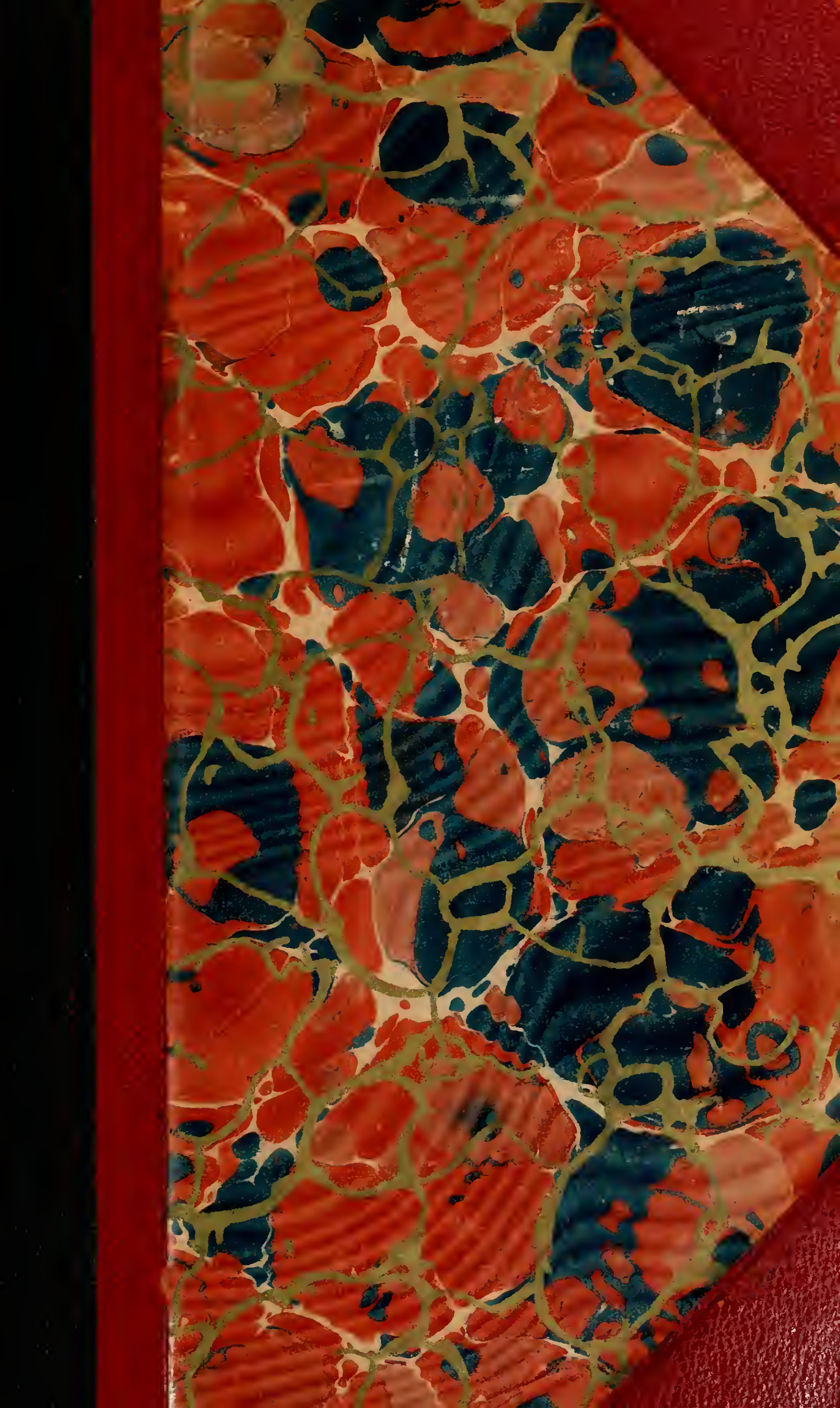

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Tartarin and his faithful spouse

THE NOVELS, ROMANCES
AND MEMOIRS OF

ALPHONSE DAUDET

PROVENÇAL EDITION

TARTARIN OF TARASCON
TARTARIN ON THE ALPS
ARTISTS' WIVES

SOCIETY OF ENGLISH AND FRENCH
LITERATURE · · · NEW YORK

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TO MY FRIEND

GONZAGUE PRIVAT

"*In France everybody is a trifle Tarasconese*"

INTRODUCTION.

To not a few persons Alphonse Daudet's claims to affectionate gratitude seem to rest chiefly upon his authorship of the Tartarin series, — at least upon the first two members of that trilogy of humourous masterpieces, the inimitable *Tartarin de Tarascon* and the equally inimitable *Tartarin sur les Alpes.* Some critics, indeed, apparently through temperamental peculiarities, lay most stress upon the excellent Parisian stories, *Le Nabab*, *Sapho*, and the rest; others care most for the delicate short stories and sketches of the Provençal poet, which Daudet never ceased to be, such as those collected in the charming *Lettres de mon Moulin;* while Daudet himself seems to have felt a partiality for that interesting mixture of pathetic romance, satire, and truth which he denominated *Jack.* But it was as the discoverer of the now famous little town of Tarascon, and the introducer of its chief citizen Tartarin to a wider public, that Daudet impressed the entire world of letters, general readers and critics as well, with the idea that he was not only a great humourist, but a decidedly original one. Now the fame of a humourist, though precarious, is wonderfully strong and popular if it manages to survive a generation or two, and it is probably a true instinct on the part of many of Daudet's friends to press his claims as the creator of Tartarin. As a Parisian veritist, to adopt Professor Brander Matthews's useful phrase, Daudet must come into somewhat disastrous competition with Balzac; as a Provençal poet he runs the risk of being labelled "slight and fragile though charming;" but as Provençal poet and original humourist combined he seems to stand an excellent chance of being regarded by future generations as uniquely delightful. If this be true, Daudet's friends — and who is not his friend? — will do well, whenever they have occasion to sound his praises, to insist upon the unapproachable merits of the Tartarin books.

There is indeed another of his stories that should not be passed over in this connection. This is that wonderful though not quite perfect comedy, *Numa Roumestan*, in which veritist, poet, and humourist are found combined in admirable proportions. In the two *Tartarins* the delightful follies and foibles of his native Provence are presented by Daudet with an exaggeration which, although it does not actually smack of the extravaganza or the farce, is never far removed from the suggestion of them. In *Numa*, on the other hand, the same follies and foibles are presented in a way that not only suggests but confirms the presence of the spirit of true comedy. There are parts of this story that Molière himself would not disdain, and it should always be held in high honour by the lovers of Tartarin, if only for the fact that in it his irrepressible friend Bompard, who had been barely mentioned in *Tartarin de Tarascon*, was developed for future use in *Tartarin sur les Alpes* and in *Port-Tarascon.*

But granted that Daudet is a great humourist who will hold his own with future readers, the fact remains that he is a French humourist, and the query at once arises whether he will be able to stand that cosmopolitan test which we demand of truly great authors. In other words will his humour bear permanent transplanting into other tongues? Any attempt to answer this question will expose the critic who makes it to a chance of committing a blunder of the kind that future critics delight to hold up to ridicule. A work of humour has difficulties enough to encounter in its author's native land; these difficulties are enhanced tenfold when the translator or interpreter has intervened. Even when two nations speak a common language, it rarely happens that they can appreciate each other's efforts to be humourous or funny. Many an American fails to smile at the best things of Charles Lamb, and we may rest assured that Mark Twain can tell queer stories of his British experiences whenever he has a mind to. Then there is the case of Dickens, with whom Daudet is forever being compared. Dickens unquestionably conquered both the British and the American public, but there has been quite a revolt against him of late, and it has never been easy to say with certainty how many of his admirers really cared for his far from delicate humour. It is, indeed, not unlikely that more people enjoyed a cry over his pathetic and sentimental pages than relished a hearty laugh over his humourous characters and situations. Even *Pickwick* has remained a sealed book to many, though few have had the courage of a gentleman known to the present writer, who read before a literary club passages from that immortal book to prove the thesis that there is no fun in Dickens. He thinks to this day that the club members were laughing with him, and not at him. But would not the tables have been turned if he had been a Frenchman addressing his literary confrères? Might he not have been cheered to the echo, while phrases like "Grosse bête!" "Conspuez Dickens!" made themselves heard amid the applause? It is surely not unlikely, nor can one help feeling that, although the Tartarin books have been widely read in America, it would be a little unsafe to attempt to read passages from them to any save a select audience, even in this cosmopolitan land.

But the true lover is nothing if not bold, and Daudet's admirers may as well have the courage of their convictions and proclaim that if the Tartarin books do not give pleasure and happiness the world over, they ought to. Readers who insist upon horse-laughs and farces may indeed be warned away from them, as well as those who think that the secret of humour is to be found in queer spelling; but readers glad of any opportunity for a genial laugh or a rippling smile may be counselled to make the acquaintance of Daudet's masterpieces as soon as they conveniently can.

The first of these masterpieces, *Tartarin de Tarascon*, seems to have been begun about 1868. It was finally published in 1872, and has ever since been a most popular book. Even if we did not have these dates, the Provençal setting and the fact that the apostrophe of the old diligence to Tartarin must have been written by the author of *La Chèvre de M. Seguin* would have proved that these first adventures of the illustrious citizen of Tarascon developed in Daudet's mind about the time that he wrote and published those "Letters from my Mill" (1869), in which the story of the sad fate of M. Seguin's she-goat found a place; while the comparative failure to strike the comic vein — which is quite apparent on the other hand in *Tartarin sur les Alpes* — would, seemingly, have proved equally well that the book stood at a considerable remove from *Numa Roumestan* (1881). But the date of a book is not so important as its matter and manner — and what of these?

The Arthurian romances used to be called "Matter of Britain;" just so the Tartarin books might be called "Matter of Tarascon," or better still "Matter of Provence." But his beloved Midi is described in many of Daudet's stories, and one could have got out of them a fairly complete picture of the region and its people, — of those irrepressible, exaggerating, mercurial inhabitants of that South of France " où les paroles volent plus vite qu'ailleurs à cause de la légèreté de l'air," where words fly more quickly than elsewhere because the air is so light and buoyant, — had Tartarin and his Tarascon never taken definite shape in Daudet's imagination. Primarily speaking, therefore, the matter of these books is their unique hero. Who, then, is Tartarin and whence does he proceed?

