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The undersigned, acting as a Committee of Graduate School, have read the accompanying thesis submitted by Eleanor Norcross Shenehon for the degree of Master of Arts. They approve it as a thesis meeting the requirements of the Graduate School of the University of Minnesota, and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

Minneapolis, Minnesota

May 19 1917

Robert Searles
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REPORT
of
COMMITTEE ON EXAMINATION

This is to certify that we the undersigned, as a Committee of the Graduate School, have given Eleanor Norcross Shenehon final oral examination for the degree of Master of Arts. We recommend that the degree of Master of Arts be conferred upon the candidate.

Minneapolis, Minnesota

May 19 1917

Leobert Seales
Chairman

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E. W. Chmated.

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THEOPHILE GAUTIER AND THE "ROMAN COMIQUE".

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A Thesis Submitted to the
Faculty of the Graduate School of the
University of Minnesota.

by

Eleanor N. Shenehon.

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of
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June

1917.

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In 1833 there appeared on the covers of books printed by Renduel the announcement of two novels soon to be published; "La Quiquengrogne" by Victor Hugo, and "Le Capitaine Fracasse" of Théophile Gautier. The first never saw the light of day. The second remained unwritten for nearly thirty years. Many times its appearance was heralded by Renduel; twice it was promised as a serial by prominent periodicals, "la Revue des Deux Mondes" and the "Revue de Paris." As a matter of fact, the second magazine did receive the first chapter, "le Château de la Misère" in 1855, and had it printed on placards awaiting the completion of the book. But Gautier went off to Russia, and his hero was left to languish for years in his ruined castle.

So familiar did the name of "le Capitain Fracasse" become to the public that many believed it had been published, and so Gautier says, "en faisait même la critique". Indeed the novel was listed in the catalogues of the "Librairie Nouvelle" for 1853 as having been published in two volumes, octavo.

The third magazine to promise "Fracasse" to its readers was the "Revue Nationale et Étrangère", created and edited by Gautier's friend and publisher, Charpentier, who obtained the rights of the novel after the suppression of the "Revue de Paris." The long-heralded romance finally made its debut in the number of the "Revue Nationale", for January tenth, 1862. From that time

it appeared a chapter, sometimes two, at a time up to June 1863, when the last three chapters came out together. It was then printed in book form, two volumes, by Bourdin and Company, Paris. It had many subsequent editions, the most famous of which is that illustrated by Gustave Doré, which I have never seen.

The year 1833, when the title of Gautier's novel made its initial appearance, falls within the decade from 1825 to 1835, during which the romantic movement in France was at its height. Gautier himself was one of the prominent young members of the *Genacle*. He had come to be identified with the romantic school as a result of his natural literary tendencies, particularly through his love of the picturesque and his interest in the past.

It had been the part of the romanticists to discover the richness of the past as a source of ^{literary} material. For them the middle ages particularly were full of picturesque possibilities, but the whole of time was to be theirs to choose from. There had been, of course, prior to this, tragedies and romances purporting to have taken place in very remote times. But they had been entirely lacking in any real value as pictures of the life of the past. Aside from the fact that their characters were kings and heroes, queens and great ladies, there was nothing in them to distinguish them from romances and tragedies dealing with the France of the eighteenth century.

The romanticists were to change all this. They were to resuscitate the past with all those individual characteristics which gave it its own peculiar "local color". Their characters

were to look, and speak, to think, and act in a way that should identify them with their times. The past was to be made to live again by every device possible to human knowledge plus the power of intuition, that "feeling for history" which was held to be the gift of the true historical novelist. In the avant-propos of the "Capitaine Fracasse", Gautier, speaking of his own novel, gives a very fair statement of the creed of the historical novelist of his day.

