

## AN OLD STORY REVIVED,

### The Queer Adventurers of the Chevalier D'Eon.

#### Incidents in the Life of a Man Who Passed as a Woman--His Trial for the Offence.

From the New York Times.

A few weeks ago there was printed in these columns an account of a woman who had for years been driving a oab in London, without any suspicion arising as to her sex. There have been many remarkable instances of similar concealment—notably one which came to light in England a few years ago at the death of an assistant inspector-general of army hospitals, by name Barry. The history of that extraordinary person, will in all probability, never be known, and the causes and early circumstances of her extraordinary career are almost beyond conjecture. One fact, however, about her was beyond question—that she continuously had friends in very high places.

Barry, who had always shown herself ready to fight a duel, and permitted no jokes as to her feminine appearance, displayed the utmost anxiety up to the last to conceal her sex, and made the attendant on her last hours promise to bury her just as she then was. But an examination was insisted on. These, however, are cases of women personating men. Let us turn to one more remarkable, that of a man personating a woman—the Chevalier D'Eon.

Charles D'Eon de Beaumont, advocate of the parliament of Paris, and censor general of Belles Lettres and history in that city, was born in Burgundy in 1727, of highly respectable parentage, received a superior education, and was called to the Parisian bar. In 1755 he was introduced to Louis XV, by the Prince de Conti, and it is said that thenceforward he maintained a secret correspondence with that sovereign. On this mission he went for the first time in female attire. The object of the visit was to approach the Empress Elizabeth with the view of putting an end to the ill-feeling between the French and Russian courts, and more especially to promote the private interests of his patron, the prince de Conti, with the empress.

The next year he went to St. Petersburg as secretary of embassy. During the next two years he was actively employed in intrigue and negotiation. Meanwhile he had been appointed a lieutenant of dragoons; in 1758 he was made a captain; and a few years later distinguished himself in several engagements.

In 1761 he was appointed secretary of embassy to the duc de Nivernois, who came to England as ambassador extraordinary, to conclude a peace, and certainly brought an extraordinary secretary. The chevalier's troubles, which he attributed to the jealousy of Madame de Pompadour when she discovered his secret correspondence with the king, now began. Walpole mentions D'Eon coming to breakfast at Strawberry hill with a large party of French people in May, 1763. Not long after this Nivernois was recalled, and count de Guerchy appointed in his place. In the interval between the departure of the one and the arrival of the other, D'Eon, who was appointed plenipotentiary meanwhile, conducted himself in a surprising manner. The temporary position of ambassador seemed to entirely turn his head. "D'Eon," writes Walpole to Lord Hertford, in November, 1763, "is still here; I know nothing more of him but that the honor of having a hand in the peace overset his poor brain. This was evident on that fatal night at Lord Halifax's." (Where he had behaved in a most violent manner in the presence of M. de Guerchy.) "When they told him his behavior was a breach of the peace, he was quite distracted, thinking it was the peace between this country and his." When count de Guerchy arrived and brought letters of recall to D'Eon he declined to accept them, alleging them to be forged, and refused to vacate the office. Presently, to gratify his rage, he published a pamphlet reflecting on various eminent Frenchmen, more especially the count de Guerchy, and this nobleman, in July, 1764, prosecuted him for libel, and obtained a conviction. Walpole comments amusingly on this to Mann: "D'Eon's book will divert you extremely. He told people in the park the other day M<sup>me</sup> de Guerchy, (who is remarkably plain,) is going to Paris to take M<sup>me</sup> de Pompadour's place. We do not hear that it is seriously filled up; I mean in the cabinet, for in the bed chamber it has long been executed by deputies."

D'Eon's next move to obtain notoriety was to assert that the French government intended to carry him off privately by force, and he wrote to complain of this to Chief Justice Mansfield, Lords Bute and Temple, and Mr. Pitt, and in March, 1764, a bill of indictment was, on his allegation, found against the count de Guerchy for a conspiracy against the case of an ambassador, much perplexed the government. Further proceedings were evaded. In June, 1765, as he had failed to come up for judgment in the libel suit, he was declared outlawed, and on May 20, 1771, a caveat was entered at doctors' commons against his goods, he being supposed to be dead, as he had been advertised for in vain. But not long after the chevalier turned up, refreshed himself with a duel or two, and it was a wound received in one of these which led to serious suspicion that he was a woman. Out of this arose a trial which amazed all London.

The cause came on before Lord Mansfield on July 1, 1777. The plaintiff was Mr. Hayes, a surgeon, who brought the suit, for the recovery of £700, against Mr. Jacques, a broker, the said Jacques having, about six years before, received certain premiums of fifteen guineas per cent., for every one of which he stood engaged to return one hundred guineas whenever it should be proved that the Chevalier D'Eon was actually a woman.

The counsel for the plaintiff was Mr. Bullers, afterward famous as a judge, who said that Mr. Hayes believed himself now to be in possession of positive proof of D'Eon's being a female. He called Mr. Le Goux, a surgeon, who stated that "he had been acquainted with the Chevalier D'Eon from the time when the duc de Nivernois resided in England as French ambassador, and that to his certain knowledge the person called the Chevalier D'Eon was a woman. On cross-examination, Mr. Le Goux stated that he had arrived at this knowledge in the course of a medical attendance on the chevalier. Then M. De Moraude was called, who gave equally strong evidence in support of that of Mr. Le Goux.

