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WALPOLE AND THE 'MÉMOIRES DE GRAMMONT.'

The admirers of the *Mémoires de Grammont* have been many, but nobody loved the memoirs and the age they describe as Horace Walpole did. 'I know all that can be told me about the periods I delight in,' he says. 'I can scarce read Grammont and Madame de Sévigné because I know them by heart¹.' The Englishman, with his knowledge of the French language and literature, was eminently fitted to appreciate this French masterpiece written by an Englishman, and recalling events which an Englishman only could fully understand and enjoy.

Walpole refers to the Memoirs constantly; his correspondence is full of allusions to the incidents familiar to all readers of the Memoirs. One Lady Betty Smithson appears at a subscription masquerade with a 'pyramid of baubles' on her head; Walpole is irresistibly reminded of the Princess of Babylon in Grammont². A conversation takes place between Lady Greenwich and Lady Tweeddale; Lady Greenwich mentions the Saxons. 'The Saxons, my dear, who were they?' 'Lord, Madam, did your ladyship never read the History of England?' 'No, my dear, pray who wrote it?'—'Don't it put you in mind of Matta and the Allobroges in Grammont?' is Walpole's comment³.

A curious little incident links him with one of the personages of the Memoirs. Once, when Walpole was a boy, there came to see his mother at Chelsea one of the fair ladies of the court of Charles II, 'la belle' Jennings, no longer now in the radiance of her famous beauty, but a needy Jacobite, anxious to obtain a pension through Lady Walpole's influence. 'Her eyes being dim and she full of flattery,' says Walpole annotating his copy of the Memoirs, 'she commended the beauty of the prospect, but unluckily the room in which they sat looked only against the garden wall⁴.'

A man cannot know a book by heart without falling under its influence in some way or other. When one reads Walpole's *Memoirs of the Reign of George the Third*, one is occasionally reminded of the

¹ *Letters*, 1903–1905; 16 vols., ix, p. 127.

² *Ib.*, II, p. 372.

³ *Ib.*, xiv, p. 75.

⁴ Austin Dobson, *Horace Walpole, a Memoir*, London, 1910, p. 8.

manner of Hamilton. Certain portraits recall those which abound in the Grammont Memoirs; the following one may serve as an example, at the same time it will show how far the imitation, conscious or unconscious, falls short of the model. 'The Countess of Northumberland was a jovial heap of contradictions. The blood of all the Percies and Seymours swelled in her veins and in her fancy; while her person was more vulgar than anything but her conversation, which was larded indiscriminately with stories of her ancestors and her footmen. Shows and crowds and junketting were her endless pursuits. She was familiar with the mob, while stifled with diamonds; and yet was attentive to the most minute privileges of her rank while almost shaking hands with a cobbler....She was mischievous under an appearance of frankness; generous and friendly, without delicacy or sentiment¹.'

But while Walpole had an infinite admiration for the grace of the *Mémoires de Grammont*, he did not so unreservedly admire the spirit in which they were written. He admitted that Hamilton was superior to the indelicacy of the Stuart court; at the same time he pointed out that he was so overborne by its prejudices 'that he had the complaisance to ridicule virtue, merit, talents².'

Gradually there grew up in his mind the resolution to bring out a new edition of the Memoirs. He first mentions his purpose in a letter of 1751³; it would seem however that the plan had originated long before this. His edition was to have 'notes, and cuts of the principal beauties and heroes' if he was successful, as he hoped he would be, in discovering all their portraits⁴. He set himself first of all to 'make out all the people at all remarkable⁵,' annotated his edition of the Memoirs⁶ and made out an 'Index of Remarkable Persons.' He found some difficulty in identifying 'My Lord Janet,' but ultimately decided that he must be one of the Thanets and his rectification has been accepted in all subsequent editions of the Memoirs, though 'Janet' is a misprint for 'Jaret' which in turn is a misspelling for 'Gerard⁷.'

¹ *Memoirs of the Reign of George III*, 1845, 4 vols., vol. I, p. 419.

² *Catalogue of Engravers* (octavo edition), p. 135.

³ *Letters*, III, p. 63.

⁴ *Ib.*

⁵ *Ib.*

⁶ Walpole's copy of the Memoirs was the 1746 edition published at Paris. This annotated copy was sold in May 1902 by Messrs Sotheby, Wilkinson and Hodge to Mr Denham of Russell Square for £53 (*Book Prices Current*, 1902, pp. 458-9). Mr Denham has unfortunately removed to America. I have therefore been unable to trace this copy any further.