Daudet has answered these questions for us better than we should have done for ourselves. He tells us that the hero of his fertile imagination is a compound of Don Quixote and Sancho Panza. Cervantes has had many sins to answer for in the story-tellers whom he has inspired to send more or less queer heroes and their queerer attendants through the world hunting for adventures, but it should be as impossible to be sorry that Daudet fell under his influence as it is to be sorry that Fielding fell. The conception of a united Quixote-Sancho in the person of Tarascon's famous hunter and Alpinist is almost as original in its way as that of the Jekyl-Hyde of the English romancer, and is as much more beneficial to the world as a smile is worth more than a shudder. And who of us fails to smile at Tartarin and yet to love him? For, as Professor Matthews has acutely observed, " there is a boaster and a liar in most of us, lying in wait for a chance to rush out and put us to shame." We have all of us read our romances of love or war, and aspired to imitate our heroes and then quietly settled back into our commonplace grooves. It may not have been romances of chivalry as with Don Quixote, or those of Gustave Aimard and Cooper as with our friend Tartarin, but we have all been stirred by the far-off and the strange, and if we have not persuaded ourselves that we have actually fought with Tartars at Shanghai when we were really watering our plants at Tarascon, we have at least known and liked people who had persuaded themselves of equal impossibilities. Hence we have taken Tartarin to our hearts, and hence Daudet has added a character to European fiction and has rivalled the creators of Parson Adams and Dr. Primrose in his power to develop a personage who should win our laughter and our love at one and the same instant. It would perhaps be presumptuous to say that Tartarin is the French Falstaff, yet he surely has many qualities in common with that inimitable creation.

With regard now to Daudet's manner of telling his story, nothing but praise seems possible. With absolute lightness of touch he sets Tarascon before us in such a way that we seem to know the little town and its self-centred inhabitants as well as we know our native place and the men with whom we grew up. And when we have once learned to know the town's hero, he is our hero, and we stand with him outside the menagerie listening to the lion's roar; we lie ill with him in the cabin of the "Zouave;" we accompany him in all his blood-curdling expeditions until we are in at the death of the tame lion; we follow him as obsequiously as the devoted camel itself; we mingle with the applauding Tarasconese in order to welcome him home from his mighty labours, — all because Daudet has thrown in our eyes some of the golden dust which, he tells us, always affects the vision of his brother Provençals. Perhaps, indeed, we do not find ourselves quite as comfortable as Tartarin did in the sunlight of the smiles of the fair Baïa, but then this means only that we are Anglo-Saxons after all. We are very dull Anglo-Saxons, however, if we lay down *Tartarin de Tarascon* without confessing that more good can come out of France than our doughty ancestors used to think.

It is not often that an author can add to a phenomenally successful book an equally successful sequel, yet this is what Daudet did when in 1885 he published *Tartarin sur les Alpes*. Indeed some people are inclined to think that he did more than this — that he actually made the second Tartarin more entertaining than the first, thus fairly rivalling, as an acute critic has observed, the almost unique success achieved by Mark Twain when he followed *Tom Sawyer* with *Huckleberry Finn*. The parallel between the two great humourists is rendered still closer when we compare their respective attempts to conjure a third time with their hitherto potent wands, and own their comparative want of success.

Whether now *Tartarin sur les Alpes* is a greater masterpiece than *Tartarin de Tarascon*, is a question about which we need not dispute too warmly. Some readers of excellent taste prefer the earlier book; some fully as competent to judge prefer the later. It may be permissible to remark, however, that there are reasons for holding that *Tartarin on the Alps* is the more artistic production. In the first place it seems to contain more of the true comic spirit. Certainly there is more of the comedy of manners in the description of the hotel of the Rigi-Kulm and its guests than can be found in the pages of *Tartarin de Tarascon*. In other words, Daudet had spent the years between 1872 and 1885 in faithful study of society at Paris and elsewhere, and he had already learned how to write comedy in *Numa Roumestan*. Again, there is more of the comic spirit and of true art in the love adventures of Tartarin with the fair Nihilist Sonia than there is in his relations with Baïa, which clearly suggest farce. Nor is there anything in the earlier volume that is as clever as Daudet's use of "a certain rope made in Avignon" or as daring as his incarceration of his hero in Bonnivard's cell at Chillon. Byron no longer has a monopoly of that famous dungeon.

And with regard to the hero's later exploits in the more technical sense, it would seem that the champions of *Tartarin on the Alps* can make out a good case for themselves. It is true that lion hunting in the desert is a less common pastime than alpine climbing, but just for this reason perhaps, the pages devoted to Tartarin's actual experiences as a Nimrod seem to resemble a burlesque a little more than do the corresponding pages descriptive of the most *sans-souciant* ascent of the Jungfrau ever made. As for the disappearance of the intrepid Alpinist amid the snows of Mont Blanc and his sudden apparition in the midst of the séance of the Alpine Club of Tarascon, what more superb dénouement could a masterpiece of humour have?

Finally, when we consider the characters of the two books we may find reason to believe, as indeed we might have inferred from *à priori* considerations, that the Daudet of 1885 is a more consummate artist than the Daudet of 1872. Whether Tartarin himself is more inimitable as an Alpinist than as a mighty hunter who disdained panthers and such ignoble beasts, and would be satisfied with nothing less than a hecatomb of lions, may perhaps be doubted, although it would seem that his character is more delicately shaded. But almost every other personage of the second book shows the effects of Daudet's thirteen years' experience in character-drawing. Certainly Pascalon, and Bravida, and Bézuquet, those illustrious Tarasconese, are better sketched, and for the Prince of Montenegro we have Bompard in exchange,— Bompard, who yields only to

Tartarin himself as the most deliciously and lovably absurd of visionaries. There was no need of giving to Bompard so thin a joke as that assigned to the Prince, who excited Tartarin's curiosity greatly by informing him that he had spent three years at Tarascon, a statement which was cleared up for the bewildered great man of a small place only when he learned that his Royal Highness had seen Tarascon merely from the windows of his prison-cell.

But why should we continue the ungrateful task of comparing *Tartarin sur les Alpes* with its delightful predecessor to the detriment of the latter? *Vive* Tartarin, the Alpinist; but *vive* also Tartarin-Nimrod. There is no need for us to initiate a contest similar to that waged between the partisans of rice and the stanch defenders of prunes in the dining-room of the Rigi hotel. For when we are engaged in our critical balancings and comparisons, who breaks into our midst but the illustrious Tartarin himself, bent on forcing us into as wild a dance as that in which he succeeded in involving the factions of the Swiss caravansary? There is really no need of criticism when Tartarin is about. Think how small Professor Schwanthaler and the Academician Astier-Réhu appear beside him. He is a hero favoured of the gods. He never seems to lack money, and he is actually a hero to his fellow-townsmen. The glamour of the South is upon him and is radiated from him upon all who are brought within his magic influence. If we do not look upon life as genial optimists after having made his acquaintance, then we are indeed fit, in the words of the great dramatist who has ere this hailed Daudet as in part at least a kindred spirit, "for treason, stratagems, and spoils."

W. P. TRENT.

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TARTARIN OF TARASCON.

FIRST EPISODE.

AT TARASCON.

I.

The garden of the baobab.

My first visit to Tartarin of Tarascon remains an unforgetable date in my life; it is a dozen or fifteen years since then, but I remember it better than yesterday. The intrepid Tartarin was then living at the entrance to the town, in the third house, left-hand side, on the road to Avignon; a pretty little Tarasconese villa, garden before, balcony behind, very white walls, green blinds, and on the step of the gate a brood of little Savoyards playing at hop-scotch, or sleeping in the blessed sun, with their heads on their shoe-blacking boxes.

Outside, the house looked like nothing at all.

Never could I have thought myself before the home of a hero. But enter — *coquin de sort!* . .

From cellar to garret the whole building had an heroic air, even the garden.

Oh, the garden of Tartarin! there are not two like it in all Europe. Not one tree of the region, not a flower of France; nothing but exotic plants, gum-trees, cotton-trees, bottle-gourds, cocoanuts, mangoes, cochineal-trees, banana-trees, palm-trees, a baobab, cactuses, prickly pears from Barbary, till one might fancy one's self in Central Africa, ten thousand leagues from Tarascon. All these, be it understood, were not of natural size; the cocoanut-trees were scarcely larger than beet-roots, and the baobab (*arbos gigantea*, tree of Senegal, largest known vegetable product) lived at ease in a mignonette pot; but no matter for that! it was very pretty to the eyes of Tarascon; and the people of the town, admitted on Sundays to the honour of contemplating the baobab, went home full of admiration.

Think what emotion I must have felt that first day in crossing that wondrous garden! . . But it was quite another thing when I was ushered into the study of the hero.

This study, one of the curiosities of the town, was at the farther end of the garden, opening into it on a level with the baobab by a glass door.

Imagine to yourself a large hall, tapestried from top to bottom with guns, sabres, the weapons of all lands, carbines, rifles, blunderbusses, Corsican knives, Catalan knives, revolving knives, dagger-knives, Malay krishes, tomahawks, Hottentot clubs, Mexican lassos, and I know not what all.

Shining above them, a great ferocious sun made the steel of the blades and the muzzles glitter, as if to make your flesh creep all the more. . . It was rather reassuring, however, to see the good air of order and cleanliness that reigned throughout the yataghanery. All things were in place, ranged in line, dusted, ticketed as in a pharmacy; here and there a little notice, in neat writing, said:

Poisoned arrows; do not touch!

or: —

Loaded weapons; be careful!

Without these notices I should not have dared to enter.

In the middle of the study was a round table. On the table a flask of rum, a Turkish tobacco-pouch, Captain Cook's Travels, the novels of Fenimore Cooper and Gustave Aimard, hunting narratives, bear-hunts, elephant-hunts, hunts with falcons, etc. . . Before this table sat a man of forty to forty-five years of age; short, fat, squat, ruddy, in his shirt-sleeves and flannel drawers, with a strong short beard and flaming eyes; in one hand he held a book, in the other he brandished an enormous pipe with a metal lid, and, while reading I know not what stupendous tale of the hunters of pelts, he made, by advancing his lower lip, a terrible grimace, which gave to the visage of a small Tarasconese proprietor the same air of innocent ferocity that reigned throughout his dwelling.

This man was Tartarin, Tartarin of Tarascon, the intrepid, the great, the incomparable Tartarin of Tarascon.

II.

General coup d'œil cast upon the worthy town of Tarascon. The Hunters of caps.

At the period of which I am telling you, Tartarin of Tarascon was not yet the Tartarin that he is to-day, the great Tartarin of Tarascon, so popular throughout the south of France. Nevertheless, even at that epoch, he was already king of Tarascon.

Let me tell whence that royalty came to him.

You must know, in the first place, that every man down there is a sportsman, from the highest to the lowest. Hunting is the passion of the Tarasconese; and this from times mythological when La Tarasque played the mischief in the marshes of the town, and the Tarasconese of those days formed battues against her. Good reason, as you see, for their passion.

Consequently, every Sunday morning Tarascon takes arms and issues from its walls, gun to shoulder, game-bag on its back, with a turmoil of dogs, ferrets, trumpets, and horns. Superb to see. Unfortunately, game is lacking; absolutely lacking. However stupid wild animals may be, you can well believe that in the end they would mistrust that turmoil.

