

Mrs. C. L. Anderson.

THE CHEVALIER D'HARMENTAL

THE WORKS OF
ALEXANDRE DUMAS

IN THIRTY VOLUMES



THE CHEVALIER
D'HARMENTAL



ILLUSTRATED WITH DRAWINGS ON WOOD BY
EMINENT FRENCH AND AMERICAN ARTISTS



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THE CHEVALIER D'HARMENTAL

CHAPTER I

CAPTAIN ROQUEFINETTE

ON THE 22d of March, in the year of our Lord 1718, a young cavalier of high bearing, about twenty-six or twenty-eight years of age, mounted on a pure-bred Spanish charger, was waiting toward eight o'clock in the morning, at that end of the Pont Neuf which abuts on the Quai de l'Ecole.

He was so upright and firm in his saddle that one might have imagined him to be placed there as a sentinel by the Lieutenant-General of Police, Messire Voyer d'Argenson. After waiting about half an hour, during which time he impatiently examined the clock of the Samaritaine, his glance, wandering till then, appeared to rest with satisfaction on an individual who, coming from the Place Dauphine, turned to the right, and advanced toward him.

The man who thus attracted the attention of the young chevalier was a powerfully built fellow of five feet ten, wearing, instead of a peruke, a forest of his own black hair, slightly grizzled, dressed in a manner half-bourgeois, half-military, ornamented with a shoulder-knot which had once been crimson, but from exposure to sun and rain had become a dirty orange. He was armed with a long sword slung in a belt, and which bumped ceaselessly against the calves of his legs. Finally, he wore a hat once furnished with a plume and lace, and which—in remembrance, no doubt, of its past splendor—its owner had struck

so much over his left ear that it seemed as if only a miracle of equilibrium could keep it in its place. There was altogether in the countenance and in the carriage and bearing of the man (who seemed from forty to forty-five years of age, and who advanced swaggering and keeping the middle of the road, curling his mustache with one hand, and with the other signing to the carriages to give place) such a character of insolent carelessness that the cavalier who watched him smiled involuntarily as he murmured to himself, "I believe this is my man."

In consequence of this probability, he walked straight up to the new-comer, with the evident intention of speaking to him. The latter, though he evidently did not know the cavalier, seeing that he was going to address him, placed himself in the third position, and waited, one hand on his sword, and the other on his mustache, to hear what the person who was coming up had to say to him. Indeed, as the man with the orange ribbon had foreseen, the young cavalier stopped his horse by him, and, touching his hat, "Sir," said he, "I think I may conclude, from your appearance and manner, that you are a gentleman; am I mistaken?"

"No, *palsam-bleu!*" replied he to whom this strange question was addressed, touching his hat in his turn. "I am delighted that my appearance speaks so well for me, for, however little you would think that you were giving me my proper title, you may call me captain."

"I am enchanted that you are a soldier; it is an additional security to me that you are incapable of leaving a brave man in distress."

"Welcome, provided always the brave man has no need of my purse; for I confess, freely, that I have just left my last crown in a cabaret on the Port de la Tonnelle."

"Nobody wants your purse, captain; on the contrary, I beg you to believe that mine is at your disposal."

"To whom have I the honor to speak?" asked the captain, visibly touched by this reply, "and in what can I oblige you?"

"I am the Baron René de Valef," replied the cavalier.

"I think," interrupted the captain, "that I knew, in the Flemish wars, a family of that name."

"It was mine, since we are from Liège." The two speakers exchanged bows.

"You must know, then," continued the Baron de Valef, "that the Chevalier Raoul d'Harmental, one of my most intimate friends, last night, in my company, picked up a quarrel, which will finish this morning by a meeting. Our adversaries were three, and we but two. I went this morning to the houses of the Marquis de Gacé and Comte de Sourgis, but unfortunately neither the one nor the other had passed the night in his bed; so, as the affair could not wait, as I must set out in two hours for Spain, and as we absolutely require a second, or rather a third, I installed myself on the Pont Neuf with the intention of addressing the first gentleman who passed. You passed, and I addressed myself to you."

"And you have done right, *pardieu!* rest satisfied, baron, I am your man. What hour is fixed for the meeting?"

"Half-past nine this morning."

"Where will it take place?"

"At the Port Maillot."

"*Diable!* there is no time to lose; but you are on horse-back and I am on foot; how shall we manage that?"

"There is a way, captain."

"What is it?"

"It is that you should do me the honor of mounting behind me."

"Willingly, baron."

"I warn you, however," added the young cavalier, with a slight smile, "that my horse is rather spirited."

"Oh, I know him!" said the captain, drawing back a step, and looking at the beautiful animal with the eye of a connoisseur; "if I am not mistaken, he was bred between the mountains of Granada and the Sierra Morena. I rode such a one at Almanza, and I have often made him lie down

like a sheep when he wanted to carry me off at a gallop, only by pressing him with my knees."

"You reassure me. To horse, then, captain."

"Here I am, baron."

And without using the stirrup, which the young cavalier left free for him, with a single bound the captain sprang on to the croup.

The baron had spoken truly; his horse was not accustomed to so heavy a load, therefore he attempted to get rid of it. Neither had the captain exaggerated, and the animal soon felt that he had found his master; so that, after a few attempts, which had no other effect than to show to the passers-by the address of the two cavaliers, he became obedient, and went at a swinging trot down the Quai de l'Ecole, which at that time was nothing but a wharf, crossed at the same pace the Quai du Louvre and the Quai des Tuileries, through the gate of the Conference, and leaving on the left the road to Versailles, threaded the great avenue of the Champs Elysées, which now leads to the triumphal Arc de l'Etoile. Arrived at the Pont d'Antin, the Baron de Valef slackened his horse's pace a little, for he found that he had ample time to arrive at the Port Maillot at the hour fixed.