⁷ *Letters*, III, p. 63. 'Jaret' and not 'Janet' is given in the MS. copy of the Memoirs at the Bibliothèque Mazarine, and 'Jaret' is the spelling adopted for 'Gerard' by the French Ambassadors; see, for instance, Cominges' letters in vol. 79, *Correspondance Politique d'Angleterre, Affaires Étrangères*. The stories that Cominges relates about 'Madame Jaret' are to be found in Pepys, where, of course, Madame Jaret figures as My Lady Gerard.

The 'philosophe Whitnell' puzzled him for long, but at length he discovered the original. 'What do you think his real name was?—only Whetenhall. Look in Collin's *Baronets* and under the article Bedingfield you will find that he was an ingenious gentleman, and la blanche Whitnell, "though one of the greatest beauties of the age, an excellent wife".' 'I am persuaded,' adds Walpole with delight, 'the Bedingfields crowded in these characters to take off the ridicule in Grammont. They have succeeded to a miracle¹.'

The 'hunting' of the portraits took up much of his time. 'I am Grammont mad,' he said of himself². He went to sales in the hope of finding some long sought-for favourite; he visited old country houses, for the sake of the treasures they might contain, going out of his way on one occasion to climb up to Summer Hill, to make a drawing of the residence of the princess of Babylon³. The 'rage of Grammont' carried him to 'old Malbro's at Wimbledon' to see a charming picture of Lady Denham⁴; in a 'purgatory of antiquities' at Woburn he found 'le vieux Roussel qui était le plus fier danseur d'Angleterre⁵'; Sir George Lyttelton's house, though 'immeasurably bad and old,' contained pictures 'extremely agreeable' to Walpole for their relation to Grammont, 'le sérieux' Lyttelton, Miss Stuart, Lord Brouncker and Lady Southesk⁶. Portraits of Harry Jermyn and Chiffinch were bought in 1755⁷. A Lady Kingsland in Dublin, he heard, possessed a picture of Madame de Grammont. 'I don't know who Lady Kingsland is, whether rich or poor,' he writes to his friend George Montague, 'but I know there is nothing I would not give for such a picture. I wish you would hunt it, and if the dame is above temptation, do try if you could obtain a copy in water colours, if there is anybody in Dublin could execute it⁸.' Montague found not only this portrait by Petitot but also a younger one by Lely, and Walpole decided to have a copy in enamel of the latter. 'I would fain resist this copy,' he says. 'I would more fain excuse myself for having it. I say to myself, it would be rude not to have it, now Lady Kingsland and Mr Montague have had so much trouble.—Well, I think I must have it⁹.'

In 1765 the belongings of the comte de Caylus were put up for auction, and Walpole hastening to Paris bought 'half of it for a song¹⁰.'

¹ *Letters*, III, p. 64.

² *Ib.*, p. 71.

³ *Ib.*, p. 112, and Mrs Paget Toynbee's note.

⁴ *Ib.*, p. 64.

⁵ *Ib.*, p. 71.

⁶ *Ib.*, p. 185.

⁷ *Ib.*, p. 309.

⁸ *Ib.*, vol. v, p. 165. One of the daughters of George Hamilton and la belle Jennings had married a Viscount Kingsland.

⁹ *Ib.*, p. 182.

¹⁰ *Ib.*, p. 364.

This was felicity indeed, but better things were yet in store. 'Oh Madam, Madam, Madam,' he writes to Lady Hervey, 'what do you think I have found since I wrote my Letter this morning? I am out of my wits! Never was anything like my luck, it never forsakes me! I have found Count Grammont's picture! I went to the Grands Augustins to see the picture of the reception of the Knights of the Holy Ghost: they carried me into a chamber full of their portraits; I was looking for Bassompierre; my laquais de louage opened a door and said "Here are more." It is old, not at all handsome, but has a great deal of finesse in the countenance. I shall think of nothing now but having it copied. If I had seen or done nothing else, I should be content with my journey hither¹.' For fifteen years he had been in search of a portrait of Grammont and had always been assured that there was none in existence.