"On n'y retrouvera aucune thèse politique, morale ou religieuse. Nul grande problème ne s'y débat. On n'y plaide pour personne. On n'y exprime jamais son opinion. C'est une oeuvre purement pittoresque, objective, comme diraient les Allemands. Bien que l'action se passe sous Louis XIII, "Le Capitaine Fracasse" n'a d'historique que la couleur du style. Les personnages s'y présentent comme dans la nature par leur forme extérieure, avec leur fond obligé de paysage ou d'architecture. Leurs Costumes sont décrits, leurs gestes dessinés; et quand ils parlent, ils emploient la langue de leur époque."¹

Gautier, following the example of Alfred de Vigny in "Cinq-Mars", (1826) or Mérimée in "La Chronique du règne de Charles IX", (1829) or Victor Hugo in "Notre-Dame de Paris" (1831), formed the project of writing a novel which should be a resuscitation of the past. He found his inspiration in a seventeenth century tale, the "Roman Comique", (1659) of Paul Scarron. The "Roman Comique" has to do with the adventures of a band of strolling players in provincial France. Its hero and

¹The preface of "Le Capitaine Fracasse" p. IV.

heroine, who play the leading parts, are young people who have seen better days, but are reduced by poverty to this method of earning their bread. This idea Gautier takes for his novel. The "Capitaine Fracasse" is also the story of the adventures of a group of seventeenth century actors, on their way from Gascony to Paris. Its heroine is Isabelle, who plays the leading feminine roles in the company's performances. Sigognac, the hero, is a poverty-stricken young Gascon nobleman, who, under the stage-name of the "Capitaine Fracasse" joins the troupe, partly as a means of reaching Paris, where he hopes to mend his fortunes, and partly because of his love for Isabelle.

The two novels have to do with precisely the same class of people, living at the same time. Their two heroines are young actresses. The two heroes are young men from higher walks of life whom necessity has reduced to the state of strolling actors. Destin, the hero of the "Roman Comique" is only the son of a small farmer, it is true, but he has had the good fortune to be educated with the sons of neighboring nobleman, and to spend several years in travelling with them. Finding himself at the end of this time without any means of earning his living, he joins a theatrical company.¹

This theme Gautier varies slightly in choosing his own hero. Instead of being a farmer's son, the protege' of a nobleman, with accomplishments and tastes above his station, Sigognac is a gentleman by birth, but deprived of the ordinary material advantages of his class by the extreme poverty of his family. His very name and title, however, are borrowed from

¹"Le Roman Comique", Vol. I, p. 143

the earlier novel. The Baron de Sigognac is a minor character, a provincial nobleman and the owner of a chateau, who figures in the "Roman Comique"¹. Gautier appropriates the name, the title, and the chateau for his impoverished young hero (explaining that the "ac" was a common Gascon termination) and provides him with a shield, three golden "Cigognes" on a blue field, to match the name.² The castle Gautier reduces to a picturesque ruin,³ and sends its owner out into the world to seek his fortune with a troupe of strolling players⁴. Though the situations of the two young men are not alike, still both are calculated to bring about the same results, namely, the placing of a youth with all the instincts of a gentleman in the company of actors.

For his heroine, Isabelle, Gautier adopts Scarron's idea nearly exactly. L'Étoile, of the "Roman Comique" is the daughter of a nobleman and a serving-woman⁵. Her mother, who had become separated from the father, dies, leaving to her child a portrait set round with diamonds, whereby she might be known to the father should they ever meet⁶. Having no other inheritance L'Étoile becomes an actress as a means of earning her bread.⁷

The following is Gautier's version: The mother of Isabelle had been the principal actress of a travelling troupe. Her

- 1 "Le Roman Comique" - Vol. II p. 7.
- 2 "Le Capitaine Fracasse", Vol. I, p. 4
- 3 " " " " " pp. 1-30
- 4 " " " " " p. 69
- 5 "Le Roman Comique", " I, p. 84
- 6 " " " " I, p. 143
- 7 " " " " I, p. 143

father was a great French nobleman.¹ During her lifetime the mother had refused to divulge his name, but at her death left to her daughter an amethyst ring, engraved with the princely crest of his house.² Gautier, it is true, carries the idea to greater lengths than does Scarron, completing his novel with the finding of the father, le prince de Vallombreuse³ and the elevation of Isabelle to the rank and fortune of a countess.⁴ Scarron, who died leaving his novel unfinished, never accomplished a like family reunion, but it was unmistakably the intended outcome of his tale.*

Like Saldagne, the villain of the "Roman Comique" the duc de Vallombreuse, the villain of the "Capitaine Fracasse", is a dissolute young nobleman. As in the earlier novel, the incidents of Gautier's tale are based upon the attempts of this unpleasant person upon the virtue of the heroine and the life of the hero. A slightly different twist is given to the latter tale by making the duc the half-brother of the heroine, thus creating an opportunity for a very dramatic dénouement when their relationship is discovered.⁵ Saldagne meets death in the pursuance of one of his nefarious plans. The duc, after the discovery referred to above, sees the evil of his ways, and gives up (for the time being, at any rate) his villainous practices.

