

PAUL MONTAIGU

A STOIC'S SKETCHES

and other stories



London
2021

Part I

The whole house was in chaos – Louis-Philippe-Albert d'Orléans, Duc d'Orléans, Comte de Paris, Prince Royales des Français, Héritier du Trône de France, was dying. Stowe House, which usually was a place that was more accustomed to peace and benevolence – a mansion whom almost never experienced tragedy – was now in the utmost distress; such a disturbance had not been made for many years.

"Where is his Highness?" asked the local Doctor, that had been summoned after the first sign of malady from the Count's part.

"In here." came the shrill voice of a frightened housemaid.

The Doctor pushed his way through the crowd that had assembled outside the Count's bedroom and knocked at the door, but he was only replied by a female's voice that exclaimed that he was not to be disturbed.

"But Doctor McFarlane is here. Let him in, and he'll do what he can!" shouted Byron-Kettler, an English gentleman that resided in Shropshire, yet had been summoned here; he being a friend of the Count.

He tried vainly to open the door, but it was locked, "Why was life so bitter!"

"His Highness wishes to be alone with me." replied the same female voice.

Inside the room there was the Count, lying on the large four poster bed, gasping for breath, coughing every now and then. His whole countenance was indeed of one who knew that he would meet death soon; he was only fifty two of age, but was suffering from some unknown disease.

"My dear," he said, addressing the woman that was sitting on a chair by the bed, "please write my testament." Here he coughed heavily and the woman had to calm him with soothing words, whilst ignoring the racket that the crowd was making outside.

"You aren't dying, are you?" she asked.

"I am – I'll dictate to you, my –" he coughed and breathed heavily, his chest moving in every direction as if there was a kind of tropical bird inside him, and his blood-shot eyes were bulging out of their sockets.

"Please, my dear." At this, the woman was resolved and fetched at once a paper and some ink that she had got out from some drawer, after some quick, logical thinking from her part.

"Ready." she said, as she sat by him with pen in hand.

Here, the Count coughed again, but silenced himself, and thought for a moment, until saying:

Louis-Philippe-Albert d'Orléans, Duc d'Orléans, Comte de Paris, Prince Royales des Français, Héritier du Trône de France, is on the eight of September 1894, dictating my testament, which is thus:

May Stowe House, that is my current residence, be deprived to any successor of mine or to any one who will buy it or legally reclaim it," he coughed and whizzed, but he was determined to say his will, already his breathing was fading and he was looking as pale as pure white snow.

"I have been poisoned and I know it, whilst being forced to drink a beverage by forces from France." The woman looked at him with wide eyes, this was new!

"Indeed, anarchists have already assassinated the president Sadi Carnot and are now wanting to exterminate me – I, as last heir to the rightful throne of France; so may Stowe be deprived from their hands and be turned in a school—" he coughed greatly.

At that moment, the door outside was being torn down to pieces, so great was the banging.

"–in which students will learn the rightful knowledge they deserve, amongst an environment of nature and beauty." Here he beckoned the woman to make him sign the paper, and so she handed him her quill, and with a trembling hand, with some of the last



"...it couldn't be tigers or jaguars, because he didn't believe at the rumour that Stowe's park served as an open menagerie for many exotic animals..."

A STOICS' SKETCHES

BY PAUL MONTAIGU

An eclectic collection of short stories, *A Stoic's Sketches* will take you deep into the mind of Paul Ostroverhy, alias Paul Montaigne – thirteen year old poet, architect, inventor of squong pong, and wine sommelier in training. With the innocent, yet arresting perception of a child and the tasteful distinction of a Nineteenth Century English nobleman who is completely baffled by our present ways of life, Paul will discuss the designs of bygone police uniforms and give advice on how to legally walk around Paris without a mask (hint: it involves eating an apple). He laments the greatest architectural tragedy of the Twenty-first Century, contemplates the advantages of reinstating the monarchy, and imagines his future life as a passionate world traveler, tea connoisseur, and aesthete. Historical fiction, reality, and imagination blend smoothly into one, as we learn about the history of Stowe House through the ages, are enlightened about the various perils of landscape painting in the swamp and enchanted by the forgotten tales of Ostroco. Read on if you dare! You might just start to look at the world with new eyes.

Victoria-Sophie Wettmarshausen



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Poems & Reflections



Paul Ostroverby
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2018