For a circuit of five leagues around Tarascon burrows are empty, nests are deserted. Not a blackbird, not a quail, not the least little rabbit, nor so much as a snipe.

And yet they are very tempting, those Tarasconese hillsides, all redolent of thyme and myrtle, lavender and rosemary; and those fine muscat grapes, bursting with sugar, in serried ranks along the Rhone, are devilishly appetizing also. Yes! but there is always a Tarasconese behind them; and in the kingdom of pelts and plumes the men of Tarascon are very ill-noted. The birds of passage have marked a great cross against the name of that town in their time-tables, and when the wild ducks, flying south toward the Camargue in long triangles, perceive from afar the steeples of the town, the leader cries out, very loud, "There 's Tarascon! there 's Tarascon!" and the flock makes a crook in its course.

In short, as to game, nothing remains in the whole region but one old scamp of a hare, escaped by miraculous means from the Tarasconese September massacres, who obstinately persists in living there. That hare is well known to Tarascon. They have given him a name. He is called "Rapid." His burrow is on the estate of M. Bompard (a fact which has, by the bye, doubled or even trebled the value of that property), but no one yet has been able to bag him.

At the present time there are only two or three fanatics still rabid enough to hunt him.

The rest mourn him, and "Rapid" has long since passed into the state of a local superstition, though the Tarasconese are not at all superstitious by nature; in fact, they eat swallows in stews — when there are any.

"Ah, ça!" you will say to me, "if game is so scarce in Tarascon what do those Tarasconese hunters do of a Sunday morning?"

What do they do?

Hey! *mon Dieu!* they go out into the open country, two or three leagues from the town. There they gather in little groups of five or six, stretch themselves tranquilly out in the shade of a quarry, an old wall, an olive-tree, take from their game-bags a good bit of braised beef, raw onions, a *saucissot*, a few anchovies, and begin then and there an interminable repast, washed down with one of those delectable Rhone wines that make laughter and song.

After which, being well ballasted, up they get, whistle to the dogs, load the guns, and begin the hunt. That is to say, each of these gentlemen takes his cap, tosses it in the air with all his strength, and fires at it on the wing with a 5, or a 6, or a 2 — according to agreement.

He who hits his cap the oftenest is hailed king of the hunt, and returns in the evening triumphant to Tarascon, amid the barking of dogs and the blare of trumpets, his riddled cap on the muzzle of his gun.

Useless to tell you that a great business in hunting-caps is done in that town. Some of the hat-makers even keep torn and riddled hats for the clumsy; but no one has ever been known to buy them, except Bézuquet the apothecary. It is dishonourable.

As a hunter of caps Tartarin of Tarascon had not his equal. Every Sunday morning he started forth with a new cap, every Sunday evening he returned with a ragged one. The garrets of the little house of the baobab were full of these glorious trophies. Thus the Tarasconese, one and all, considered him their leader, and as Tartarin knew to its depths the sportsman's code, and had read all treatises, all manuals of all possible hunts, from the hunt of the cap to the hunt of the Burmese tiger, his compatriots had made him their arbiter and judge of venery, and took him as their umpire in all their disputations.

Every day, from three to four, at the shop of the gunsmith Costecalde, could be seen a stout man, grave, a pipe between his teeth, seated in a green leather arm-chair, in the midst of a shopful of cap-hunters, all standing and squabbling. This was Tartarin of Tarascon, delivering judgment. A Nimrod lined with Solomon.

III.

Nan! Nan! Nan!

Continuation of the general coup d'œil cast upon the good town of Tarascon.

To a passion for sport the stalwart Tarasconese race added another passion; that of romantic song. The amount of romantic poesy consumed in that small region is not to be believed. All the aged sentimentalities yellowing in the oldest receptacles will be found at Tarascon in full youth and glory. They are all there, all. Every family has its own, and the whole town knows it. They know, for example, that that of the apothecary Bézuquet is: —

"Thou! purest star whom I adore."

That of the gunsmith Costecalde: —

"Wilt thou come to the land of the flat-bottomed boats?"

That of the receiver of registrations: —

"If I were invisible, none could see me."
(*Comic song.*)

And so on, throughout Tarascon. Two or three times a week they meet at their several houses and sing them to one another. The singular thing is that these songs are always the same, and that, long as the worthy Tarasconese have sung them, they have no desire for change. They bequeath them in families, from father to son, and no one meddles with them; those songs are sacred. Never are they even borrowed. Never would the idea come to a Costecalde to sing the song of a Bézuquet, nor to a Bézuquet to sing that of a Costecalde. And yet, as you can well believe, they must know them after hearing them sung for forty years. But no! each keeps his own, and all are content.

In song as in caps, the first in the town was still Tartarin. His superiority over his fellow-citizens consisted in this: Tartarin of Tarascon had no song of his own. He had them all.

All!

Only, it took the devil and all to make him sing them. Retiring early from mere salon successes, the Tarasconese hero much preferred to plunge into his sporting books or pass his evening at the club, to playing swain at a piano from Nîmes, between two Tarasconese wax candles. Such musical parades he thought beneath him. Sometimes, however, when there was music at Bézuquet's pharmacy, he would drop in, as if by chance, and, after getting himself much entreated, would consent to sing the great duet in "Robert le Diable" with Madame Bézuquet *mère*. . . He who never heard that has heard nothing. . . As for me, if I should live a hundred years I should all my life see the great Tartarin approaching the piano with solemn step, resting his elbows upon it, making his grimace, and — beneath the green reflection of the bottles in the window — endeavouring to give to his worthy face the satanic and savage expression of Robert le Diable. Scarcely had he taken position before the whole salon quivered; it was felt that something grand was about to occur. Then, after a silence, Madame Bézuquet *mère*, accompanying herself, began: —

"Robert! thou I love,
Who hast my faith,
Thou see'st my terror (*repeat*),
Mercy for thee!
Mercy for me!"

Then in a low voice: "Now you, Tartarin;" and Tartarin of Tarascon, arm extended, fist clenched, nostril quivering, said three times in a formidable voice, which rolled like thunder through the bowels of the piano: "Non! . . non! . . non! . ." pronounced by the worthy Southerner: "Nan! . . nan! . . nan! . ." On which Madame Bézuquet *mère* repeated: —

"Mercy for thee!
Mercy for me!"

"Nan! . . nan! . . nan! . ." roared Tartarin, finer than ever, and matters stopped there. . . It was not long, as you see, but so well ejaculated, so well simulated, so diabolical, that a shudder of terror ran through the pharmacy, and they made him begin his: "Nan! . . nan! . ." over again, four or five times.

After which Tartarin mopped his forehead, smiled at the ladies, winked at the men, and, retiring on his laurels, went off to the club to remark with a careless air: "I have just been singing the duet in Robert le Diable at the Bézuquets'."

And the best of it was, he believed it.

IV.

They!!!

It was to all these different talents that Tartarin of Tarascon owed his high situation in the town.

At any rate, it is a positive thing that that devil of a man had known how to captivate everybody.

The army was for Tartarin — in Tarascon. The brave Commander Bravida, captain of equipment, retired, said of him: "He 's a *lapin* [determined fellow, army term];" and you may well think the commander was knowing in *lapins*, having clothed so many of them.

The magistracy was for Tartarin. Two or three times in open court the old judge Ladevèze had said, speaking of him: —

"There 's a man of spirit!"

And, finally, the populace was for Tartarin. His sturdy make, his bearing, his air, that air of a trumpeter's horse that fears no noises, his reputation of a hero, which came from nobody knows where, certain distributions of two-sous pieces, and pats on the head to the little shoe-blacks sprawling at his gate, had made him the Lord Seymour of the region, the King of the Tarasconese markets. On the quays, of a Sunday evening, when Tartarin returned from the chase, his cap on the muzzle of his gun, and well-girthed in his fustian jacket, the porters of the Rhone saluted him, full of respect, showing to one another with a clip of the eye the gigantic biceps that rolled upon his arm, and saying, in tones of admiration: "He's strong, he is! he has *double muscles*."

DOUBLE MUSCLES!

It is only in Tarascon that you can hear things like that.

And yet, in spite of all, with his numerous talents, double muscles, popular favour, and the esteem, so precious, of the brave Commander Bravida, retired captain of equipment, Tartarin was not happy; that life of a small town weighed upon him, smothered him. The great man of Tarascon was bored at Tarascon. The fact is, that for a nature so heroic as his, for a soul so adventurous and ardent, which dreamed of battles, splendid hunts, sands of the desert, rambles on the pampas, hurricanes and typhoons, to spend his Sundays in a battue of caps and the rest of his days in laying down the law at the gunsmith's shop was really nothing, nothing at all! . . Poor dear great man! It was enough, in course of time, to make him die of consumption.

In vain — to enlarge his horizons and forget for a moment the club and the market-place — in vain did he surround himself with baobabs and other tropical vegetations; in vain did he heap up weapons upon weapons, Malay krishes on Malay krishes; in vain did he stuff his mind with romantic reading, striving, like the immortal Don

Quixote, to wrench himself by the vigour of his dream from the claws of a pitiless reality. . . Alas! all that he did to slake his thirst for adventure only increased it. The sight of his weapons kept him in a state of perpetual wrath and excitement. His rifles, his arrows, his lassos cried to him: "Battle! battle! battle!" Through the branches of his baobab the wind of mighty travels whistled and gave him evil counsels, and, to cap it all, Gustave Aimard, Fenimore Cooper! . .

Ah! on those heavy summer afternoons, when he was alone in the midst of his blades, how many a time did Tartarin rise up roaring, and, casting away his book, precipitate himself upon that wall to snatch down a panoply!

The poor man forgot he was at home in Tarascon, with a foulard on his head and flannel drawers around his loins; he put his reading into action, and, exciting himself more and more by the sound of his own voice, he cried aloud, brandishing an axe or a tomahawk: —

"Come on! . . They come! . ."

They! Who, *They?*

Tartarin did not very well know himself. *They!* Why, all who attack, all who combat, all who bite, all who claw, all who scalp, all who roar. . . *They!* Why, the Indian Sioux dancing their war dance round the stake to which the white man is bound.

'T was the grisly bear of the Rocky Mountains, licking himself with his bloody tongue. 'T was the Bedouin of the desert, the Malay pirate, the bandit of the Abruzzi. . . *They!* in short, 't was *they!* that is to say, war, travel, adventures, glory.

But alas! *they* were summoned in vain by the intrepid Tarasconese; in vain were *they* defied, *they* came not. . . *Pecaïré!* what could *they* have found to do in Tarascon?

Nevertheless, *they* were always expected by Tartarin; especially in the evening when he went to the club.

V.

When Tartarin went to the club.

The Knight Templar preparing to make a sortie against the besieging Infidel, the Chinese *tiger* equipping himself for battle, the Comanche warrior entering the war-path, were as nought compared with Tartarin of Tarascon arming himself *cap-à-pie* to go to the club at nine in the evening — one hour after the bugles had sounded tattoo.