- 1 "Le Capitaine Fracasse" Vol. I, p. 208-9
- 2 " " " " " p. 211
- 3 " " " " " II, p. 267
- 4 " " " " " p. 292
- 5 " " " " " p. 268

* There have been written several endings for the "Roman Comique" since its author's death, by as many different men. The best known is that by Offray, which is included in the edition of the Bibliothèque-Nationale. (see bibliography.)

Not only in his choice of a milien, in his characters, and in his plot does Gautier borrow from Scarron, but in detail also. As has been stated before, the adventures of the hero and heroine of each novel are the results of a persecution of the latter by the villain, and of his attempts to do away with the former. There is a curious similarity between the first meeting of Saldagne, l'Étoile, and Destin and that of the duc de Vallombreuse, Isabelle and Sigognac. In the earlier novel Saldagne sees l'Étoile in a public garden. Attracted by her appearance he attempts to force her to draw aside the veil which covers her face, but is prevented by the arrival of Destin, who champions the young lady.¹ As a result of his interference he is attacked several nights later in dark and narrow street by Saldagne and his man, where he is severely wounded.²

In the "Capitaine Fracasse" the duc first sees Isabelle at the inn³ and follows her to the theatre, where he stands in the common dressing-room of the company, watching her put on her make-up. When it comes to the critical point of the placing of the little black "mouche" Vallombreuse seizes one from the toilet-table and attempts to place it for the young actress, but finds his hands suddenly withheld by Sigognac in his actor's costume.⁴ Scorning to cross swords with a comedian, the duc has the young baron attacked by four of his servants with cudgels as he returns to the inn that night by a dark alley-way. In this case, however,

1 "Le Roman Comique", Vol. I, p 75-76.
2 " " " " " " I p. 81.
3 "Le Capitaine Fracasse" Vol. I, p. 282.
4 " " " " " I, p. 316

the right is triumphant, and Sigognac and two of the other actors put the four to rout.¹ The same situation in both cases, causes the same result.

From Scarron Gautier borrows the use of the false message as a device for separating the heroine from her protectors, in order that her ravishers may have a better chance to carry her away. As in the case cited above the two incidents differ in detail, but are the same as far as essentials are concerned.²

Destin is set upon by tirelaines late one night on the Pont-Neuf. Saldagne, of course is the instigator of the action.³ Gautier uses exactly the same spot for the scene of a night attack on Sigognac by Vallombreuse's hired assassin.⁴

There are three other points of likeness in subject matter between the two novels. Yet they cannot be classed positively as borrowings on Gautier's part. They are as follows: (a) in both stories the actors make their first appearance in the ox-cart which is their ordinary means of transportation;⁵ (b) in both cases the troupe makes a journey to a big country place to give a performance, an occasion which is accompanied by a great deal of festivity;⁶ (c) when l'Etoile is finally successfully kidnapped by the villain, she is carried to a lonely château and held as prisoner;⁷ in Isabelle's case the place of detention is an equally

- ¹ "Le Capitaine Fracasse" Vol. I, p. 326-327.
- ² "Le Roman Comique" Vol. II, p. 64
- ³ "Le Capitaine Fracasse" Vol. II, p. 185.
- ⁴ "Le Roman Comique" Vol. I, p. 143
- ⁵ "Le Capitaine Fracasse," Vol. II, p. 143, 144
- ⁶ "Le Roman Comique", Vol. I, p. I.
- ⁷ "Le Capitaine Fracasse", Vol. I, p. 33
- ⁸ "Le Roman Comique" Vol. I, p. 148
- ⁹ "Le Capitaine Fracasse", Vol. I, p. 128.
- ¹⁰ "Le Roman Comique" Vol. II, p. 60

