

DUTENS

MEMOIRS 1807
OF A
TRAVELLER,
NOW IN RETIREMENT.

WRITTEN BY HIMSELF.

INTERSPERSED WITH
HISTORICAL, LITERARY, AND POLITICAL
ANECDOTES,

RELATIVE TO
MANY OF THE PRINCIPAL PERSONAGES
OF THE PRESENT AGE.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH, UNDER THE SUPER-
INTENDANCE OF THE AUTHOR.

IN FIVE VOLUMES.

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Dulcis in expertis cultura potentis amici,
Expertis metuit. — HOR. *l. 1. e. 5, 19.*

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CHAPTER VII.

*Milan.—Marquis de Parabère.—
A Rhinoceros.*

WE left Rome, that we might be at Venice at the feast of the Ascension. The Emperor was expected there, but he did not come. A man may have seen all the cities of Europe, and yet have no idea of Venice, and of the life that is led there. Instead of streets there are canals ; and instead of carriages, boats, which are called gondolas. The nobles have magnificent palaces in the best style of building, but they receive scarcely any company in them. Their wives have small houses, (*casini*), to which they go at night to receive their

friends, and where great ease and freedom prevail. The only one who is deprived of these advantages is the Doge, who can never leave the city without permission of the Senate. The government, always watchful for its safety, allows no discussion upon any thing relating to it : but though the mind is constrained, the manners are entirely free ; nor is there any city where libertinism is more extensive, and less repressed, than at Venice.

I found the Marquis de Prié there, who had come to seek an asylum from what he called the persecution of the King of Sardinia. As his property had been sequestered, he was reduced to his shifts, but adversity had not at all abated his spirit. In the midst of the wreck of his fortune, you might fancy you saw Marius seated among the ruins of Carthage.

I found also at Venice the Duke

de Braganza, (a near relation to the King of Portugal,) whom I had formerly seen at Turin. He was settled at Vienna; where his distinguished merit had contributed as much as his high birth, to conciliate the respect of the Empress Queen and all her court. I shall have occasion to speak more fully concerning him, in my account of that city. He was extremely friendly to me during my stay at Venice; he pressed me earnestly to go and see the Court of Vienna, and determined me by these words: "*Come thither, and you will see whether I am one of your friends!*"

We proceeded to visit the rest of Lombardy; and arrived at Milan, where we stopped some time. I had long wished to be personally acquainted with the Count de Firmian, who was prime minister in the States of the House of Austria in Lombardy. Great as was his reputation for wisdom, po-

liteness, wit, and benevolence, I found that an acquaintance with him raised him still higher in my esteem. The simplicity of his manners set off his fine qualities to much advantage. He was fond of the arts and sciences, which he cultivated and encouraged.

There are many great and rich families at Milan. At the time that I was there, the families of *Litta*, *Clerici*, *Boromeo*, *Dada*, and *Zerbelloni* made the most conspicuous figure: the family of *Litta*, particularly, were distinguished for the politeness and hospitality with which they received foreigners. The Marchioness Cusani and the Countess Castiglione, daughters of the Marchioness Litta, who had been recently married, were brilliant ornaments of the court of the Princess of Modena; and the Marchioness Litta had brought up three or four other young ladies, whom she introduced into

the world with all the success which the good education that she had given them deserved. I called this family the nursery of the Graces; and far from being jealous of the name, the other ladies approved of it.

There is no city in Italy where foreigners are better received than at Milan; it is, indeed, the only one where they are invited to eat in the houses which they frequent. All the nobility speak French; and as to manners, they seem to have selected and adopted all that is most agreeable in the societies of Italy, France, and Germany. There are many very amiable women at Milan, and the education which they receive is admirably adapted to make them so. Among the men of talents were the Father Frisi, the Father Boscovich, and the Marquis Beccaria, whose conversation pleased me more than the perusal of a book

which he has since published ; I mean his "Treatise on Style," in which he has forgotten to give example as well as precept. The Marquis Beccaria, however, was a man of great genius, and of perfect urbanity of manners.