"Prepare for action!" as the sailors say.

In his left hand Tartarin took a knuckle-duster with iron points; in his right hand a sword-cane; in his left-hand pocket was a tomahawk; in the right-hand pocket a revolver. On his breast, between cloth and flannel, a Malay krish. But never a poisoned arrow; such weapons are too disloyal! . .

Before starting, in the silence and shade of his study, he practised for a moment; parrying, letting fly at the wall, exercising his muscles. Then he took his latch-key, and crossed the garden gravely, not hurrying — English fashion, messieurs, English fashion; that is true courage. At the end of the garden he unlocked the iron gate; then he opened it suddenly, violently, so that it swung back rapidly outside, against the wall. . . If *they* had been behind it, think what marmalade! Unfortunately, they were not behind it.

The gate open, Tartarin went out, cast a rapid glance to right and left, turned round, double-locked the gate behind him, and then, forward!

On the road to Avignon, not a cat. Gates closed, windows darkened. All was black. Here and there a street-lamp blinked through the river fog. . .

Lofty and calm, Tartarin of Tarascon advanced into the night; making his boot-heels ring in rhythm, and striking sparks from the pavement with the iron tip of his cane. Boulevards, wide streets, or alleys, he was careful to keep to the middle of the road ; excellent measure of precaution, which enables you to see an approaching danger, and also to avoid what is apt, at night, in the streets of Tarascon, to fall from the windows. In seeing him thus prudent, do not think for a moment that Tartarin was afraid. . . No! he was only careful.

The best proof that Tartarin was not afraid is that, instead of going to the club by the public promenade, he went through the town; that is, by the longest and darkest way, through a nest of villanous little streets, at the end of which the Rhone is seen to glitter ominously. The poor man always hoped that in passing some angle of these cut-throat alleys *they* would spring from the shadow and fall upon his back. Had *they* done so, *they* would have been well received, I 'll answer for it. . . But alas! by the derision of fate, never, eternally never, did Tartarin of Tarascon have even the chance of a dangerous encounter.

Not a dog. Not so much as a drunken man. Nothing!

Occasionally, however, a false alarm. A sound of steps and smothered voices. "Attention!" said Tartarin to himself; and he stood stock-still, planted on the ground, scrutinizing the shadows, scenting the wind, putting his ear, Indian fashion, to the earth. . . The steps approached. The voices grew distinct. . . Doubt was at an end. *They* were coming. *They* came. Tartarin, his eye flaming, his chest heaving, was gathering himself together, like a jaguar, prepared to bound while uttering his war-cry . . . when, all of a sudden, from the bosom of the darkness came virtuous Tarasconese voices, calling to him, tranquilly: "Hey, hey! Tartarin, good-night, Tartarin."

Maledictions! 't was Bézuquet, with his family, on the way home after singing *his* at Costecalde's. "Good-night! good-night!" growled Tartarin, furious at the mistake; then, savage, with uplifted cane he plunged into the darkness.

Reaching the street of his club, the intrepid Tartarin waited a moment, walking up and down before he entered. . . At last, weary of waiting, and certain now that *they* would not show themselves, he cast a last look of defiance into the shades, and muttered angrily: "Nothing! . . nothing! . . Everlastingly nothing! . ."

Thereupon the brave man entered the club and played his bésique with Commander Bravida.

VI.

The two Tartarins.

WITH this mania for adventure, this need of strong emotions, this passion for travel, for roaming, this devil at grass, how the deuce was it that Tartarin of Tarascon had never left Tarascon?

For that is a fact. Until he was forty-five years old the intrepid Tartarin had never once slept out of his town. He had not even made the famous journey to Marseilles which every good Provençal owes to himself on attaining his majority. It is doubtful if he knew Beaucaire; and yet Beaucaire is not very far from Tarascon, for there is only the bridge to cross. Unfortunately, that bridge has so often been swept away by hurricanes; it is so long, so frail, the Rhone is so wide just there, that — well, well! you understand. . . Tartarin of Tarascon preferred *terra firma*.

The fact is, it must now be owned to you, that there were in our hero two very distinct natures. " I find two men within me," said a Father of the Church — I do not remember which. It was true of Tartarin, who bore within him the soul of a Don Quixote; the same chivalric impulse, the same heroic ideal, the same passion for the romantic and the grandiose; but, unfortunately, he had not the body of the famous hidalgo; that thin and bony body, that pretext of a body, on which material life could get no grip; a body capable of sitting up for twenty nights without unbuckling its cuirass, and of going forty hours on a handful of rice. . . Tartarin's body, on the contrary, was a good fellow of a body, very fat, very heavy, very sensual, very luxurious, very exacting, full of bourgeois appetites and domestic requirements, the short and pot-bellied body on paws of the immortal Sancho Panza.

Don Quixote and Sancho Panza in the same man! you understand what a household that must have made! what struggles! what wrenchings! . .

Oh, the fine dialogue that a Lucian or Saint-Evremond could write! a dialogue between the two Tartarins, Tartarin-Quixote and Tartarin-Sancho! Tartarin-Quixote inspired by the tales of Gustave Aimard and crying aloud: "I go!" Tartarin-Sancho, thinking only of his rheumatism, and saying: "I stay."

TARTARIN-QUIXOTE, *all enthusiasm.*

Cover thyself with glory, Tartarin.

TARTARIN-SANCHO, *calmly.*

Cover thyself with flannel, Tartarin.

TARTARIN-QUIXOTE, *more and more enthusiastic.*

Oh, the fine rifles! the double-barrelled rifles! Oh, the daggers, the lassos, the moccasins!

TARTARIN-SANCHO, *more calmly still.*

Oh, those knitted waistcoats! those good warm knee-wraps! those excellent caps with ear-pads!

TARTARIN-QUIXOTE, *beside himself.*

An axe! an axe! bring me an axe!

TARTARIN-SANCHO, *ringing for the maid.*

Jeannette, my chocolate.

Whereupon Jeannette appears with excellent chocolate, hot, foamy, perfumed, and a certain succulent toast made of anise-seed bread, which cause a smile on the face of Tartarin-Sancho while they stifle the cries of Tartarin-Quixote.

That is how it happened that Tartarin of Tarascon had never left Tarascon.

VII.

Europeans at Shanghai.
Higher Commerce. Tartars.
Can it be that Tartarin of Tarascon is an impostor?

ONCE, however, Tartarin came near departing — departing on a great journey.

The three brothers Garcio-Camus, Tarasconese persons who had settled at Shanghai, offered him the management of one of their counting-rooms over there. That, indeed, was the very life that would have suited him. Business of importance; an army of clerks to govern; relations with Russia, Persia, Turkey in Asia, — in short, the Higher Commerce.

In the mouth of Tartarin those words, "Higher Commerce," revealed to you heights! . .

The house of Garcio-Camus had, moreover, this advantage: at times it was threatened with a visit from Tartars. Then, quick! the doors were closed. All the clerks seized weapons, the consular flag was hoisted, and pan! pan! through the windows at the Tartars.

I do not need to tell you with what enthusiasm Tartarin-Quixote jumped at the proposition. Unhappily, Tartarin-Sancho did not hear of it with the same ear, and, as he was the stronger, the matter could not be arranged. In the town of Tarascon much was said about it: "Will he go?" "Will he not go?" "I bet yes." "I bet no." 'T was an event. . . In the end, Tartarin did not go. Still, it was a tale that did him much honour. To have failed to go to Shanghai, or to have gone, proved to be all the same for Tartarin. By dint of talking about that journey, people ended by believing he had returned from it; so that in the evenings, at the club, all those gentlemen asked him for information about the life in Shanghai, its manners and morals, the climate, opium, and Higher Commerce.

Tartarin, very well informed, gave with a good grace the details demanded; so that in course of time the worthy man was not very sure himself that he had not been to Shanghai; in fact, after relating for the hundredth time a Tartar raid, he said, quite naturally: "I then armed all the clerks, hoisted the consular flag, and pan! pan! through the windows at the Tartars." Hearing that, the club quivered. . .

"But, then," you say, "your Tartarin was a shocking liar."

No! a thousand times no! Tartarin was not a liar —

"But he must have known he did not go to Shanghai!"

Yes, no doubt he knew it. Only . . .

Only — now listen to this. It is time to come to an understanding once for all about that reputation for lying which the men of the North have put upon Southerners. There are no liars in the South, neither at Marseilles, nor Nîmes, nor Toulouse, nor Tarascon. The man of the South does not lie, he deceives himself. He does not always tell the truth, but he thinks he does. . . A lie in him is not a lie, it is a species of mirage. . .

Yes, mirage. . . In order to understand me perfectly, go to the South, and you will see. You will see that 'devil of a land where the sun transfigures everything and makes it grander than nature. You will see those little hills of Provence that are no higher than the heights of Montmartre, but they will seem to you gigantic. You will see that Maison-Carrée at Nîmes — a little gem of a doll's house — and you will think it grander than Notre-Dame. You will see. . . Ha! the sole liar in the South (if there is one) is the sun. . . All that he touches he exaggerates. . . What was Sparta in the days of its splendour? A straggling village. . . What was Athens? At the most a sub-prefecture . . . and yet in history they appear to us enormous cities. That is what the sun has made them.

After that, will you feel surprised that the same sun, falling on Tarascon, should have made of a retired captain of equipment like Bravida the brave Commander Bravida, out of a turnip a baobab, out of a man who failed to go to Shanghai a man who had been there?

VIII.

The Menagerie Mitaine.
A lion of the Atlas in Tarascon.
Terrible and solemn interview.

AND now that we have shown Tartarin of Tarascon as he was in private life, before fame had kissed his brow and crowned it with the laurel of centuries, now that we have pictured that heroic life in its modest environment, in its joys, its sorrows, its dreams, its hopes, let us hasten to reach the grand pages of his history, and the singular event that was fated to give wings to his incomparable destiny.

'T was evening, in the shop of the gunsmith Costecalde. Tartarin of Tarascon was in the act of explaining to certain amateurs the proper manipulation of a needle-gun, then in all its novelty. Suddenly the door opened, and a cap-hunter precipitated himself, breathless, into the shop, crying out: "A lion! . . a lion! . ." Stupor, terror, tumult, jostling. Tartarin fixed bayonet. Costecalde ran to lock the door. The hunter was surrounded, questioned, pressed; and this was what they learned: the Menagerie Mitaine, returning from the fair at Beaucaire, had consented to halt for a few days at Tarascon, and had just installed itself on the Place du Château, with a mass of boas, phocas, crocodiles, and — a magnificent lion of the Atlas.

A lion of the Atlas in Tarascon! Never within the memory of man had such a thing been seen before. How proudly did our brave sportsmen of caps turn their eyes to one another! What gleams upon their manly faces in the darkest corner of that shop of Costecalde's. What graspings of the hands were silently exchanged! The emotion was so great, so unexpected that no one could find a word to say. . .

