

AN EARLY GOTHIC TALE: 'THE ADVENTURE OF COUNT BEAUMONT'

Edited by Manuel Aguirre

1. INTRODUCTION

The Universal Museum and Complete Magazine of Knowledge and Pleasure (UMCM) began in London in November 1764 and ran for 7 years, finally closing in 1770.¹ A 'little narrative' titled 'The Adventure of Count Beaumont' appeared anonymously in the April issue of 1765.² If the story can be taken as Gothic, it constitutes a remarkably early example of the genre, as it predates all but one of the titles commonly accepted into the Gothic canon: it appeared simultaneously with the second edition of Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (11 April 1765) and scant four months after the first edition, which had been issued

¹ *The New Cambridge Bibliography of English Literature*, vol. 2, 1660-1800, ed. George Watson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974).

² *UMCM* for April 1765, vol. 1, no. 6, p.195-99.

on 24 December 1764.³ Specifically, it precedes by eight years the earliest Gothic tale known so far, Anna Laetitia Barbauld's 'Sir Bertrand' (1773).⁴ As published in the *UMCM*, 'The Adventure of Count Beaumont' constitutes, therefore, the earliest short narrative we have at present in the English Gothic tradition.

The story reappeared, without attribution, in *The American Moral and Sentimental Magazine (AMSM)* for December 1797 - January 1798.⁵ The *AMSM* omitted or slightly modified various words or fragments, broke up long paragraphs, added a number of parentheses, and cryptically altered the title to 'Singular Adventure of Count General Saxe'. Its version was reprinted (equally unattributed, but acknowledging the *AMSM* as source, and preserving the latter's title) in the *Methodist Magazine* for 1824.⁶ A year later the story resurfaced (again unattributed) in *The Wonders of Nature and Providence*, a compilation of articles from various magazines, under the title 'Singular Adventure of Count Beaumont, or, General Saxe'.⁷

³ See W. S. Lewis, Introduction to *The Castle of Otranto* by Horace Walpole (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), p.xvi.

⁴ Originally published in *Miscellaneous Pieces, in Prose*, by Anna Laetitia Aikin (later Barbauld) and her brother John. For an edition and study see M. Aguirre and E. Ardoy 'Narrative Morphology in Barbauld's "Sir Bertrand: A Fragment"'. Madrid: *The Northanger Library Project* 2009, <http://www.northangerlibrary.com/nlproject.html>.

⁵ The *AMSM* ran in New York from July 1797 through May 1798. Our story appears in vol. 2, no. 13 for December 18, 1797 - January 1, 1798, p.385-90, 442-7.

⁶ *Methodist Magazine* 7 (New York: Banks and Mason, 1824), p.382-8 (the title on the inside cover reads *Methodist Review*),

<http://books.google.com/books?id=7pdFvutJbT8C&pg=PA384&lpg=PA384&dq=%22>.

⁷ *The Wonders of Nature and Providence, Displayed. Compiled from authentic sources, both ancient and modern, giving an account of various and strange phenomena existing in nature, of travels, adventures, singular providences, &c.* (Albany: Josiah Priest, 1825), p.549-55,

<http://books.google.com/books?id=pxEPxUBOj08C&pg=PA551&lpg=PA551&dq=%22>.

The history of the text deserves some editorial comment here. Edward Pritcher claims that the *AMSM* text “was extracted from Nathaniel William Wraxall’s anecdotes of Marshal Saxe in *Memoirs of the Courts of Berlin, Dresden, Warsaw, and Vienna (1777-79)*”.⁸ But the story is not to be found in Wraxall’s *Memoirs*;⁹ nor could it, since the years “1777-1779” do not correspond to the publication date of Wraxall’s book but belong in the title itself, referring as they do to the two years Wraxall spent travelling through central Europe; while the *Memoirs* were first published in 1799,¹⁰ hence near two years after *AMSM* no. 13 appeared. Furthermore, the name ‘Saxe’ occurs only in the title of the *AMSM* story and its reprints, whereas the character remains ‘the Count of Beaumont’ throughout the piece itself in all three American editions.

