really mad. I immediately recognized him for my countryman, from his manner of skipping and frisking about: the prince was charmed with his humour and activity. After the dance, I sent for him, and inquired who he was: 'A poor priest, at your service, my lord,' said he: 'my name is Poussatin, and Bearn is my native country: I was going into Catalonia to serve in the infantry, for, God be praised, I can march very well on foot; but since the war is happily concluded, if your lordship pleases to take me into your service, I would follow you everywhere, and serve you faithfully.' 'Monsieur Poussatin,' said I, 'my lordship has no great occasion for a chaplain; but since you are so well disposed towards me, I will take you into my service.'

"The Prince de Conde, who was present at this conversation, was overjoyed at my having a chaplain. As poor Poussatin was in a very tattered condition, I had no time to provide him with a proper habit at Perpignan; but giving him a spare livery of one of the Marshal de Grammont's servants, I made him get up behind the prince's coach, who was like to die with laughing every time he looked at poor Poussatin's uncanonical mien in a yellow livery.

"As soon as we arrived in Paris, the story was told to the Queen, who at first expressed some surprise at it: this, however, did not prevent her from wishing to see my chaplain dance; for in Spain it is not altogether so strange to see ecclesiastics dance, as to see them in livery.

"Poussatin performed wonders before the Queen; but as he danced with great sprightliness, she could not bear the odour which his violent motions diffused around her room the ladies likewise began to pray for relief; for he had almost entirely got the better of all the perfumes and essences with which they were fortified: Poussatin, nevertheless, retired with a great deal of applause, and some louis d'or.

"Some time afterwards I procured a small benefice in the country for my chaplain, and I have since been informed that Poussatin preached with the same ease in his village as he danced at the wedding of his parishioners."

The King was exceedingly diverted at Poussatin's history; and the Queen was not much hurt at his having been put in livery: the treatment of Gregorio Brice offended her far more; and being desirous to justify the court of Spain, with respect to so cruel a proceeding: "Chevalier de Grammont," said she, "what heresy did Governor Brice wish to introduce into the state? What crime against religion was he charged with, that he was confined in the inquisition?" "Madam," said he, "the history is not very proper to be related before your majesty: it was a little amorous frolic, ill-timed indeed; but poor Brice meant no harm: a school-boy would not have been whipped for such a fault, in the most severe college in France; as it was only for giving some proofs of his affection to a young Spanish fair one, who had fixed her eyes upon him on a solemn occasion."

The King desired to know the particulars of the adventure; and the Chevalier gratified his curiosity, as soon as the Queen and the rest of the court were out of hearing. It was very entertaining to hear him tell a story; but it was very disagreeable to differ with him, either in competition, or in raillery: it is true that at that time there were few persons at the English court who had merited his indignation: Russell was sometimes the subject of his ridicule, but he treated him far more tenderly than he usually did a rival.

This Russell was one of the most furious dancers in all England, I mean, for country dances: he had a collection of two or three hundred in print, all of which he danced at sight; and to prove that

he was not an old man, he sometimes danced until he was almost exhausted: his mode of dancing was like that of his clothes, for they both had been out of fashion full twenty years.

The Chevalier de Grammont was very sensible that he was very much in love; but though he saw very well that it only rendered him more ridiculous, yet he felt some concern at the information he received, of his intention of demanding Miss Hamilton in marriage; but his concern did not last long. Russell, being upon the point of setting out on a journey, thought it was proper to acquaint his mistress with his intentions before his departure. The Chevalier de Grammont was a great obstacle to the interview, he was desirous of obtaining of her; but being one day sent for, to go and play at Lady Castlemaine's, Russell seized the opportunity, and addressing himself to Miss Hamilton, with less embarrassment than is usual on such occasions, he made his declaration to her in the following manner: "I am brother to the Earl of Bedford: I command the regiment of guards: I have three thousand pounds a year, and fifteen thousand in ready money: all which, madam, I come to present to you, along with my person. One present, I agree, is not worth much without the other, and therefore I put them together. I am advised to go to some of the watering places for something of an asthma, which, in all probability, cannot continue much longer, as I have had it for these last twenty years: if you look upon me as worthy of the happiness of belonging to you, I shall propose it to your father, to whom I did not think it right to apply before I was acquainted with your sentiments: my nephew William is at present entirely ignorant of my intention; but I believe he will not be sorry for it, though he will thereby see himself deprived of a pretty considerable estate; for he has great affection for me, and besides, he has a pleasure in paying his respects to you since he has perceived my attachment. I am very much pleased that he should make his court to me, by the attention he pays to you; for he did nothing but squander his money upon that coquet Middleton, while at present he is at no expense, though he frequents the best company in England."