Not even Tartarin. Pale and quivering, the needle-gun still in his hand, he stood, reflecting, before the counter. A lion of the Atlas, there, close by, not two steps off! A lion! in other words, the heroic and ferocious animal *par excellence*, the king of wild beasts, the game of his dreams; the first object, as one might say, of that ideal troop which played such splendid dramas in his fancy.

A lion, ye gods! . .

And a lion of the Atlas!! 'T was more than the great Tartarin could bear. . .

A rush of blood flew suddenly to his face.

His eyes flamed. With a convulsive gesture he flung the needle-gun upon his shoulder and turning to the brave Commander Bravida, retired captain of equipment, he said to him, in a voice of thunder: "Let us go, commander, and see THAT."

"Hey! but . . . hey! . . My gun, my needle-gun, you are taking with you," objected timidly the prudent Costecalde. But Tartarin was already in the street, and behind him were the cap-hunters, proudly keeping step.

When they reached the menagerie a crowd had already collected. Tarascon, race heroic, too long deprived of sensations and sights, had rushed to the barrack Mitaine and taken it by storm. Consequently, the stout Madame Mitaine was well content. . . Attired in Kabylese costume, arms bare to the elbow, iron bracelets round her ankles, a whip in one hand, a live fowl (though plucked) in the other, that illustrious dame did the honours of the tent to the worthy Tarasconese burghers; and as she, too, had *double muscles*, her success was almost as great as that of her animals.

The entrance of Tartarin, the needle-gun upon his shoulder, cast a chill upon the scene.

All these worthy Tarasconese, walking about most tranquilly before the cages, without weapons, without fear, without so much as the smallest idea of danger, felt a natural sense of terror on seeing the great Tartarin enter that tent with his formidable engine of war. Surely there must be something to fear, since he, that hero . . . In the twinkling of an eye the space before the cages was left vacant. The children screamed with fear; the ladies looked at the door; Bézuquet, the apothecary, slipped out, muttering the remark that he would fetch his gun. . .

Little by little, however, Tartarin's attitude reassured the crowd. Calm, his head held high, that intrepid man walked slowly round the enclosure, passed, without pausing, the pool of the phoca, glanced with disdainful eye at the box filled with bran where the boa was digesting that live, plucked hen, and planted himself finally before the cage of the king of beasts.

Terrible and solemn interview! The lion of Tarascon and the lion of the Atlas face to face! . . On one side, Tartarin, erect, right leg advanced and both arms resting on his rifle; on the other, the lion, a gigantic lion, stretched upon the straw, with blinking eyes and stupid aspect, his monstrous muzzle and his yellow wig reposing on his fore-paws. . . Both were calm, and gazed upon each other.

Singular result! whether it was that the needle-gun gave him umbrage, or that he scented an enemy to his race, the lion, who, up to that time, had looked at the Tarasconese with an air of supreme contempt while yawning in their faces, the lion was suddenly seized with an angry emotion. First, he sniffed, growled in an undertone, parted his claws and stretched out his paws; then he rose, erected his head, shook that tawny mane, opened his vast jaws, and gave vent, eying Tartarin, to a formidable roar.

A cry of terror answered him. All Tarascon, mad with fright, rushed to the doors. All — women, children, porters, hunters of caps, the brave Commander Bravida himself. . . Tartarin of Tarascon alone never stirred. . . He stood there, firm and resolute before the cage, lightning in his eye and that terrible expression the whole town knew so well upon his face. . . After a while the cap-hunters, reassured by his attitude and the solidity of the bars, approached their leader and heard him murmur, as he gazed at the lion: "That, yes, *that* is game."

For that day, Tartarin of Tarascon said no more. . .

IX.

Singular effects of mirage.

THAT day, Tartarin of Tarascon said no more; but the hapless man had already said too much. . .

The next day nothing was talked of in the town but the coming departure of Tartarin for Algeria to hunt the lion. . . You are witnesses, dear readers, that the worthy man had never said one word about it; but, *mirage* — you understand. . .

In short, all Tarascon talked of this departure.

On the promenade, at the club, in Costecalde's shop, men approached each other to say, with haggard air: —

"And otherwise, you know the news, at least?"

"And otherwise, of course! . . Tartarin's departure, at least?"

At Tarascon all sentences begin with *et autrement* (there pronounced *autremain*), and end with *au moins* (pronounced *au mouain*). On this occasion above all others, the "at leasts," and the "otherwises," resounded through the town till the windows rattled.

The most surprised man in all Tarascon at the news that he was going to Africa was Tartarin himself. But see what vanity will do! Instead of simply answering that he was not going at all, and had never had any intention of going, poor Tartarin, the first time the journey was mentioned to him, assumed an evasive air: "Hey! . . hey! . . perhaps. . . I can't say." The second time, being rather more familiar with the idea, he answered: "Probably." The third time: "Certainly."

Finally, one evening at the club and at the gunsmith's, led away by an egg-punch, the lights, and the cheering, — drunk, in short, with the applause that the news of his departure had evoked, — the unhappy man declared formally that he was weary of hunting caps and was about, before long, to set forth in pursuit of the lions of Africa. . .

This declaration was greeted with a thundering hurrah. On which, more egg-punch, grasping of hands, accolades, and a torch-light serenade in front of the little house of the baobab.

But Tartarin-Sancho was far from happy. This idea of a journey to Africa and of hunting the lions of Atlas gave him chills down his back; and while that serenade of honour was still sounding beneath his windows Tartarin-Sancho made Tartarin-Quixote a terrible scene, calling him crazy, visionary, imprudent, a triple fool, and minutely detailing the many catastrophes that awaited him: shipwreck, rheumatism, fevers, dysenteries, black death, elephantiasis, and all the rest of them. . .

In vain did Tartarin-Quixote swear he would commit no imprudence; he would wrap himself up, he would carry with him whatever he needed.

Tartarin-Sancho listened to nothing. Already he saw himself torn to bits by the lions, or engulfed in the sands of the desert like the late Cambyses; the other Tartarin could succeed in pacifying him only by the reminder that this departure was not immediate, there was no hurry, and, after all, they were not yet gone.

It is plain, of course, that no one starts on an expedition like that without taking certain precautions. In the first place, one has to know where one is going; how the devil could one start like a bird? . .

Therefore, before all things else, Tartarin of Tarascon determined to read the narratives of the famous African tourists, Mungo Park, Caillé, Dr. Livingstone, Henri Duveyrier.

There he found that those intrepid travellers, before they buckled on their sandals for distant enterprises, prepared themselves, long beforehand, to endure forced marches, hunger and thirst, and all sorts of privations. Tartarin determined to do as they did, and from that day forth he fed upon nothing but *eau bouillie.* What is called *eau bouillie* in Tarascon consists of slices of bread steeped in hot water with a clove of garlic, a sprig of thyme, and a pinch of bay-leaf. The regimen was severe; and you can fancy what a face poor Sancho made at it. . .

To the training of *eau bouillie* Tartarin of Tarascon added other wise practices. To acquire the habit of long marches, he compelled himself to walk round the town seven or eight times every morning, without stopping, sometimes at a quickstep, sometimes in gymnastic fashion, elbows to his sides and pebbles in his mouth — according to the customs of antiquity.

Next, to use himself to cold night-air and fogs and dew, he went down into the garden every evening, alone with his gun, and stayed there on watch till ten or eleven o'clock behind the baobab.

And lastly as long as the Menagerie Mitaine remained in Tarascon, belated cap-hunters loitering at Costecalde's could see, as they went their way home in the darkness, a mysterious human being pacing up and down behind the tents.

'Twas Tartarin of Tarascon, getting used to hear without a shudder the roaring of the lion through the darksome night.

X.

Previous to departure.

WHILE Tartarin was thus training himself by all sorts of heroic means, Tarascon kept its eyes fixed upon him; nothing else was thought of. Capsport lost all credit; romantic song lay fallow. Bézuquet's piano languished in the pharmacy beneath its green covering, on which cantharides now lay drying, their stomachs upturned to the air. . . Tartarin's expedition stopped everything short.

The success of the Tarasconese hero in the salons was a thing to be seen. People snatched him, quarrelled for him, borrowed him, stole him. No greater honour for the ladies than to go to the menagerie on Tartarin's arm and make him explain, in front of the lion's cage, how he should go to work to hunt those noble beasts, where he should aim, at what distance he should stand, and, above all, the numerous accidents that were likely to befall him.

Tartarin gave all the explanations demanded of him. He had read Jules Gérard, and knew the method of hunting lions to the tips of his fingers, as if he had practised it. Consequently, he spoke on the subject with great eloquence.

But where he was finest was at dinner in the evening with old Judge Ladevèze or the brave Commander Bravida (retired captain of equipment), when coffee was brought, the chairs drawn together, and they made him talk of his future hunts. . .

Then, his elbow on the table-cloth, his nose in his mocha, the hero related in a voice of emotion the perils that awaited him; he told of the long night-watches, moonless, the pestilential marshes, the rivers poisoned by the leaves of the bay-tree, the snows, the scorching suns, the scorpions, the rains of grasshoppers. Also he told of the morals and customs of the lions of the Atlas, their manner of fighting, their phenomenal vigour, and their ferocity during the rutting season. . .

Then, exciting himself with his own eloquence, he sprang from the table, bounded into the middle of the room, imitating the cry of the lion, the discharge of the rifle, pan! pan! the whistle of the ball, pfft! pfft! gesticulating, roaring, and knocking over chairs.

Around the table all were pale. The men looked at each other and shook their heads; the ladies shut their eyes with little screams of terror; the old men brandished their canes belligerently; and the little boys in the adjoining room, put to bed early, wakened with a start by the roaring and the shots, demanded lights in mortal terror.

Meanwhile, however, Tartarin of Tarascon did not depart.

XI.

Sword-thrusts, gentlemen, sword-thrusts. . . but no pin-pricks!

HAD he really the intention to go? . . Delicate question, to which Tartarin's historian is puzzled to reply.

It is certain that the Menagerie Mitaine had left Tarascon more than three months and still the lion-killer did not depart. But, after all, perhaps the simple hero, blinded by a new mirage, imagined in good faith that he had been to Africa. Perhaps, by dint of relating his future sport, he fancied he had killed his lions as sincerely as he believed he had hoisted the consular flag and fired on the Tartars, pan! pan! at Shanghai.

Unfortunately, if Tartarin of Tarascon was the victim of another mirage, the Tarasconese were not; and when, at the end of three or four months of expectation, it became apparent that the hunter had not packed a single trunk, they began to murmur.

"It will be as it was about Shanghai," said Costecalde, smiling; and the gunsmith's speech went the rounds of the town; for no one any longer believed in Tartarin.