In point of fact, the story printed in the *UMCM* for 1765 under the title ‘The Adventure of Count Beaumont’ was not an original tale but had been taken from *Les Amusemens de Spa: or, The Gallantries of the Spaw in Germany* (henceforward *Gallantries*), a book published in Amsterdam in 1736, where our story bears the title ‘An Adventure of the Count of B———’.¹¹ The third edition of *Gallantries* was printed in London in

⁸ Edward Pritcher *American Moral & Sentimental Magazine (New York 1797-1798): An Annotated Catalogue* (Lewiston-Queenston-Lampeter: The Edwin Mellen Press 2005), p.21.

⁹ Nathaniel William Wraxall, *Memoirs of the Courts of Berlin, Dresden, Warsaw, and Vienna, in the Years 1777, 1778, and 1779* (London: T. Cadell and W. Davies, 1779), <http://www.archive.org/stream/memoirsofcourso01wraxiala#page/n5/mode/2up>. Pritcher may have been misled by an anecdote of the raising of the spirit of the Chevalier de Saxe (half-brother to Marshal Saxe) in Vol. 1 of Wraxall’s *Memoirs*, p.277-94.

¹⁰ As Wraxall himself makes clear in his *Memoirs*, Preface, p.iii.

¹¹ *Les amusemens de Spa: or, The Gallantries of the Spaw in Germany. Containing the Virtues of every Spring; their Nature and several Uses. The Reasons why frequented by Persons of the First Distinction; besides drinking the Waters. The Various Diversions and Amusements of the Place. Many Entertaining Histories of the Principal Persons*

1745, and this appears to have been the immediate source for the 1765 *UMCM*. This source, however, is in turn a translation of a French book published two years earlier by Karl Ludwig von Pöllnitz (Baron de Poellnitz) under the title *Amusemens des Eaux de Spa*,¹² which in its first volume presents the 'Avanture du Comte du B...' as one of a number of stories told in the course of fashionable conversation among persons of quality while taking the waters.¹³

Several differences are in evidence between the French original and its English 1736 rendering which are not simply due to the translator's requirements. For instance, the original's humour is somewhat lost in translation; the detail that the castle's owner had given his house to the devil *pour en tirer quelque argent* is omitted from the English version; so is the narrator's remark regarding the pit, that *l'abîme n'alloit pas jusqu'aux Enfers*. Other omissions include the closing remark in the messenger's letter that he and his mysterious colleagues will retell the Count's adventure *comme si nous l'avions apprise de vous*

Resorting to the Spaw. Intermix'd with several others of Wit, Humour, Gaiety, &c. (third edition. London: Birt & Sandby, 1745), p.144-56,

<http://books.google.com/books?id=vkFFAAAAAYAAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=%22the+gallantries&sourc>. At one point in the body of the text the name appears without the initial B, as 'the Count of ——' (p.152).

¹² *Amusemens des Eaux de Spa. Ouvrage utile a ceux qui vont boire ces Eaux Minérales sur les Lieux. Enrichi de tailles douces, qui représentent les Vues et Perspectives du Bourg de Spa, des Fontaines, des Promenades, & des Environs* (Amsterdam: Pierre Mortier, 1734), p.233-55,

<http://books.google.com/books?id=WdgUAAAAQAAJ&pg=PA180&dq=%22Perspectives+ou+les+amusemens+de+Spa%22>.

¹³ The story reappears as 'Avanture du Comte du B***, tirée des Amusements des Eaux de Spa' in a collection of sundry stories, *Nouvelle Bibliothèque de Campagne ou choix d'épisodes intéressans et curieux, Tirés des meilleurs Romans, tant anciens que modernes* (Amsterdam: Changuion, 1771), VI, p.363-82,

<http://books.google.com/books?id=P-M7AAAACAAJ&pg=PA369&lpg=PA368&ots=bqIXdVbSzV&dq>.

