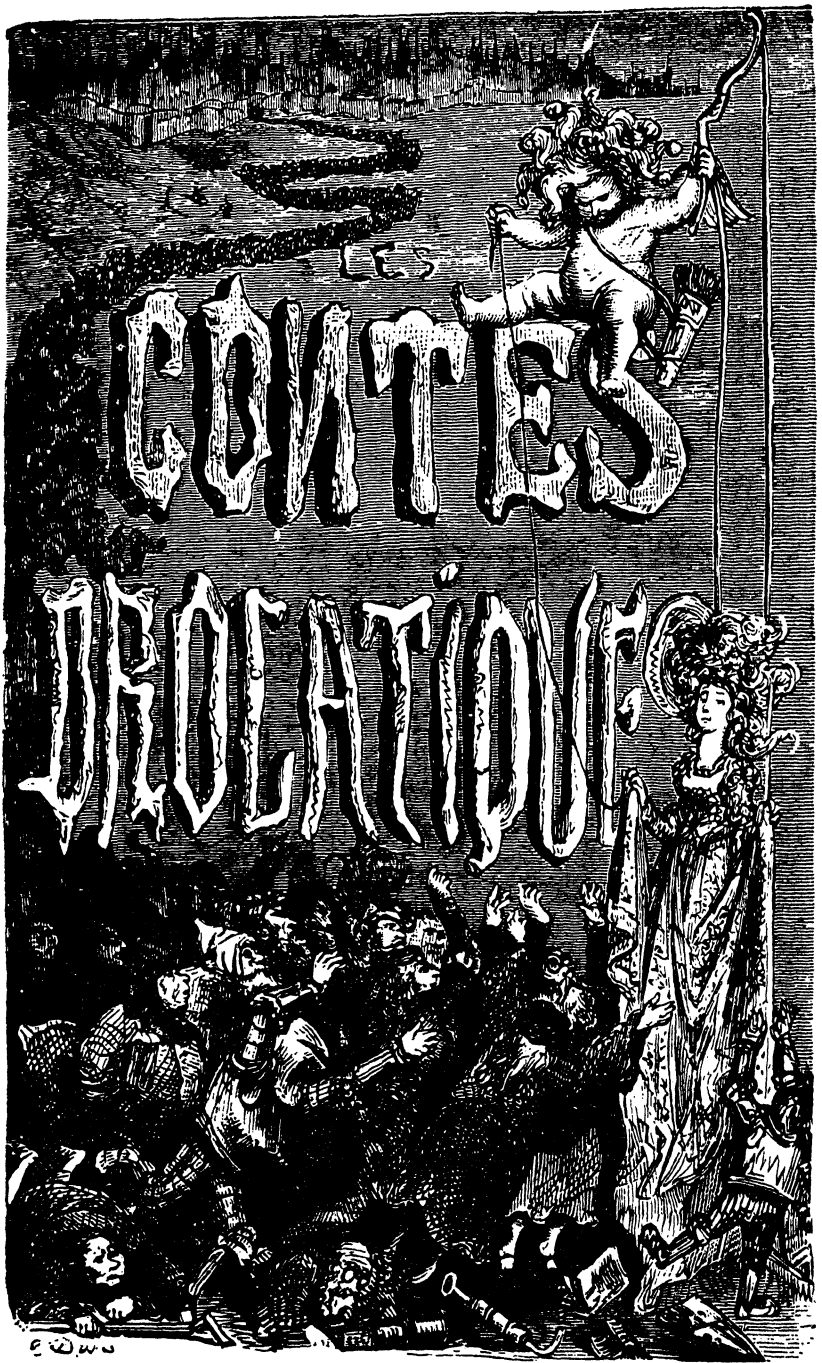


DROLL STORIES



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CONTES DROLATIQUES

Droll Stories
By
Honore de Balzac

ILLUSTRATED BY GUSTAVE DORE



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TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

WHEN, in March, 1832, the first volume of the now famous *Contes Drolatiques* was published by Gosselin of Paris, Balzac, in a short preface, written in the publisher's name, replied to those attacks which he anticipated certain critics would make upon his hardy experiment. He claimed for his book the protection of all those to whom literature was dear, because it was a work of art—and a work of art, in the highest sense of the word, it undoubtedly is. Like Boccaccio, Rabelais, the Queen of Navarre, Ariosto, and Verville, the great author of *The Human Comedy* has painted an epoch. In the fresh and wonderful language of the Merry Vicar of Meudon, he has given us a marvellous picture of French life and manners in the sixteenth century. The gallant knights and merry dames of that eventful period of French history stand out in bold relief upon his canvas. The background to these life-like figures is, as it were, "sketched upon the spot." After reading the *Contes Drolatiques*, one could almost find one's way about the towns and villages of Touraine, unassisted by map or guide. Not only is this book a work of art from its historical information and topographical accuracy ; its claims to that distinction rest upon a broader foundation. Written in the nineteenth century