The captain profited by this respite.

"May I, without indiscretion, ask why we are going to fight? I wish, you understand, to know that, in order to regulate my conduct toward my adversary, and to know whether it is worth while killing him."

"That is only fair," answered the baron; "I will tell you everything as it passed. We were supping last night at La Fillon's. Of course you know La Fillon, captain?"

"*Pardieu!* it was I who started her in the world, in 1705, before my Italian campaign."

"Well," replied the baron, laughing, "you may boast of a pupil who does you honor. Briefly, I supped there *tête-à-tête* with D'Harmental."

"Without any one of the fair sex?"

"Oh, *mon Dieu*, yes! I must tell you that D'Harmental is a kind of Trappist, only going to La Fillon's for fear of the reputation of not going there; only loving one woman at a time, and in love for the moment with the little D'Averne, the wife of the lieutenant of the guards."

"Very good!"

"We were there, chatting, when we heard a merry party enter the room next to ours. As our conversation did not concern anybody else, we kept silence, and, without intending it, heard the conversation of our neighbors. See what chance is. Our neighbors talked of the only thing which we ought not to have heard."

"Of the chevalier's mistress, perhaps?"

"Exactly. At the first words of their discourse which reached me, I rose, and tried to get Raoul away, but instead of following me, he put his hand on my shoulder, and made me sit down again. 'Then Philippe is making love to the little D'Averne?' said one. 'Since the fête of the Maréchal d'Estrée, where she gave him a sword-belt with some verses, in which she compared him to Mars,' replied another voice. 'That is eight days ago,' said a third. 'Yes,' replied the first. 'Oh! she made a kind of resistance, either that she really held by poor D'Harmental, or that she knew that the regent only likes those who resist him. At last this morning, in exchange for a basketful of flowers and jewels, she has consented to receive his Highness.'"

"Ah!" said the captain, "I begin to understand; the chevalier got angry."

"Exactly. Instead of laughing, as you or I would have done, and profiting by this circumstance to get back his brevet of colonel, which was taken from him under pretext of economy, D'Harmental became so pale that I thought he was going to faint; then, approaching the partition, and striking with his fist, to insure silence, 'Gentlemen,' said he, 'I am sorry to contradict you, but the one who said that Mademoiselle d'Averne had granted a rendezvous to the regent, or to any other, has told a lie.'"

“It was I who said it, and who repeat it, and if it displeases you, my name is Lafare, captain of the guards.’ ‘And mine, Fargy,’ said a second voice. ‘And mine, Ravanne,’ said the third. ‘Very well, gentlemen,’ replied D’Harmental, ‘to-morrow, from nine to half-past, at the Port Maillot.’ And he sat down again opposite me. They talked of something else, and we finished our supper. That is the whole affair, captain, and you now know as much as I.”

The captain gave vent to a kind of exclamation which seemed to say, “This is not very serious”; but in spite of this semi-disapprobation, he resolved nonetheless to support, to the best of his power, the cause of which he had so unexpectedly been made the champion, however defective that cause might appear to him in principle; besides, even had he wished it, he had gone too far to draw back. They had now arrived at the Port Maillot, and a young cavalier, who appeared to be waiting, and who had from a distance perceived the baron and the captain, put his horse to the gallop, and approached rapidly; this was the Chevalier d’Harmental.

“My dear chevalier,” said the Baron de Valef, grasping his hand, “permit me, in default of an old friend, to present to you a new one. Neither Sourgis nor Gacé was at home. I met this gentleman on the Pont Neuf, and told him our embarrassment, and he offered himself to free us from it, with the greatest goodwill.”

“I am doubly grateful to you, then, my dear Valef,” replied the chevalier, casting on the captain a look which betrayed a slight astonishment. “And to you, monsieur,” continued he, “I must excuse myself for making your acquaintance by mixing you up thus with an unpleasant affair. But you will afford me one day or another an opportunity to return your kindness, and I hope and beg that, an opportunity arising, you will dispose of me as I have of you.”

“Well said, chevalier,” replied the captain, leaping to

the ground; "and in speaking thus you might lead me to the end of the world. The proverb is right: 'It is only mountains that don't meet.'"

"Who is this original?" asked D'Harmental of Valef, while the captain stamped the calls with his right foot, to stretch his legs.

"Ma foi! I do not know," said Valef; "but I do know that we should be in a great difficulty without him. Some poor officer of fortune, without doubt, whom the peace has thrown abroad like so many others; but we will judge him, by and by, by his works."

"Well!" said the captain, becoming animated with the exercise he was taking, "where are our adversaries?"

"When I came up to you," replied D'Harmental, "they had not arrived, but I perceived at the end of the avenue a kind of hired carriage, which will serve as an excuse if they are late; and indeed," added the chevalier, pulling out a beautiful watch set with diamonds, "they are not behind time, for it is hardly half-past nine."

"Let us go," said Valef, dismounting and throwing the reins to D'Harmental's valet; "for if they arrive at the rendezvous while we stand gossiping here, it will appear as though we had kept them waiting."

"You are right," said D'Harmental; and, dismounting, he advanced toward the entrance of the wood, followed by his two companions.

"Will you not take anything, gentlemen?" said the landlord of the restaurant, who was standing at his door, waiting for custom.

"Yes, Maitre Durand," replied D'Harmental, who wished, in order that they might not be disturbed, to make it appear as if they had come from an ordinary walk, "breakfast for three. We are going to take a turn in the avenue, and then we shall come back." And he let three louis fall into the hands of the innkeeper.

The captain saw the shine of the three gold pieces one after another, and quickly reckoned up what might be had

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