Silly people, cowards, men like Bézuquet, whom a flea could put to flight and who dared not fire a gun without shutting their eyes, were the most pitiless. At the club, on the esplanade, they accosted poor Tartarin with a jeering air.

"*Et autremain*," they would say, "when does the trip come off?"

His opinion no longer had weight at the gunsmith's; even the cap-hunters disowned their leader!

Epigrams took part in the affair. Judge Ladevèze, who, in his hours of leisure, paid willing court to the Provençale Muse, composed a song in the vernacular which had vast success. It told of a certain great hunter, called Maître Gervais, whose doughty gun was expected to exterminate the very last of the lions of Africa. Unfortunately, that gun had a singular disposition: it was always loaded, but *it never went off*.

Never went off! You understand the allusion. . .

In a trice, that song became popular. When Tartarin passed the porters on the quay or the little shoe-blacks at his own gate, they sang it in chorus.

But at a distance, — on account of his double muscles.

Oh, the fragility of Tarascon enthusiasm!

The great man himself feigned to see nothing, hear nothing; but in his heart this venomous little underhand war distressed him much; he felt that Tarascon was slipping through his fingers, that popular favour was going to others, and he suffered horribly.

Ah! that great bowl of popularity! how good to sit down before it, but if it upsets, what scalding! . .

In spite of his inward suffering, Tartarin smiled, and continued tranquilly his same way of life, as if nothing were happening.

Occasionally, however, this mask of gay indifference, which pride had gummed upon his face, became for a moment detached, and then, instead of laughter, indignation was visible, and sorrow. . .

Thus it happened that one morning, when the shoe-blacks were singing the song of the gun of Maître Gervais, the voices of those young rascals ascended to the chamber of the poor great man as he stood before his glass in the act of shaving (Tartarin wore his full beard, but it was a strong one, and he was forced to keep an eye upon it.)

Suddenly the window opened violently and the hero appeared, in his shirt and night-cap, his face in a good white lather, brandishing his razor in one hand, his soap-ball in the other, and shouting in his formidable voice: —

"Sword-thrusts, gentlemen, sword-thrusts, but no pin-pricks!"

Noble words, worthy of history! their only fault lay in being addressed to little scamps no taller than their blacking-boxes, — gentlemen who were quite incapable of even holding a sword.

XII.

That which was said in the little house of the baobab.

In the midst of this general defection the army stood firmly by Tartarin.

The brave Commander Bravida, late captain of equipment, continued to show him the same respect. "He 's a *lapin*," he persisted in saying; and this assertion, I imagine, was worth as much as that of the apothecary Bézuquet. . . Not once did the brave commander make allusion to that African journey. Nevertheless, when public clamour became too strong, he resolved to speak out.

One evening, while the unfortunate Tartarin was sitting alone in his study, thinking of melancholy things, he beheld the commander entering the room, grave, wearing black gloves, and buttoned to the chin.

"Tartarin," said the former captain, in a tone of authority, "Tartarin, you must go!" and he stood erect in the frame of the doorway — rigid and grand as duty.

All that was contained in those words: "Tartarin, you must go!" Tartarin of Tarascon comprehended.

Very pale, he rose, looked about him with a touching glance on the pretty room, so cozy, so full of warmth and tempered light, on his easy-chair, so comfortable, his books, his carpet, the large white shades to the windows, behind which fluttered the slender branches of his little garden: then, advancing to the brave commander, he took his hand, and pressing it firmly said in a voice suffused with tears, — stoical, nevertheless, — " I *will* go, Bravida ! "

And he went, as he had said. But not immediately. He needed a little time for his outfit.

First, he ordered from Bompard two large boxes lined with copper, on which were brass plates bearing this inscription : —

TARTARIN OF TARASCON.
WEAPONS.

The lining of these boxes and the inscriptions took a good deal of time. He also ordered from Tastavin a magnificent album of travel, in which to write his journal, his impressions; for really, though you hunt lions, you think all the same on the way.

Next, he sent to Marseilles for quite a cargo of preserved aliments, pemmican with which to make broth, a shelter-tent of a new pattern capable of being put up and taken down in a minute, sailor-boots, two umbrellas, a waterproof, blue spectacles to prevent opthalmia. And, lastly, the apothecary Bézuquet put him up a little portable pharmacy, stocked with diachylon, arnica, camphor, vinegar *des quatre-voleurs*, etc.

Poor Tartarin! all this that he now did was not for himself; but he hoped by dint of precautions and delicate attentions to appease the wrath of Tartarin-Sancho, who, ever since the departure had been finally resolved upon, never ceased to be angry, night or day.

XIII.

The departure.

THE day arrived; the solemn day, the great day.

At early dawn Tarascon was afoot, blocking the road to Avignon and the approaches to the little house of the baobab.

People at the windows, on the roofs, on the trees; sailors of the Rhone, porters, shoe-blacks, burghers, spinners, silk-weavers, the club, — in short, the whole town; also the inhabitants of Beaucaire, who came across the bridge, the market-gardeners of the suburbs and their carts with great awnings, vine-dressers, perched on handsome mules tricked out with ribbons, tassels, bells; and even, here and there, some pretty girls from Arles, with sky-blue ribbons round their heads, brought by their lovers, *en croupe*, on the little gray horses of the Camargue.

The whole crowd pressed and jostled one another round Tartarin's gate — that good M. Tartarin, who was going to kill lions among the *Teurs*.

To the Tarasconese mind, Algiers, Africa, Greece, Persia, Turkey, Mesopotamia form one great country, very vague, almost mythological, and it goes by the name of *les Teurs* (the Turks).

In the midst of this tumultuous crowd the cap-hunters went and came, proud of the triumph of their chief, their passage tracing furrows of glory through the multitude.

Before the house of the baobab stood two great barrows. From time to time the gate was opened, so that certain persons walking gravely in the garden could be seen. Porters brought trunks, boxes, carpet-bags, and piled them on the barrows.

As each new package appeared, the crowd quivered. The various objects were named aloud.

"There! that 's the shelter-tent. . . Those are the preserved things. . . There 's the pharmacy . . . and the weapons," — about which the cap-sportsmen gave explanations.

Suddenly, towards ten o'clock, a great stir took place in the crowd. The gate swung violently on its hinges.

"'T is he! . . 't is he! . ." they cried.

It was he. . .

When he appeared on the threshold two cries of stupefaction issued from the crowd.

"It is a *Teur!* . ."

"He wears spectacles!"

Tartarin of Tarascon had felt it his duty, as he was going to Algiers, to assume an Algerian costume, — full trousers of white linen, a short tight-fitting jacket with metal buttons, two feet of waistband, red, round his stomach, throat bare, forehead shaved, and on his head a gigantic *chechia* (scarlet fez) with a blue woollen tassel, of a length!! . . On each shoulder a heavy gun, a large hunting-knife in his belt, upon his stomach a cartridge-box, upon his hip a revolver, swinging in a leathern pocket. That was all. . .

Oh! excuse me, I forgot the spectacles, which came in, very apropos, to correct a little something that was rather too savage in our hero's outfit.

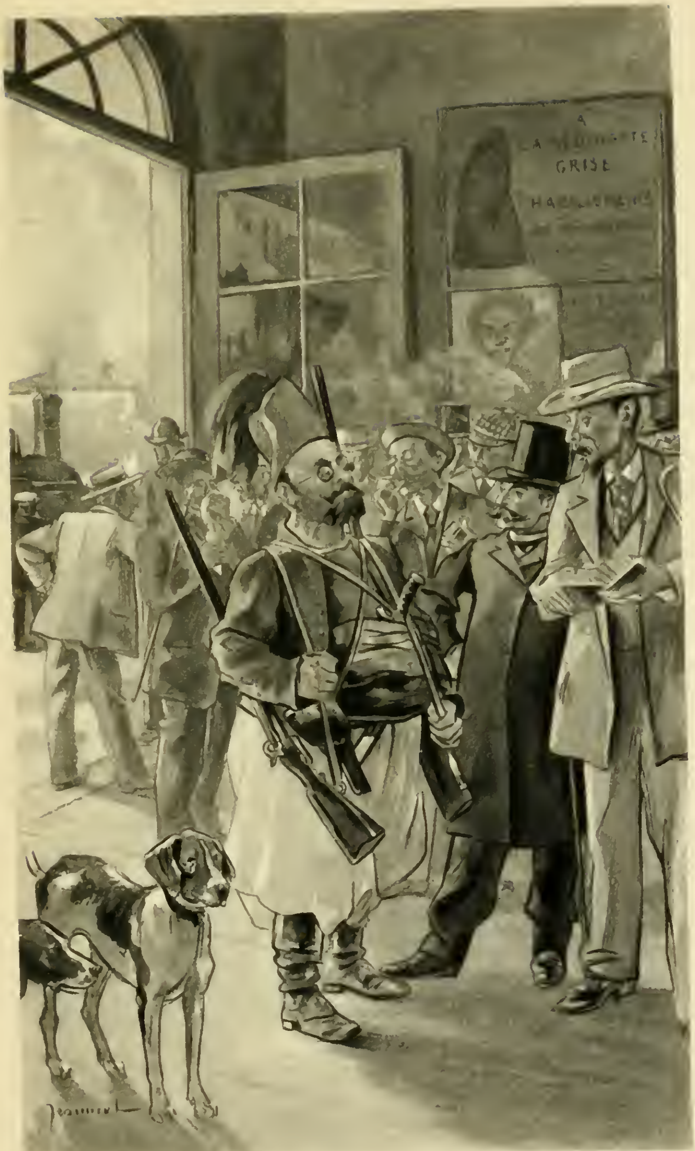
"Vive Tartarin! . . vive Tartarin! . ." shouted the people. The great man smiled, but did not bow, his guns hindered him. Besides, he knew by this time what popular favour was worth; perhaps, in the depths of his soul, he may even have cursed his terrible compatriots, who compelled him to depart and to leave his pretty little home with its white walls and its green blinds. . . But if this were so, it did not appear.

Calm and proud, though a trifle pale, he advanced to the roadway, looked at his barrows, and then, seeing that all was right, he took his way jauntily to the station, without so much as once glancing back to the house of the baobab. Behind him marched the brave Commander Bravida, retired captain of equipment, and Judge Ladevèze, then came the gunsmith Costecalde and all the sportsmen, then the barrows, then the populace.

In front of the station the station-master awaited him — an old African of 1830, who pressed his hand warmly several times.

The Paris-Marseilles express had not yet arrived. Tartarin and his staff entered the waiting-room. To avoid the pressure of a crowd, the station-master ordered the iron gates to be closed behind them.

The Departure of Tartarin


A
GRISE
HABILLEMENTS

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Goupil & Co Paris

Tartarin walked up and down for fifteen minutes in the midst of his friends and the hunters. He spoke to them of his journey, of his noble game, and promised to send them skins. They wrote their names upon his tablets for a skin as they did at a ball for a country dance.

