

**COUNT CAVOUR AND
MADAME DE CIRCOURT:
SOME UNPUBLISHED
CORRESPONDENCE, PP. 2-157**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649460946

Count Cavour and Madame de Circourt: Some Unpublished Correspondence, pp. 2-157 by
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Cover @ 2017

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SOME UNPUBLISHED CORRESPONDENCE

EDITED BY
COUNT NIGRA

TRANSLATED BY ARTHUR JOHN BUTLER

LATE FELLOW OF TRINITY COLLEGE CAMBRIDGE

CASELL AND COMPANY LIMITED
LONDON PARIS & MELBOURNE

1894

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ANASTASIE KLUSTINE, COMTESSE DE CIRCOURT.

much merit and a good wit, immensely learned, and modest beyond common.¹

Until her death, which took place in 1863, I saw the Countess continually, except during the ten months—October, 1860, to August, 1861—which I spent in Italy, owing to the temporary break in my mission.² During these years I saw a stream of those who might be called the picked men of contemporary society pass through the Circourts' drawing-room in Paris, or their country house at Les Bruyères, near Bougival. She herself determined to honour his recommendation in my favour, and passed on to me a portion of the friendship which she had long felt for Count Cavour. Young and almost inexperienced as I was when suddenly

¹ He appeared for a short time in a public capacity when M. de Lamartine sent him, in 1848, on a mission to Frederick William IV., King of Prussia, a task which he fulfilled, amid serious difficulties, with much tact and with his native straightforwardness. But to the men of his generation he was known less by this brief tenure of office than by his rare erudition, and by the kind courtesy with which he placed it at the disposal of every applicant. His published works, numerous as they are, are far from giving a measure of his talents and his knowledge. His worth, both as a man and as a *savant*, will be judged by his correspondence, if it ever be published, and by the recollections of his contemporaries. One of these, Colonel Haber-Saladin, has dedicated to his memory a cleverly—perhaps too cleverly—written book, interesting, however, for the historical, biographical, and bibliographical material which it contains. It appeared at Paris in 1881, under the title, *Le Comte de Circourt, son temps, ses écrits; Mme de Circourt, son salon, ses correspondances*. But the book never had any circulation. Like him who was its principal subject, it remained almost unknown beyond the narrow circle of friends for whom it was exclusively destined.

² On the breaking off of diplomatic relations between France and Sardinia, owing to the invasion of the Papal territories by the latter power.

placed at the head of what then was the most important and most difficult of Italian diplomatic missions, called upon, moreover, to move amid a society in great part hostile to the cause which I represented, I was not without some apprehension as to the success of my efforts. The assistance which I had been fortunate enough to afford to Cavour, and the intimacy with which he honoured me, had, it is true, been the best training I could have for all that related to the political part of my task. But in the social relations which are so important in diplomatic life, I was, so to say, without bearings; not to mention that, at the time of which I speak, these relations had in France become extremely difficult, owing to the great division and hostility between parties. The *château*,¹ as the phrase then was, and official society were, of course, open to me; but there were many people in Opposition circles whom it was useful and agreeable to me to know, and my only chance of meeting them was in those *salons* which brought together the best men and women of both parties in the bond of wit and intelligence. That in the Rue des Saussaies was perhaps the last survivor of these. When Mme de Circourt admitted me to it, she used all her courtesy and all the inducement of her wit to make me welcome to the distinguished company which surrounded her.

¹ Of the Tuileries: that is, the court.

At her death she bequeathed to me the letters which Count Cavour had written to her during a period of twenty-five years. Unfortunately, they are not many. Reckoning the six addressed to Count Adolphe de Circourt, which formed part of the legacy, and including a note two lines long, the little collection contains only thirty-seven items. They are all autograph, written in Cavour's delicate little round characters—extremely neat and free from erasures; but curiously enough only six have a complete date, while seventeen are undated.¹ They are written in French, for though Mme de Circourt knew something of Italian, she was not accustomed to read or write it. Such are the letters which I now publish, thirty years after the death of her to whom they were addressed. Mme de Circourt was wont to call this little collection her "treasure"; and indeed its publication will add fresh wealth to that unequalled treasury formed by the works of the greatest statesmen of modern Italy.

Count Cavour's letters can well dispense with any commentary; they speak clearly and plainly for themselves. What, indeed, could one add to these pages? If the author's renown, or his claim to the gratitude

¹ "Count Cavour's Correspondence," edited by Signor Chiala, contains a letter to Mme de Circourt of April 26, 1849 (vol. i. p. 413), which is not in my collection. In vol. i. p. 287, of the same work, the letter which appears as No. xii., under the date of May, 1835, is wrongly put down as addressed to Mme de Circourt; and several extracts from letters to her are inaccurately dated. The correct dates will be found in this book.

of Italians and the admiration of the world, could be increased by anything, it would be by these letters. All his characteristics, his prodigious activity, his clear-headedness, his "go," the keenness of his intellect, at once playful and decided, touching with equal ease the most diverse subjects; the precision of his thought, his unalterable faith in freedom, his ardent yet well-considered patriotism, his independent yet safe judgment, find in these letters fresh and genuine corroboration.

Nor is there any need for me to take the opportunity of this publication in order to write another biography of our great statesman. Every circumstance of his life, every political act of his, has been the subject of careful studies and of numerous writings, some of which met with a success which time has only confirmed.¹ Although an important part of the present correspondence, that, for instance, which refers to the preparation for the war of 1859, could not be included in the great collection compiled and annotated with such unwearied devotion by Signor Chiala,

¹ I may mention two, rendered specially worthy of attention by the position of their authors and the authentic sources to which they had access. One is the fine introduction which Signor L. Arton, who shared with me the honour of acting as secretary to the great Minister, prefixed to his *Œuvre parlementaire du Comte de Cavour*, brought out by him and M. Albert Blanc at Paris in 1862. The other is M. William de la Rive's *Le Comte de Cavour, récits et souvenirs* (also Paris, 1862). M. de la Rive, whose family was related to Count Cavour, had seen him frequently, and at all periods of his life, in the close intimacy of his own father's house. He has drawn with a master hand the most lively and most faithful portrait that exists of his illustrious cousin.