lonely fortified castle.¹ These similarities^{ies} may be, of course, quite accidental. Given like situations, like circumstances would naturally arise. Gautier may have chosen the ox-cart because it was both picturesque and characteristic of the times. Very probably he might have chosen just that conveyance for his actors, had Scarron never mentioned it. In the case of the second likeness the probability of its occurrence makes its inclusion in the story not at all remarkable. Travelling troupes of comedians did take just such journeys to the homes of those who could afford to pay them for their time. It is particularly probable in the third case that Gautier did not mean to use Scarron's idea. The "enlèvement" having taken place, it was natural to have the lady conveyed to a place where her friends could not find her. These incidents are simply given as possible, if not probable cases of a still more extensive use of the "Roman Comique" by Gautier.

It is noteworthy that Gautier makes no use whatever of any of Scarron's very amusing provincial characters, Ragotin, the rattlepated little hump-backed attorney of Mans, La Rappinière, the rascally sheriff, innkeepers and travelling merchants, townsfolk and provincial gentry, whose rather coarse adventures form such a large part of the "Roman Comique". There is absolutely no trace of anything of the kind in the "Capitaine Fracasse."

If the "Roman Comique" was Gautier's principal source of inspiration for his novel, it was by no means the only one. There are to be found very evident traces of the influence of certain of his contemporaries on his work. Like all the historical

¹"Le Capitaine Fracasse" Vol. II, p. 190.

novelists of his time, he was an admirer of Walter Scott. The effect of the latter's style upon him is particularly noticeable in his descriptions of his characters, their dress, their coloring, their expression; and in certain descriptions of buildings.*

The episode of the bandit. Agostin, he who alone, the last of his band, attempted to hold up the players on a lonely road, is reminiscent of certain tales of Mérimée, which deal with the brigands of Sicily and Spain. ("Matteo Falcone," 1829, "Carmen," 1849.)¹

The most striking case of likeness between the "Fracasse" and any contemporary novel is to be found between Chapters XI and XII,¹ those dealing with "des brelandiers, des aigrefins, des coupe-bourses et des coupe-jarrets,"² all the scum of seventeenth-century Paris, and those portions of "Notre-Dame" in which Hugo describes the frequenters of the "Cour des Miracles" of two hundred years before. The subject matter here is very similar. The street scene of Chapter XX of the "Capitaine Fracasse"³ which deals with death of Agostin, is also very suggestive of similar scenes in "Notre-Dame", namely that of the punishment of Quasimodo and that of the hanging of Esmeralda.

The "Capitaine Fracasse" as a resuscitation of the early early seventeenth century is an original piece of work, in spite of the fact that its author was to some extent influenced by those

* Compare the description of Rowena and Rebecca of "Ivanhoe" with the Serafina and Marquise de la Bruyères of the "Capitaine Fracasse"; also the castle of Frou-de-Boauf in the same novel, with the castle of Vallombreuse.

¹ "Le Capitaine Fracasse" Vol. II, pp. 46-121

² " " " " " p. 101.

³ " " " " " pp. 335-343.

of his contemporaries who were attempting the same sort of thing, and that his theme was a borrowed one. Scarron's plot and Scarron's characters give him the framework upon which to hang his pictures of the past, but it is Gautier's work in creating the milieu that make the "Fracasse" the distinctive novel that it is, and no mere rewriting of the older story. Though so similar in the matter of plot and character, it would be hard to imagine two novels more unlike as far as treatment is concerned. Leaving out of consideration the six or seven entirely unrelated tales introduced into the narrative, Scarron has devoted three hundred and twenty-one pages to his story. The descriptive elements contained therein would not all together fill half-a-dozen of the three hundred and twenty-one. Aside from Destin, the hero, who has perhaps half a page of description, the characters are dismissed with a word. Opportunities to describe places, inns; country-houses, street scenes in Paris and in Rome, are absolutely neglected. The action of the story is Scarron's only concern.

With the "Capitaine Fracasse" the case is quite otherwise. In adopting Scarron's idea Gautier utilizes to its fullest extent every opportunity for the introduction of local color that the situation provides. Of a total of seven hundred and fifty five pages, one hundred and sixty-one are devoted to description. The setting for the story is a matter of the greatest concern to Gautier. From books on seventeenth-century costumes and architecture, from old dictionaries,* and the writings of the sixteenth-hundreds he gathered a vast amount of material for his purpose.