Miss Hamilton had much difficulty to suppress her laughter during this harangue: however, she told him that she thought herself much honoured by his intentions towards her, and still more obliged to him for consulting her, before he made any overtures to her relations: "It will be time enough," said she, "to speak to them upon the subject at your return from the waters; for I do not think it is at all probable that they will dispose of me before that time, and in case they should be urgent in their solicitations, your nephew William will take care to acquaint you; therefore, you may set out whenever you think proper; but take care not to injure your health by returning too soon."

The Chevalier de Grammont, having heard the particulars of this conversation, endeavoured, as well as he could, to be entertained with it; though there were certain circumstances in the declaration, notwithstanding the absurdity of others, which did not fail to give him some uneasiness. Upon the whole, he was not sorry for Russell's departure; and, assuming an air of pleasantry, he went to relate to the king how Heaven had favoured him by delivering him from so dangerous a rival. "He is gone then, Chevalier," said the king. "Certainly, sir," said he; "I had the honour to see him embark in a coach, with his asthma, and country equipage, his perruque a calotte, neatly tied with a yellow riband, and his old-fashioned hat covered with oil skin, which becomes him uncommonly well: therefore, I have only to contend with William Russell, whom he leaves as his resident with Miss Hamilton; and as for him, I neither fear him upon his own account, nor his uncle's; he is too much in love himself to pay attention to the interests of another; and as he has but one method of promoting his own, which is by sacrificing the portrait, or some love-letters of Mrs. Middleton, I have it easily in my power to counteract him in such kind of favours, though I confess I have pretty well paid for them."

"Since your affairs proceed so prosperously with the Russells," said the king, "I will acquaint you that you are delivered from another rival, much more dangerous, if he were not already married: my brother has lately fallen in love with Lady Chesterfield." "How many blessings at once!" exclaimed the Chevalier de Grammont: "I have so many obligations to him for this inconstancy, that I would willingly serve him in his new amour, if Hamilton was not his rival: nor will your majesty take it ill, if I promote the interests of my mistress's brother, rather than those of your majesty's brother."

"Hamilton, however," said the king, "does not stand so much in need of assistance, in affairs of this nature, as the Duke of York; but I know Lord Chesterfield is of such a disposition, that he will not suffer men to quarrel about his wife, with the same patience as the complaisant Shrewsbury; though he well deserves the same fate." Here follows a true description of Lord Chesterfield.

[Philip, the second Earl of Chesterfield. He was constituted, in 1662, lord-chamberlain to the queen, and colonel of a regiment of foot, June 13, 1667. On November 29, 1679, he was appointed lord-warden and chief-justice of the king's forests on this side Trent, and sworn of the privy-council, January 26, 1680. On November 6, 1682, he was made colonel of the third regiment of foot, which, with the rest of his preferments, he resigned on the accession of James II. He lived to the age of upwards of 80, and died, January 28, 1713, at his house, in Bloomsbury-square.]

He had a very agreeable face, a fine head of hair, an indifferent shape, and a worse air; he was not, however, deficient in wit: a long residence in Italy had made him ceremonious in his commerce with men, and jealous in his connection with women: he had been much hated by the king; because he had been much beloved by Lady Castlemaine: it was reported that he had been in her good graces prior to her marriage; and as neither of them denied it, it was the more generally believed.

He had paid his devoirs to the eldest daughter of the Duke of Ormond, while his heart was still taken up with his former passion: the king's love for Lady Castlemaine, and the advancement he expected from such an alliance, made him press the match with as much ardour as if he had been passionately in love: he had therefore married Lady Chesterfield without loving her, and had lived some time with her in such coolness as to leave her no room to doubt of his indifference. As she was endowed with great sensibility and delicacy, she suffered at this contempt: she was at first much affected with his behaviour, and afterwards enraged at it; and, when he began to give her proofs of his affection, she had the pleasure of convincing him of her indifference.

They were upon this footing, when she resolved to cure Hamilton, as she had lately done her husband, of all his remaining tenderness for Lady Castlemaine. For her it was no difficult undertaking: the conversation of the one was disagreeable, from the unpolished state of her manners, her ill-timed pride, her uneven temper, and extravagant humours; Lady Chesterfield, on the contrary, knew how to heighten her charms with all the bewitching attractions in the power of a woman to invent who wishes to make a conquest.

Besides all this, she had greater opportunities of making advances to him than to any other: she lived at the Duke of Ormond's, at Whitehall, where Hamilton, as was said before, had free admittance at all hours: her extreme coldness, or rather the disgust which she showed for her husband's returning affection, wakened his natural inclination to jealousy: he suspected that she could not so very suddenly pass from anxiety to indifference for him, without some secret object of a new attachment; and, according to the maxim of all jealous husbands, he immediately put in practice all his experience and industry, in order to make a discovery, which was to destroy his own happiness.

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