(clearly in order to exonerate themselves from suspicion). Certain inappropriate French uses have also been improved upon in translation: *qu'on y dresse incessamment mon lit* was rightly amended to 'get my bed ready immediately', and *il étoit moralement impossible qu'il se tuât* sensibly became 'he couldn't possibly be kill'd'.

Differences emerge in turn between the 1736 English rendering and the text that was issued in 1765. Such are the practice of systematically capitalizing nouns, which the *UMCM* relinquishes, or the use of the name 'Beaumont', introduced for the first time in this magazine. Other far-reaching modifications have to do with the need to excise a tale that was originally part of a book and presented as told in the course of conversation and to transform it into a self-contained piece of fiction; nearly all narratorial intrusions and all comments by members of the audience are omitted in 1765 (I have indicated remains of the original diction in the footnotes).

That the story migrated to the *AMSM* in 1797-8 not directly from either the French original or its *Gallantries* translation but from the *UMCM* version is obvious if one judges by the fact that all the modifications introduced in the latter are followed by the American magazine (as well as by the other two American reprints); in particular, the name 'Beaumont' is retained (in the body of the text, if not in the title) in all three American editions. From the *AMSM* the text was reprinted at least twice more in the 1824 *Methodist Magazine* and the 1825 *Wonders of Nature*; but here again, multiple, if often minute, differences (in typography, spelling, punctuation and omissions) can be found between versions. None of the seven versions consulted are attributed.

If the story was originally written close to the time of its publication as part of Pöllnitz's *Amusemens*, the 'last war' alluded to at the start of the story is most likely an early episode in the War of the Polish Succession (1733-38), namely the brief French Rhineland campaign led by Marshall Berwick in Imperial territory, which included the captures of Nancy on 12 October 1733 and Kehl, across the Rhine from Strasbourg, on 28 October. According to the Wikipedia, 'The onset of bad weather ended the French campaign for the year, and Berwick, after consolidating his control over the area, quartered his troops for the winter on the French side of the Rhine.'¹⁴ This would tally with Beaumont reaching 'the frontiers', as our story has it, 'about the month of October, which was very rainy that year'. Interestingly, the siege of Kehl saw meritorious action by Moritz Graf von Sachsen—or, in his naturalized French name, Maurice Comte de Saxe, later to become Maréchal de France.¹⁵ This might cast some light on the use of 'Saxe' in the titles of the American versions; but if 'le Comte du B——' was a fictionalized Comte de Saxe, how did this piece of data reach the editors of the *AMSM*, and what motivated them to insert 'Saxe' in their title but to retain 'Beaumont' in their text?¹⁶

¹⁴ [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Siege_of_Kehl_\(1733\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Siege_of_Kehl_(1733)).

¹⁵ He led his own regiment (see Michael Ranft *Leben und Thaten des weltberühmten Grafens Mauriti von Sachsen, Marschalls von Franckreich* (Leipzig: Verlegts Johann Samuel Heinsius, 1746), pp. 81-2, <http://books.google.es/books?printsec=frontcover&id=iiA6AAAACAAJ&hl=es#v=onepage&q&f=true>), though apparently did not take direct part in the action (see Victor Comte de Seilhac *Les Bâtards de Rois. Le Maréchal de Saxe* (Paris: Amyot 1864), pp. 127-8, <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k5787648z>, and *New Monthly Magazine* 135, no. 809 for November, 1865, p. 261).

¹⁶ And of course, what led the editors of *The Wonders of Nature* to juxtapose the two names in their own version of the title?

To the best of my knowledge, 'The Adventure of Count Beaumont' has not been reprinted for close to two centuries, and never as an object of study. What follows is an edition of this forgotten story. The transcription adheres to the 1765 text and punctuation faithfully. Various peculiarities of spelling and diction have been pointed out in the notes. A critical study is underway.

2. THE TEXT

The following little narrative may not be displeasing to such readers as love to relax a little from the severity of graver studies.

The Adventure of Count BEAUMONT.