Strawberry Hill was full of his Grammont souvenirs—portraits of Catherine of Braganza, of the Earl of Ormonde, Arabella Churchill by Lely and 'Backstairs Chiffinch' by Riley, miniatures of Mrs Middleton and Miss Temple, a bust of the elder Jermyn, etc. In the great North Bed Chamber hung portraits of the Countess of Chesterfield by Lely, the Countess de Grammont by Eckardt, a companion picture to one of Mlle de la Vallière, and a copy of la belle Jennings by Milbourn; in the Green Closet there was a portrait in oil of George Hamilton and, finally, in the Blue Breakfast Room—Walpole's constant and chosen apartment—there was to be found a portrait of the comte de Grammont 'in an elegant carved frame,' and a portrait—one wonders which one—of Anthony Hamilton².

In 1772, at last, there was issued from the 'Officina Arbuteana' the famous Strawberry Hill edition of the *Mémoires de Grammont*. The editor had spent more than twenty years in collecting material for his notes and bringing together the portraits, but in the end, 'hindered by insuperable difficulties,' he gave in his edition only the portraits of Elizabeth Hamilton, Anthony Hamilton and the Comte de Grammont. He wanted to include also those of George Hamilton and la belle Jennings, and one of Anthony Hamilton in his youth, but he was unable to obtain the necessary permission from the family in whose possession they were at the time³. Besides the 'Avis de l'Editeur' from Walpole's

¹ *Letters*, III, p. 361.

² *Catalogue of the Sale of valuable Contents of Strawberry Hill*, Monday, April 25th, 1842, pp. 203, 204, 113, 114, 183; Allan Fea, Introduction to his edition of the *Memoirs*, 1906, *passim*; Pinkerton, *Walpoliana*, 1786, 2 vols., I, p. xli.

³ 'Avis de l'Editeur' in the Strawberry Hill edition.

pen, this edition contains a very short account of Hamilton's life which appears in most early editions of the *Mémoires de Grammont*, from 1731 downwards. Walpole probably copied it from the 1746 edition which he possessed, but, as he does not state this fact, the sketch has often been attributed to him¹. The notes are not all equally valuable, and in some cases are even incorrect².

The edition was dedicated to one who was well able to appreciate the Memoirs.

A
Madame
l'Editeur vous consacre cette édition,
comme un monument de son Amitié,
de son Admiration & de son Respect ; à
vous dont les Graces, l'Esprit & le Goût
retracent au siècle present le siècle de Louis
quatorze & les Agremens de l'Auteur de
ces Memoires.

Madame is, of course, no other than Madame du Deffand. Walpole had sent her his Preface and the Dedication, and at his desire she had corrected mistakes in spelling and had altered the style. It was at her special request, though, that her name did not appear in the 'Dedicace,' as Walpole had intended it should³.

One hundred copies only of the book were printed, not because Walpole intended this edition for his friends alone—'who would have an hundred?' he asks—but because he did not wish to make his favourite book common⁴. Of the hundred copies twenty-five were sent to France, where, besides Madame du Deffand, the following friends and acquaintances were remembered: Mmes de Choiseul, de Luxembourg, de Lauzun, de Boufflers, de Boisgelin, de Cambis, de la Vallière, de Chatillon, de Sanadon, de Jonzac, M. and Mme Trudaine, the bishop of Mirepoix, the abbé Barthélemy, the comte de Caraman, Pont de Veyle and a certain M. Francès⁵.

In 1783 Walpole had his edition reprinted by Dodsley, but naturally the reprint is far from having the value and the interest of the original Strawberry Hill edition. The Dedication remains the same except for the heading, which runs thus :

¹ E.g., Sayons, *Histoire de la Littérature française à l'Étranger* (1861, 2 vols.), II, pp. 368, 372.

² E.g., on page 272 where Walpole, one does not quite see how, confuses George and Anthony Hamilton. He admits later on that he has gone wrong. 'I find that in the notes to the Strawberry Hill edition of the *Mémoires de Grammont* I have fallen into some mistakes for want of a proper genealogy of the Abercorn family' (*Walpoliana*, II, p. 7).

³ Madame du Deffand, *Lettres* (1912, 3 vols.), II, p. 380.

⁴ Walpole, *Letters*, VIII, p. 226.

⁵ *Ib.*, p. 224, du Deffand, II, *passim*.

A
Madame
Marie de Vichi
Marquise du Deffand.

Madame du Deffand had begged Walpole not to name her in any new edition of the *Memoirs*, 'on croirait que, mécontente de ce que l'on ne m'a pas dévinée, j'ai obtenu que vous me fissiez connaître¹,' but as this reprint appeared three years after Madame du Deffand's death, Walpole was no longer bound by her objections, and no one can blame him for wishing to honour the memory of his old friend.

RUTH CLARK.

WATFORD.

¹ du Deffand, II, p. 469.