Tranquil and gentle as Socrates ere he drank the hemlock, the intrepid hero had a word for each, a smile for all. He spoke simply, with an affable air; you would have thought that before departing he wished to leave behind him a trail, as it were, of charm, regrets, kind memories. Hearing their chief speak thus to them, all the cap-men shed tears; some even felt remorse, among them Judge Ladevèze and Bézuquet, the apothecary.

The train men wept in corners. Outside, the populace gazed through the bars and shouted: "Vive Tartarin!"

At last the bell rang. A dull rumbling, a shrill whistle, shook the roof... "Take your places, messieurs, your places!"

"Adieu, Tartarin! . . adieu, Tartarin! . ."

"Adieu, all!" murmured the hero, and on the cheek of the brave Commander Bravida he kissed his dear Tarascon.

Then he sprang upon the track and jumped into a carriage that was full of gay Parisian women, who nearly died of fear on seeing this strange man of carbines and revolvers in their midst.

XIV.

The port of Marseilles. Embark! Embark!

On the 1st of December, 186–, at mid-day, under a Provençal winter sun, weather clear, brilliant, splendid, the terrified Marseillais beheld the arrival of a *Teur*, oh! such a *Teur!* . . Never had they seen one like him; yet God knows *Teurs* are never lacking in Marseilles — I mean Turks.

The *Teur* in question (need I tell you) was Tartarin of Tarascon, marching along the quays, followed by his case of weapons, his apothecary's shop, his preserved aliments, and so forth, in order to reach the packet-boat "Zouave," which was destined to carry him *over there.*

Tartarin, his ears still ringing with Tarasconese applause, intoxicated with the light of the sky and the smell of the sea, Tartarin radiant, marched along, his guns on his shoulders, his head high, looking with all his eyes at that marvellous port of Marseilles, which he now saw for the first time, and which fairly dazzled him. . . The poor man thought he dreamed. He imagined he was Sinbad the Sailor, wandering in one of those fantastic towns he had read of in the " Arabian Nights."

A tangle of masts and yards, lost to sight in the distance and crossing one another in every direction. Flags of all nations, Russian, Greek, Swedish, Tunisian, American . . . Vessels moved to the quays, their bowsprits lying along the marge like rows of bayonets. Above them naiads, goddesses, Holy Virgins, and other wooden carvings, all painted, and giving their names to the various vessels; but each defaced by the salt sea-waves, rotten, damp, and oozing. . . Here and there, between the vessels, was a patch of sea, like a large piece of moire silk spotted with oil. . . Beyond were flocks of gulls, making pretty objects through the interlacing yards on the clear blue sky, while the cabin-boys below were calling to each other in all known languages.

On the quay, amid rivulets coming from the soap manufactories, green, thick, blackish, brimful of oil and soda, were crowds of custom-house officers, messengers, porters with their *bogheys*, to which were harnessed little Corsican horses; shops filled with queerly made garments, and smoky hovels where sailors cooked their food; sellers of pipes, sellers of monkeys and parrots; piles of ropes, sailcloth, fantastic bric-à-brac, among which were jumbled pell-mell ancient culverins, huge gilded lanterns, old tackle, old toothless anchors, old cordage, old pulleys, old speaking-trumpets, and spyglasses of the time of Jean Bart and Duguay-Trouin. Hawkers of mussels and periwinkles were crouching and bawling beside their shell-fish; sailors were passing with pots of tar and smoking saucepans and large baskets full of pulp, which they took to rinse in the running water of the fountains.

Everywhere enormous encumbering masses of merchandise of all sorts: silks, minerals, rafts of wood, pigs of lead, linens, sugars, cabbages, locust-beans, sugar-canes, liquorice. The East and the West pell-mell. Also great mounds of Dutch cheeses, which the Genoese dye red with their hands.

Farther along was the wheat quay, where the stevedores were discharging their sacks on the marge from the top of a tall scaffolding. The wheat, a golden torrent, rolled down in yellow vapour. Men below, in red caps, were sifting it, as it came, through enormous sieves of asses' skin, and loading it on carts, which were followed as they moved away by a regiment of women and children with brooms and baskets to catch the gleaning. . . Farther still was the dock for careening; where large vessels lay on their sides and were singed with burning brush to rid them of sea-weed; their yards almost touching the water, the smell of the rosin rising with the muffled noise of the carpenters covering the hulls of the ships with great plates of copper.

Occasionally, between the masts, came an open space. Through it Tartarin saw the entrance to the port, the coming and going of great ships, an English frigate leaving for Malta, spruce, well-cleansed, her officers in yellow kid gloves; or else a great Marseillaise brig leaving her moorings, 'mid cries and oaths, her captain, in a frock-coat and a silk hat, commanding the manœuvre in the Provençal language. Some craft were going with the wind, all sails set; others, away in the distance, were coming slowly in, looking through the sun-mist as if in mid-air.

All this while, a fearful racket of carts, the "Oh! hisse" of the sailors, oaths, songs, whistles of steamboats, drums and bugles of Fort Saint-Jean and Fort Saint-Nicolas, chimes from the Major, the Accoules, and the Saint-Victor, and, over all, the *mistral*, which caught up these noises, these clamours, rolled them, shook them, blended them with its own weird voice, making a wild, heroic, savage music, a pæan of departure, a pæan which created a desire to depart, to go far, to have wings.

To the sound of this splendid blast it was that the intrepid Tartarin of Tarascon set sail for the land of the lions.

SECOND EPISODE.

AMONG THE TEURS.

I.

The voyage. The five positions of the fez.
The evening of the third day. Mercy!

I WOULD, my dear readers, that I were a painter, a great painter, to put before your eyes, at the head of this second episode, the five positions of the fez of Tartarin of Tarascon during its three days' voyage on board the "Zouave" between France and Algeria.

First, I would show it to you on the gangway at the moment of departure, heroic, superb, a lambent glory around that Tarasconese head. Next, I would make you see it when the "Zouave" began on leaving port to caracole upon the billows; you would then behold it quivering, amazed, and as if already feeling the first assaults of ill.

Then, in the gulf of Lyons, as the ship drew farther from land and the sea grew rougher, I would show it to you grappling with the tempest, rising, horrified, on the skull of the hero, its streaming tassel of blue wool standing on end in the fog and the squall.

Fourth position Six in the evening; in sight of the Corsican coast. The unfortunate fez is now seen bending over the bulwarks, lamentably gazing into and sounding the sea. . . Finally, fifth and last position: below in a narrow cabin, in a bed like a bureau-drawer, something amorphous, disconsolate, rolls moaning on a pillow. 'T is the fez, the heroic fez of departure, now reduced to the commonplace condition of a knitted night-cap pulled down over the ears of a convulsed and ghastly head.

Ah! if the Tarasconese could have seen their great Tartarin as he lay in his bureau-drawer in the wan sad light which fell through the bull's-eye, amid that fetid odour of kitchen and damp wood, that sickening odour of a steamboat; if they could have heard the rattle in his throat at every turn of the screw, heard him cry for tea every five minutes, and swear at the waiters in the feeble voice of an infant, how sorry they would feel that they forced him to go. . . On my word as an historian, that poor *Teur* was pitiful. Suddenly overtaken by nausea, the unfortunate man had neither time nor courage to loosen his Algerine belt, or divest himself of his arsenal. The hunting-knife with its heavy handle bruised his breast, the strap of the revolver flayed his legs. To complete his agony, the mutterings of Tartarin-Sancho, who never ceased to moan and rail: " Imbecile that you are! I told you so! . . Ha! you would go to Africa! . . Well, here 's Africa. . . How do you find yourself? "

Most cruel of all, in the depths of that cabin, above his moans, the hapless man could overhear the passengers in the great saloon, laughing, eating, singing, and playing cards. Society was as joyous as it was numerous on board the "Zouave": officers rejoining their corps, ladies of the Alcazar of Marseilles, strolling players, a rich Mussulman returning from Mecca, a Montenegrin prince, very facetious, who gave imitations of Ravel and Gil Perez. . . Not one of these persons was seasick, and they spent their time drinking champagne with the captain of the "Zouave," a stout *bon vivant* of Marseilles, who had households at both ends of his trip, and answered to the jovial name of Barbassou.

Tartarin of Tarascon was bitter against these wretches. Their gayety redoubled his qualms. . .

At last, on the afternoon of the third day, an extraordinary commotion, felt and heard throughout the vessel, dragged our hero from his torpor. A bell rang forward. The heavy boots of the sailors were running overhead. "Go ahead! . . Back! . ." shouted the hoarse voice of Captain Barbassou.

Then: "Stop her!" — sudden jar, stillness, and nothing more. . . Nothing, except the silent swaying of the steamer from right to left, like a balloon in the air.

This singular stillness terrified Tartarin. "Mercy upon us! we are sinking!" he cried, in a terrible voice; and, recovering his strength as if by magic, he bounded from his lair and rushed on deck with his arsenal.

II.

To arms! To arms!

THEY were not sinking; they had only arrived.

The "Zouave" had entered the roadstead, a fine roadstead, with dark, deep water, but silent, gloomy, almost deserted. Facing them, on the hillside, lay Algiers the White, with its little houses of a dead whiteness pressing close together and running down to the shore. The barges of the washerwomen were on the Meudon slope. Above, a broad blue satin sky, but oh! so blue! . .

The illustrious Tartarin, somewhat recovered from his fright, gazed at the landscape, and listened with respect to the Montenegrin prince, who, standing beside him, named the various quarters of the city: the Kasbah, the Upper town, the rue Bab-Azoun. Very well educated this Montenegrin prince — knowing Algeria to the core and speaking Arabic fluently. Consequently, Tartarin proposed to himself to cultivate the prince's acquaintance. . . All of a sudden the hero saw, along the bulwarks against which they were leaning, a row of big black hands clutching them from the outside. At the same moment a negro's woolly head appeared in front of him, and, before he had time to open his mouth, the deck was invaded on all sides by a hundred or more pirates, black, yellow, half-naked, hideous, terrible.

Those pirates! Tartarin knew them well. . . 'T was they, yes, *they*, the famous *they* he had so often sought at night in the streets of Tarascon. So here, at last, *they* had decided to appear! . .

At first, surprise glued Tartarin to the spot. But when he saw the pirates rushing upon the baggage, pulling off the tarpaulins that covered it, and beginning to pillage the ship, the hero within him awoke. Unsheathing his knife, "To arms! to arms!" he cried to the passengers, and rushed, the very first, upon the pirates.

"*Ques aco?* What 's the matter? what are you about?" cried Captain Barbassou, emerging from between decks.

"Ah! here you are, captain. . . Quick, quick! arm your men!"

"Hey! what for? *boun Diou!*"

"Why, don't you see? . ."

"See what?"

"There . . . before you . . . pirates."

Captain Barbassou gazed at Tartarin perplexed. At this instant a tall devil of a negro ran past them with the hero's pharmacy on his back.