THE gentleman this adventure happened to, was a nobleman well known at the French court, under the name of the Count Beaumont. He was brave, even fearless, and had distinguished himself on all occasions, especially in the last war, when he served as brigadier. This nobleman having obtained leave to pass the winter in one of his country seats, set out with his equipage about the month of October, which was very rainy that year. As soon as he reached the frontiers, he assumed the privileges of his rank and title; his harbinger always set out some hours before him, to fix his lodging and fit it for the arrival of his master. One day, when the rain had so spoiled the roads that the coach and equipage of the Count could not reach the town he had proposed to lodge in, his marshal stopped at a little beggarly village, situated at the bottom of a valley, almost desert, and always full of water; and appointed the Count's lodging at the curate's, who was very poor. The poverty of this house was the same as in the other houses, excepting that it was something less inconvenient; for there was scarce any shelter from the wind and rain. When the Count arrived, he was received and complimented by the good curate, who displayed all his eloquence to thank him for the honour he did him in coming to lodge in his humble hut, and in his way, made a

hundred excuses that his cottage was so ill provided to entertain so great a man. The Count, who was unacquainted with the place, thanked him for his speech, and after having assured him that he would not incommode him, ordered his postilion to proceed. The curate, who perhaps wished no better, thought it however his duty to use some entreaties to stop him, assuring him that as poor as his house was, it was the most convenient in the village. The marshal returned in the midst of these ceremonies, and join'd his instances to those of the curate, protesting that he had visited all the houses one by one, and had found none comparable to this. Very well, says the Count, but why mayn't I lodge in that castle which I see there at t'other end of the village. Whoever lives there, I suppose won't refuse me a chamber; go thither in my name: I'll alight here and wait an answer. My lord, says the curate, that castle is not inhabited. This land has been for sale many years; most of the apartments are without doors; however some rooms are still neat enough, and there are some old moveables. I don't want so much, says the Count. It is at least a shelter, and there I'll have my Bed made. I would have done it before, my lord, says the marshal, if I had not been told that you would have been in danger there, because this castle is possessed by spirits and hobgoblins, who make a horrid din there every night. They told me but this very minute that the witches held their last meeting there, and that the master of it, who is in some foreign country, has let his house to the devil. What! are you drunk, says the Count in anger? You talk like a fool—'adone with this stuff; I'll lie in the castle; get my bed ready immediately, and in the mean time I'll sup with Monsieur the curate.—They were forced to obey.

During this interval, the Count desired the curate's company, and an account whence these foolish reports took their rise. The curate was a

good little man, as ignorant as possible, and extremely credulous, as country parsons generally are. He had every fabulous circumstance by heart, and recited tales of frightful apparitions of every kind,¹⁷ in order to divert the Count from going to the castle. The Count amused himself sometime with list'ning to him; but at length quite tired with his idle stories, he called his valet, and ordered him to follow him to the castle. The valet too made his remonstrances in vain—they made no impression. He threw himself at his master's feet, to beg him not to expose himself—but dissuasion only confirmed his resolves of going to the castle. He set out, and his valet lighted him with a link. The poor fellow, who was naturally credulous, had his head full of stories which he had picked up in the town: for every one had his tale, and the whole village attested the truth of them; so that he went with his master as if it had been to an execution. His fears increas'd as he approached the castle. It was an old building moated round, adorned with several ruinous turrets, which made a place disagreeable enough in itself, and its appearance was adapted to inspire that secret horror¹⁸ which generally attends the view of magnificent ruins. Besides, by the desertion of its masters this old pile was become the retreat of bats and screech owls. The cries and flutter of those nocturnal animals so terrified the poor fellow, that he thought he had a thousand spirits at his elbow already. But the Count encouraging him by his reasons and example, they came to the chamber where the bed was prepared. Though it was the neatest and noblest apartment, the door could not be shut on the inside. The Count undressed; but before he lay down he tied his pistols to his belt, and hung his arms over his bolster. He ordered two lighted candles in the chimney, and kept two by his bedside.

¹⁷ 'In every kind' in *UMCM* (also in *Gallantries*).

