



Droll Stories, (Contes Drolatiques), Vol. 1: Collected From the Abbeys of Touraine (Classic Reprint)

H. De Balzac

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Excerpt from Droll Stories, (Contes Drolatiques), Vol. 1: Collected From the Abbeys of Touraine

The "Contes Drolatiques" are submitted without any need of introduction other than being what they are, a chronicle of the men and manners of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. They are most assuredly not milk for infants, but strong meat for men. Odious though comparison may be, it enables one to judge with greater accuracy the merits of a work. On this line the "Contes Drolatiques" stand on no lower plane than the "Tom Jones" of Henry Fielding; Smollett's "Peregrine Pickle" and "Humphrey Clinker;" or that once be-praised work "Pamela," by the immortal Samuel Richardson, or his equally famous "Clarissa Harlowe." Even during the present century, indeed when it was well advanced, the former was placed in the hands of young girls as a text-book, the study of which should protect them against the wiles of seducing man. To-day the same work might be considered "light-reading" even by a courtesan.

Again, the brutal frankness of the English language does not lend itself kindly to those nice shades and subtleties which above all others is so characteristically beautiful in that of the French. Indecency is always vulgar, and where in these pages vulgarity may be traced it must be ascribed not to the author but to the tawdry clothes in which he is draped.

The second volume of "Droll Stories," in addition to the prologues and epilogues, of which originally they formed part, will also contain "Sarrasine," "La Fille aux Yeux d'or" (The Girl with Golden Eyes), and "Une Passion dans le desert" (A Passion in the Desert), three of de Balzac's most powerful works, but too "inconvenient" for general reading.

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