Lord Algernon Percy had nearly become the dupe of a man who called himself the Marquis de Parabère, and Lieutenant-Colonel of the third legion in France. He used to meet him at the theatre, and spoke to me frequently of him. He was charmed with the Marquis de Parabère. I had some doubts of the authenticity of this personage, having never seen him in any genteel company. He had, he said, letters for the Count de Firmian, but he did not care to present them. I proposed that his Lordship should bring him to dine with us, that we might sound him ; and after dinner I whispered to him : " He is an adventurer, an impostor ;

“ you will find that he will finish his
“ acquaintance by borrowing money
“ of you.” His Lordship was quite hurt
of my having so bad an opinion of his
friend. Two days after he sent for me
in the morning, to shew me a note
which he had just received from the
Marquis, begging him to lend him a
hundred louis; and saying, that he was
obliged to set out for Genoa, to nego-
tiate bills of exchange for twenty
thousand livres. I asked him to let me
dictate the answer: in which I said,
that his Lordship was much pleased at
having an opportunity of being useful
to him; and that if he would present
the letters which he had for the Count
de Firmian, he would save him the
journey to Genoa, by negotiating the
bills himself, through his banker at
Milan. He excused himself under
some pretence: I remained firm to my
proposal: and he was embarrassed. He

thought to impose upon his Lordship by shewing him his bills of exchange, which he sent for his inspection. A single glance was quite sufficient to discover that they were forgeries. Lord Algernon was now convinced; but from motives of compassion, sent him a few louis. I then apprised Count Firmian of his character. He had already had his eyes upon him, and the Marquis was ordered to quit Milan in twenty-four hours. He set off alone on foot; and one of my friends, who had met him before, told me that he saw him, two days after, drive up to the best inn in Parma, in a post-chaise and four.

This was the only adventurer I met with during this journey. I had myself almost been the dupe of another, whom I had known at Turin; but I was excusable, as he was a Frenchman whom I met at the house of the French am-

ambassador. He did not disclose his name; but the ambassador was in possession of his secret, approved of him, and presented him. He attached himself to me, and begged a letter for the English consul at Genoa. He set out: but two days after, having some suspicion of the probity of the man, from his affectation of great importance, and the parade he made about his equipages, which he said he had sent on before, I wrote by the post to the Consul, apprising him that my recommendation did not extend so far as to sanction any advances of money. My letter reached him very opportunely, at the very time when the Consul was going to advance him five hundred louis upon his bills on Marseilles. He waved the conclusion of the affair, and in the mean time another mine was sprung. The fellow ran off with some effects of the master of the house where he

lodged: he was pursued, taken, stripped of every thing, and left to seek other resources in fresh efforts of his invention.

Of all the dependants upon their wits that I have ever seen or heard of, a Dutch traveller mentioned to me by one of my friends, merits the palm. Mr. Bowlby told me, that when he was travelling in France, he met at Lyons a Dutch gentleman of some rank, but who was not rich. He generally dined with other foreigners at an ordinary: and spoke with earnestness of a wonderful animal, a rhinoceros, which was in that city; always pressing the newcomers to go and see this strange creature, whose singular qualities he extolled in such a manner, that he made some visit it more than once. Mr. Bowlby having met him in several cities, and seeing him always equally zealous on this subject, was desirous to find

out his motive. He discovered at last that the Dutch gentleman had found the means of obtaining a living by buying a rhinoceros, which he sent on before him, with a man whom he could trust, to all the great towns where he wished to stop; and introducing himself among foreigners into genteel company, he soon gave to the rhinoceros a celebrity which defrayed the expenses of his own travels.

We arrived at Turin, where I had formed the design of passing five or six months. The number of my friends there made it more advantageous for Lord Algernon to stay there than any where else, on account of the facility with which I could have him favourably received at Court and in town. When we were presented, the Duke of Savoy had the goodness to congratulate his Lordship upon having such a friend as me; whose counsels, he said, he

could not do better than to follow. The King did him the honour to permit him to wear his hunting uniform, and to hunt with him, which gave him an opportunity of being frequently with the royal family. He was highly pleased with Turin. I was easy on his account, and enjoyed in full security the satisfaction of seeing friends to whom I was sincerely attached.