¹⁸ Consistently spelled 'Horroure' in *Gallantries*.

After these precautions, he went to-bed not quite undressed; and his man lay upon a mattress¹⁹ brought thither on purpose.

The Count, notwithstanding his bravery, could not sleep. A certain restlessness,²⁰ consistent with the truest valour, threw him involuntarily into melancholy reflections on the hazards which he perhaps unnecessarily exposed himself to. He had passed two hours thus uneasily, and was going to compose himself, when about midnight he fancied he heard a harsh and hollow noise in the furthest court of the castle, and it was too distant to be distinct. He perceived that this noise must be made by something alive, because, as well as he could follow it by the ear, it went round the castle. He thought it at first some beast grazing thereabout with a bell at its neck; but soon changed his opinion: the noise cleared up as it came near. The Count heard distinctly the steps of one marching gravely, and the rattling of a chain, pretty heavy as he judged by the noise it made on the pavement. This frightful noise entering the apartments seemed to tend directly to the Count's chamber. He then thought he ought to stand upon his guard, and slipping on his gown and slippers, he threw his belt over his shoulder, and returned into bed ready for all events.

In the mean time the noise redoubling upon the stair-case, awaked the valet, who to drown his fears had gorged himself with wine over night. The Count could scarce keep him from crying out; for, notwithstanding his drunkenness, he was still sensible of fear. But the Count threatening to break his head with his pistol if he cried out, he lay still. The hobgoblin continuing his walks, went through the neighbouring rooms, and having made his tour, groaning most lamentably, he went up

¹⁹ 'Mattress' in *UMCM* (but not in *Gallantries*).

²⁰ 'Restlessness' in *UMCM* (but not in *Gallantries*).

two pair of stairs, where the dragging of his chains made a terrible din. This horrible noise, far from intimidating the Count, made him suspect some trick, for he was not at all credulous. Says he to himself, if they want to murder me, these ceremonies are needless; to be sure then they want to frighten me; for I shall never believe that the devil, or any inhabitant of the other world, is come hither purposely to carry on this farce. Let us see then, says he, the conclusion of this comedy.

The moment he made this reflection, the spirit pushed the door violently and entered the chamber. His figure was hideous: he seemed all hairy like a bear, and loaded with chains, which he struck against the walls with horrible groans. He advanced solemnly towards the mattress²¹ where the servant lay. The fellow, not daring to cry for fear of angering²² his master, had wrapped himself in his great coat, thinking death unavoidable, either from his master or from the ghost; which last lifting up the chains, rattled them at the poor wretch's ear, and frightened him into a swoon. The Count having quietly observed this procedure through his curtains, and hearing his man cry out, thought the spectre had offered violence to him. He jumped out of bed, his pistol in his hand, and seizing the candle ran towards the spirit, crying out, *murther, murther*,²³ as loud as he could. The ghost, without surprise, turned himself gravely to look at the Count, and shaking his chains, said to him, *Follow me, little mortal*. The undaunted Count, equally desirous of unravelling this business, and troubled at the loss of his servant, whom he thought dead, followed the spectre close, and went down stairs after him, keeping his pistol always in his hand, resolved however not to discharge it but in extremity. The spectre came into the court, which he crossed with some precipitation.

²¹ 'Matrass' in *UMCM* (but not in *Gallantries*).

²² 'Angring' in *UMCM* (but not in *Gallantries*).

²³ 'Murder, Murder' in *Gallantries*.

The Count still pursued him through the darkness and horrors of a dismal night. At last they came to the entrance of a very narrow vaulted gallery. There the Count entered too, but there the spirit disappeared, and seemed to bury itself in the bowels of the earth with a terrible cry. A violent wind which came from under ground put out the Count's candle, which had survived the open air of the court; and thus he remained in a strange place and in horrid darkness. The Count, transported by his warmth, let off his pistol, advancing forward; and immediately felt himself sink alive into the region of spectres, to punish his incredulity.