Lord Mansfield then charged the jury: "Gentlemen, this is a gambling debt. I should be glad if your verdict could so operate that neither party should be the winner; but as one must lose, you have only to consider which of them ought to win. With respect to the contract on which the action is founded, there is not anything illegal in it. It is binding on both parties. The discovery of the sex of a certain person is to give it operation. There was every external proof that the defendant was right in his conjecture.

D'Eon dressed as a man. She would have fought duels. She was a captain of dragoons. Resided here as an ambassador. To all outward appearance, therefore, the defendant had the best of the wager. On the part of the plaintiff there was considerable difficulty. Suppose him to have been right, yet the proof was not easy. It was not in the power of any one to compel D'Eon to disclose her or his sex. Was it known, the proof still rested on the plaintiff. It was thrown out that he was sure of the fact at the time he laid the wager. The contrary had appeared. He had no proofs in his power when the contract was made. The court of France was not apprised of the fact. It regarded D'Eon as a man." The jury gave for plaintiff £702. On the 13th of the same month the chevalier left England, declaring in the most solemn manner that she had no interest whatever in the policies opened respecting her sex, and that "she left dear England with grief, where she thought to have found repose and liberty." The case was subsequently argued before Lord Mansfield on behalf of the defendant, and the defendant pleading under the terms of a recent act of parliament payment was not binding on him in such a case, this was admitted and the bets were lost. D'Eon arrived at Versailles in 1777 in the uniform of the dragoons, but to satisfy the curiosity of the queen assumed presently the dress of a woman.

In 1784 he returned again to London, where the French revolution of 1789 found him. It appears by the records of the national assembly in May, 1792, that he petitioned the assembly, as Madame D'Eon, to be allowed to serve in the army. Madame stated that "though she had worn the dress of a woman for fifteen years, she was desirous of doffing cap and petticoats for helmet and sabre." The petition was received with great applause, but no other result, and as the Republican authorities had taken away a pension granted him by Louis XV, he returned to England and gave lessons in fencing, an accomplishment in which he was admirably proficient. The previous year he had advertised the sale of his effects, which included various articles of female attire. He died in London, in poverty, in 1810, although a French authority states that he had a pension of £200 a year from George III. His assumption of female attire seems to have arisen at first out of an exigency, and was probably continued for purposes of various kinds. A most ridiculous surmise is that it was adopted at one time to cover an intrigue with poor Queen Charlotte, who certainly never before had been suspected of such an indiscretion, and, a French commentator observes, "We may be permitted a doubt on this point." D'Eon seems to have been a vain, excitable creature who loved notoriety, and had a restless craving for excitement, to satisfy which he would have done anything. A post-mortem examination was made by eminent French and English surgeons, which left no doubt as to his being of the male sex.



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## Railroad Time Table.

### PEORIA & ROCK ISLAND RAILWAY.

SHORTEST ROUTE TO THE EAST AND SOUTH.

LEAVE	ARRIVE
Eastern Ex. 6:00 a. m.	Mail & Ex. 12:00 p. m.
Mail & Ex. 1:30 p. m.	Western Ex. 6:00 p. m.
Way Freight 7:35 a. m.	Way Freight 3:25 p. m.
Through Ft. 3:30 p. m.	Through Ft. 8:15 p. m.

The 6:00 a. m. train makes close connection at Peoria with T. P. & W. and T. W. & W. for Cincinnati, Louisville and all points East.

The 1:30 p. m. train makes close connection at Galva with C. B. & Q. R. R. for Galesburg and Burlington, also at Peoria with T. W. & W., T. P. & W., I. B. & W., and Illinois Midland for points East and Southeast. Sleeping Coaches on all night trains.

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JAS. V. MAHONEY, Gen'l. Trk't. Ag't.

### CHICAGO ROCK ISLAND & PACIFIC R. R.

GOING EAST TRAINS LEAVE

At 8:35 a. m.; 4:15 p. m.; and 9:45 p. m. Trains arrive from west as above.

GOING WEST TRAINS LEAVE

At 6:25 a. m.; 10:30 a. m.; and 6:35 p. m. Train arrive from the east as above.

### ROCKFORD, ROCK ISLAND & ST. LOUIS R. R.

GOING SOUTH TRAINS LEAVE

At 8:00 a. m. and 6:30 p. m.

ARRIVE FROM ST. LOUIS

At 6:00 a. m. and 9:00 p. m.

STEERING TRAINS LEAVE

At 7:00 a. m. and 5:30 p. m.

ARRIVE FROM STEERING

At 7:35 a. m. and 6:40 p. m.

### COAL VALLEY MINING CO.'S TRAINS.

LEAVE ARRIVE.

7:35 a. m. 10:30 a. m.

12:00 m. 3:30 p. m.

### WESTERN UNION RAILROAD.

LEAVE ARRIVE

Day Express and Mail 8:45 a. m. 6:00 p. m.

Night Express 10:00 p. m. 5:55 a. m.

### BURLINGTON, CEDAR RAPIDS & MINN.

To BURLINGTON—Lo. West Liberty, Ar. W. Liberty.

Accommodation 7:00 a. m. 11:30 a. m.

Express 9:40 p. m. 11:25 p. m.

To CEDAR RAPIDS—

Express 12:00 p. m. 9:25 a. m.

Accommodation 7:55 p. m. 5:35 p. m.

INDIANAPOLIS, BLOOMINGTON & WESTERN

ac. Mail & Ex. Lv. Indianapolis. Ar. Peoria. 4:00 a. m. 1:55 p. m.

ac. Mail & Ex. Lv. Peoria. Ar. Indianapolis. 7:45 p. m. 6:40 p. m.

Cars run through from Peoria to Cincinnati without change. Connections made at Indianapolis for all points East and South.