* It is always claimed for Gautier that dictionaries were his favorite reading.

To this resuscitation of the past he brought not only a great deal of information concerning his subject, but also much native ability in and liking for descriptive writing.

It is very interesting to compare Scarron's and Gautier's treatment of a similar incident. I have mentioned the attempt on the life of the hero which took place on the Pont-Neuf, an episode of the "Roman Comique" which Gautier uses in the "Fracasse". The former states in his usual bald manner that the attack took place "sur le Pont-Neuf"¹. Simply that and nothing more. The whole incident is related in four or five lines. Gautier devotes nearly a whole chapter, some twenty pages, to his version of the affair.² The scene is elaborately described, as are all the characters who take part in it, while the incident itself is simply lost in the mass of detail which surrounds it.

The famous description of the "Château de la Misère", which forms the opening chapter of the "Capitaine Fracasse"³, is perhaps Gautier's chef-d'oeuvre as a descriptive writer. The picture of a crumbling mediæval château is drawn with an almost unbelievable amount of detail. The castle is presented first as it appears at a distance. Then it is seen at close range. The exterior, the garden, the stables, the courtyard, all in a state of the utmost delapidation, are minutely described. The interior, room after room, is presented with an equal amount of detail, and an equal emphasis upon their former glory and their present state of deterioration. Gautier seems to glory in heaping up architectural terms, one after another, in his description:

¹"Le Roman Comique" Vol. I, p.

²"Le Capitaine Fracasse", Vol. II, pp. 67-87.

³" " " " Vol. I, pp. 1-30.

"pout-levis", "rossé", "faltages", "chavrons", "barbacanes", "moellons", "poutins", "salle de gardes", "corniche a modillons", "soliveau", "credences". These are but a few of the words that are used to form the picture and produce the impression of a feudal castle of 1600. Nor are architectural terms the only special ones employed. The courtyard, the walks, the gardens are all overgrown with a host of weeds: "orties", "la folle avoine", "ciguë", "joubarbes", "ravenelles", "artichauts sauvages", "ronces", "persicaires", "scolopendres", "lambruches sauvages", "champignons moisis"; a truly formidable list of undesirable vegetation. The castle is full of the animal and insect life that infests ruined buildings. There are "des hiboux", "des rats", "des tarats", "des araignées", "des chouettes", "et des choucas". Gautier gives innumerable evidences of the decay of the once splendid old building. At every turn one comes upon dirt and dust, rust and mold, discolored walls and fallen plaster. The tapestry hangs in tatters and the windows have all lost their panes. Nothing is allowed to escape the effects of time and neglect. The whole thing is a perfect orgy of description of feudal architecture in a ruined state, all hung upon the simple statement of Scarron that his baron de Sigognac was a nobleman of Périgord, and owned a chateau. And just in this fashion Gautier utilizes every situation, whether it be borrowed or original, as a basis for the introduction of that "local color" so much bespoken by the romanticists.

As has been stated, three decades intervened between Renouel's announcement of the "Capitaine Fracasse" and its completion. It would be reasonable to expect that the subject chos-

en when Gautier was an enthusiastic young man very much under the influence of romanticism might have undergone certain modifications during the passing years. One might suppose at least that its treatment would be that of Gautier's maturity. This was not the case, however. The "Capitaine Fracasse" seems to have been written in the style which dominated literature in the early eighteenthirties. A few sentences from the preface of the novel will explain the apparent incongruity of date and style:

"Pendant ce long travail, nous nous sommes autant que possible séparés du milieu actuel, et nous avons vécu retrospectivement, nous reportant vers 1830, aux beaux jours de romantisme; ce livre, malgré la date qu'il porte et son exécution récente, n'appartient réellement pas à ce temps-ci. Comme les architectes qui dans l'achèvement d'un plan ancien, se conforment au style indiqué, nous avons écrit "Le Capitaine Fracasse" dans le goût qui régnait au moment où il eut dû paraître."¹

¹"Le Capitaine Fracasse", preface, Vol. I. p. III & IV.

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