Dangerous as his fall was, he received no hurt by it. The pit was not so deep at²⁴ the centre; and though the manner of his descent was frightful, he could not possibly be killed by it. 'Twas a trap of boards so nicely poized that a foot treading upon either end of it sunk it immediately, and the person slid down with rapidity on a heap of straw and hay, so that the fall was broke. As soon as the Count was in this subterraneous place, he saw himself enclosed by a company of spirits in human shape, whom his fall had drawn round him. He judged by their looks that they breathed, and were something surprized at this unexpected visit, as he was too to find himself so surrounded. They did not give him time to recollect himself or to gaze on them; they blindfolded and disarmed him, and led him to a neighbouring cavern, where they shut him up. The Count had his wits about him, and in spite of his trouble he immediately conceiv'd that these were chymists²⁵ in full search of the philosopher's stone, or perhaps clippers and coiners;²⁶ or it

²⁴ 'as' in *UMCM* (also in *Gallantries*).

²⁵ I.e., alchemists ('Chemists' in *Gallantries*).

²⁶ 'One that debases coin by cutting'; see Samuel Johnson, *Dictionary of the English Language* (1755), ed. Alexander Chalmers (London: Studio Editions, 1994), S.v. 'clipper'. 'Coiners' use the parings of fair coins, alloyed with brass or lead, to fabricate 'new' ones.

may be both: However he could never make the discovery; but the precautions they took to conceal their employment from him, their situation so near the frontiers whence they might easily quit the realm at the least alarm, and the frightful noise they made every night in the castle to drive away the curious and impertinent, persuaded him that they pursued some dangerous employ. This consideration taught the Count all the horrible danger which he had thrown himself into; and soon he was on the very brink of that danger. From this place of confinement he plainly heard them consulting what to do with him. All voted his death but one, who with more humanity²⁷ was for sending him back after a discovery of his quality. Though the Count thought his death inevitable, yet he begged to speak to them before they took their last resolution. They led him out of his dungeon into the midst of their assembly, and permitted him to speak.

'I understand, gentlemen,' says he to them, 'how much reason you have to get rid of me. My indiscretion deserves death, and I accept it: but give me leave to represent to you, that your ruin must infallibly follow it. I think myself obliged to declare my name and quality. I am the Count of Beaumont, brigadier-general of his majesty's forces. I was going from the army to my own estate. The bad weather kept me in this village, where I have all my equipage; my valet, who lay at my bed's foot, must have made his escape and apprized my people of my adventure; they'll certainly search into it; and be assured that if they don't find me, they'll pull down the castle but they'll find what's become of me: consider it gentlemen: I don't design to threaten you: but how necessary soever my death may appear to your security I think myself obliged to assure you that it will certainly ruin you. If you doubt my quality, the letters in my

²⁷ 'but one, who had more Humanity, was' in *Gallantries*.

pocket with orders from his majesty, will confirm my testimony.' The Count produced his letters, and while these cyclopes²⁸ examined them, he added—'Sirs, I am a gentleman, and can keep a secret, without desiring to dive into yours; and I swear by my faith and honour I won't betray you.' This speech, which he made with that dignity which never abandons great men in distress, astonished them all. They sent him back to his cave to renew their deliberations.

They now gave into softer counsels; though some still persisted in advising his death, but those in less number and with less vehemence than before. The debates, which the Count heard distinctly, would have alarmed a heart less great than his. For beside the idea of death, which was always present, every one framed a different punishment, and made him feel all the horrors of it. Even death itself, in my opinion,²⁹ is preferable to this cruel vicissitude of hope and despair. The Count however calmly waited his sentence. The votes were unanimous in his favour: they brought him out again. One of this subterranean crew pronounced him at liberty on condition he swore an inviolable secrecy, and would leave the village and his servants in that notion of spirits which they already entertained; and that when he was out of the province he would not mention the adventure. After these oaths, they gave him his arms and letters, except one, which they kept. They made him drink some glasses of wine; the whole company drank to his health, and after having made him sensible what a risk they ran in sparing his life, they opened the trap, and two guides led him towards his apartment. As soon as he

²⁸ 'Cyclops' in *UMCM* (also in *Gallantries*). Johnson's *Dictionary* gives 'Cyclopick' = 'savage', and 'Cyclopean' = 'vast, terrifick'. Further, these outlaws resemble the Cyclopes busy at their secret toil, forging -pun and all- Zeus' thunderbolts in their underground caverns.

²⁹ A narratorial intrusion left over from the originally 'oral' story.

was upon the stair-case, the guides took off his bandage and returned to their cavern.

The Count returned to his chamber, amazed at his adventure, but had like to have met a more terrible one from his valet. The poor fellow, quite sobered by his fears, was in despair when he missed the Count. He concluded that the spirits had strangled him, according to the stories of the night before. Full of grief for his dear master, he even mistook him when he entered, and taking him for the spectre, let fly his pistol at him. By a providential stroke the pistol missed, and the Count made himself known. The poor servant was ready to die with shame and horror at the misfortune he had escaped, and implored his master's forgiveness. The Count, without staying to hear him, bid him follow him; for he thought quitting the castle a better security than the mutual oaths in the cavern, since it was possible they might recant theirs. They went together, and waited for day-light in the avenue leading to the village; and the Count told his man, that having followed the spectre with his arms in his hand, after several rounds it buried itself in a sort of well, which he too was almost decoyed into; and that he had much ado to find his room again. When it was day he went to the curate, and told him the same story, which soon spread itself through the village; and having sent for his bed and his clothes,³⁰ he continued his journey.

Several years passed before the Count mentioned his adventure, and he had never divulged it without the express permission which he has since received.³¹ One day when he was at his country-seat, they told him a man wanted to communicate to him an important affair, and that he could not stay nor come into the castle. The Count, surprized at the

³⁰ 'Cloaths' in *UMCM* (also in *Gallantries*).

³¹ A perfect-tense leftover from the 'oral' tale.

message, sent for the messenger, and ordered his people to enquire whence he came. The courier again answered, that he must not come in, nor wait, nor name his masters; and notwithstanding all their persuasions he persisted in staying upon the draw-bridge. The Count, who was at dinner, communicated this extraordinary message to the gentlemen at table with him, and asked their advice. Some found reasons of distrust where there was so much mystery, and were for securing the messenger. But the majority advised the Count to go and speak with him, for fear of losing some advice of consequence to his safety,³² and offered to accompany him. The counsel prevailed; the Count rose from table, and with all those gentlemen went to the bridge where the courier waited. When the courier saw him, he cried out, Fear nothing, Sir; and to prove that I have no ill design, I'll discharge my arms. Immediately he shot off his pistols towards the fields. Then the Count approaching, the messenger without dismounting put into his hands two noble Spanish horses which he led; and delivering a packet, said to him, This, Sir, will inform you further. I have finished my commission, and my orders oblige me to depart. At the end of this compliment he spurred his horse and went off full gallop, nor could they ever find out where he retired to.

The Count wondered at this commission, and was impatient to know the authors and the motive of it. He gave the gentleman next him the horses to hold, and opened the letter. He found it wrote in various characters, and those counterfeited, and after having well considered it, he read it aloud. As well as I can remember³³ it was to this effect:

'We thank you, Sir, for having hitherto preserved a secret in our favour, and we have sent these two horses as instances of our gratitude.

³² 'to his Affairs or his Safety' in *Gallantries*.

³³ Another narratorial intrusion.

We have sent too an important letter, which you left such a day and such a year at the castle of —. It may put you in mind of a strange adventure which happened to you there. We have happily concluded our affair, and returned to our own homes. We disengage you from your oaths and your secret; we shall tell your adventure ourselves, and give you permission to publish it. Adieu, generous Count.— This comes from the six gentlemen who put you into such a fright in the cellars of the castle of —.'

After reading this letter, the Count yet doubted whether he ought to divulge the secret; but at the instances of the gentlemen then with him, he told them the odd adventure mentioned here; and took a pleasure in repeating it on all occasions.

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