"Wretch! stop! stop!" roared Tartarin, rushing forward, his dagger held aloft.

Barbassou caught him on the jump, and held him by that Algerine belt.

"Be quiet, *tron de l'er!* Those are not pirates; there are no pirates now-a-days. . . Those are porters."

"Porters? . ."

"Yes, porters; come for the baggage, to take it ashore. Sheathe your cutlass, give me your ticket, and follow that negro, a worthy fellow; he'll show you the way, and even go as far as the hotel if you wish it."

Slightly confused, Tartarin gave up his ticket and, following the negro, descended by the man-ropes to a big boat that was dancing up and down beside the ship. His property was already in it, his trunks, boxes, weapons, and alimentary preserves. As they filled the whole boat there was no use in waiting for other passengers. The tall negro clambered on the trunks and squatted like a monkey, his knees in his hands. Another negro took the oars; both looked at Tartarin and grinned, showing their white teeth.

Standing in the stern, and making that fearful grimace that sent terror to the hearts of his compatriots, the great Tarasconese hero was feverishly fingering the handle of his cutlass; for in spite of what Barbassou had said, he was only half reassured as to the intentions of those ebon-skinned porters, who were so unlike the good stevedores of his native town.

Five minutes later the boat reached the landing and Tartarin set foot on that little Barbary wharf where, three centuries earlier, a Spanish galley-slave, Miguel Cervantes by name, prepared — beneath the lash of an Algerine overseer — a sublime romance, destined to be called "Don Quixote."

III.

Invocation to Cervantes. Disembarkation.
Where are the Teurs? No Teurs.
Disillusion.

O MIGUEL CERVANTES SAAVEDRA, if what they say is true, if in the places where great men have lived something of themselves still lingers and floats in the air throughout the ages, that which thus remains of thee upon this Barbary coast must have quivered with joy in beholding the disembarkation of Tartarin of Tarascon, that wonderful type of the Southern Frenchman, in whom are incarnated the heroes of thy book — Don Quixote and Sancho Panza.

The air was warm that day. The sun was rippling on the quay. Five or six custom-house officers and certain Algerines, expectant of news from France, were standing about; a few Moors crouching on their hams and smoking their long pipes; Maltese sailors hauling in their great nets, in which were myriads of sardines glittering between the meshes like silver coins.

But scarcely had Tartarin set foot to land before the quay grew lively; its aspect changed. A band of savages, more hideous than the pirates on the vessel, sprang up from the pebbles of the beach and darted on the new arrival. Tall Arabs, quite naked under woollen coverlets, little Moors in rags, negroes, Tunisians, Mahonese, M'zabites, hotel waiters in white aprons, all yelling, shouting, clutching at his clothes, quarrelling for his baggage; this one carrying off his aliments, another his pharmacy, and all deafening him in some outlandish jargon with the names, unintelligible, of hotels.

Giddy from the tumult, poor Tartarin went and came and cursed and swore, running half demented after his various packages, and, not knowing how to make himself understood by such barbarians, haranguing them in French, in Provençal, and finally in Latin, the Latin of Pourceaugnac, *rosa*, the rose, *bonus*, *bona*, *bonum*, — in short, all he knew. . . Wasted efforts! No one listened to him. . . Happily a small man, dressed in a tight coat with a yellow collar and armed with a long cane, intervened, like one of Homer's gods, in the fray, and dispersed the rabble with his stick. This was an Algerine policeman. Very politely he invited Tartarin to go to the Hôtel de l'Europe and consigned him to one of the surrounding waiters, who carried him off, himself and his baggage, on several barrows.

At the first steps which he made in Algiers, Tartarin of Tarascon opened wide his eyes. He had pictured the place a city of the Orient, fairy-like, mythological, something between Constantinople and Zanzibar. . . He had tumbled into another Tarascon! . . Cafés, restaurants, wide streets, four-storied houses, a little macadamized square, where the band of a line regiment was playing Offenbach's polkas, gentlemen on chairs drinking beer with pastry, ladies, a few *lorettes*, and soldiers, ever soldiers, and still soldiers, but never a *Teur!* . . None, that is, but himself. Consequently, he found himself rather embarrassed in crossing the square. Everybody stared at him. The band stopped playing, leaving Offenbach's polka with one foot in the air.

Both guns upon his shoulder, the revolver on his hip, fierce and majestic as Robinson Crusoe, Tartarin passed gravely through the groups; but on arriving at the hotel his strength abandoned him. The departure from Tarascon, the port of Marseilles, the voyage, the Montenegrin prince, the pirates, rolled confusedly through his head in a muddle. . . They were forced to carry him to his chamber, disarm and disrobe him. . . They even talked of sending for a doctor. But scarcely was his head upon the pillow before the hero snored so loudly and heartily that the landlord judged the assistance of the sciences to be unnecessary, and everybody discreetly retired.

IV.

The first Watch.

THE Government clock was striking three when Tartarin woke up. He had slept all the evening, all the night, all the morning, and a good part of the afternoon; but it must be remembered that for three days and three nights the fez had had a hard time. . .

The first thought of the hero on opening his eyes was this: "I am now in the land of the lion!" — Why not say it? — at this idea that lions were close-by, a step off, almost at his elbow, and that the time had come to grapple with them, b-r-r-r! . . a mortal chill laid hold of him and he plunged intrepidly beneath the bedclothes.

But a moment later the gayety out-doors, the sky so blue, the sunlight rippling through his chamber, the open window looking to the sea, the good little breakfast served to him in bed, washed down with a flask of excellent Crescia wine, restored him quickly to his former heroism. "To the lion! to the lion!" he cried; and flinging back the bedclothes, he dressed himself hastily.

This was his plan: to leave the town without a word to any one, fling himself into the open desert, await the night in ambush, and on the first lion that came by, pan! pan! . . Then, to return next morning for breakfast at the Hôtel de l'Europe, receive the congratulations of the Algerines, and charter a cart to fetch the animal.

He armed himself therefore in haste, hoisted upon his back the shelter-tent, the stout pole of which reached to a foot above his head, and, rigid as a pile, went down into the street. There, unwilling to ask his way lest he should awaken inquiry as to his projects, he turned to the right, threaded his way to the farther end of the Bab-Azoun arcades, where crowds of Algerine Jews, ambushed like spiders in the corners of their black shops, watched him pass, crossed the Theatre square, followed the faubourg, and came at last to the dusty highroad of Mustapha.

The road was fantastically encumbered. Omnibuses, hackney-coaches, corricolas, railway-vans, hay-waggons drawn by bullocks, squadrons of *chasseurs d'Afrique*, troops of microscopic little donkeys, negresses peddling cakes, vehicles of Algerine emigrants, spahis in red mantles; and all defiling in clouds of dust amid shouts, songs, the blare of trumpets, between two rows of shabby huts at the doors of which the tall Mahonese women could be seen combing themselves, taverns full of soldiers, and the shops of the butchers and the horse-meat men. . .

"What is all their talk about this Orient?" thought Tartarin. "Why, there are not so many *Teurs* as there are in Marseilles."

Suddenly he saw, passing close beside him, stretching forth its great legs and swelling its neck like a turkey, a superb camel. That made his heart beat.

Camels already! Lions could not be far off; and, sure enough, in about five minutes he saw, coming towards him, shouldering their guns, a whole troop of lion-hunters.

"Cowards!" said our hero to himself as he passed beside them, "cowards! to hunt lions in bands! with dogs! . ." For he never imagined that anything but lions could be hunted in Algeria. However, these hunters having the kindly appearance of retired merchants, and this fashion of hunting lions with dogs and gamebags seeming so patriarchal, Tartarin, a good deal puzzled, thought proper to question one of the gentlemen.

"*Et autrement*, comrade, a good hunt?"

"Not bad," replied the other, gazing with a scared eye at the very considerable armament of the warrior of Tarascon.

"You killed?"

"Why, yes . . . not bad . . . look there;" and the hunter tapped his gamebag, bulging with rabbits and woodcock.

"What! your gamebag? . . But surely you can't put them in a gamebag?"

"Where else do you expect me to put them?"

"But if so, then they — they must be little ones."

"Little and big," replied the hunter; and as he was in a hurry to get home, he rejoined his comrades with great strides.

The intrepid Tartarin stood stock-still in the middle of the highroad. . . Then, after a moment's reflection, " Pooh ! " he said to himself, " they are only hoaxing. . . They have n't killed anything at all." And he continued his way.

Already the houses were becoming fewer ; passengers also. Night was falling ; objects grew dim. Tartarin of Tarascon walked on for another half-hour. Then he stopped. . . It was dark night now. Night without a moon, though studded with stars. No one was on the road. . . Nevertheless, the hero reflected that lions were not stage-coaches, and did not always follow the highroad. Consequently he flung himself across country. . . At every step ditches, brambles, briers. No matter ! on he went. . . Then, all of a sudden, halt ! " There 's lion in the air about here," thought the worthy man ; and he sniffed strongly to right and left.

V.

Pan! Pan!

'T WAS a great wild desert, all bristling with fantastic plants, those eastern plants which look like savage beasts. Beneath the tempered light of stars their lengthened shadows crossed the ground in all directions. To right lay the heavy and confused mass of a mountain, — Atlas perhaps! . . To left, the invisible sea, rolling, growling . . . the very spot to tempt wild beasts. . .

One gun laid out before him, the other in his hands, Tartarin of Tarascon knelt, one knee to earth, and waited. . . He waited an hour, two hours . . . Nothing! . . Then he remembered that in the books no great lion-hunters ever went out without a little kid, which they fastened a few steps in front of them and forced to cry by pulling its paw with twine. Not having a kid the Tarasconese bethought him of trying an imitation, and he began to bleat in a tremulous voice: "Mea! Mea! . ."

At first very softly, because at the bottom of his soul he was half afraid that the lion might hear him . . . then, as no lion came, he bleated louder: "Mea! . . Mea! . ." Still nothing! . . Impatiently he tried again, louder, and over and over again:

"Mea! . . Mea! . . Mea! . ." with such force that the kid in the end appeared to be an ox. . .

All of a sudden, a few steps in front of him, something black and gigantic appeared. He stopped bleating. . . The thing stooped, smelt the earth, bounded, rolled over, sprang away, then returned and stopped short . . . 't was the lion, not a doubt of it! . . His four short legs were now quite visible, also his formidable shoulders and two eyes, two great eyes shining out of the darkness. . . Take aim! pan! pan! . . 'T was done. Then, instantly, one bound backward, with the hunting-knife ready.

To Tartarin's shot a terrible howl responded.

"He 's got it!" cried the intrepid hunter, and planting himself squarely on his two stout legs he prepared to receive the beast. But the beast getting more than it reckoned, fled at a triple gallop, roaring. . . Tartarin, however, did not stir. He awaited the female . . . just as the books say.

Unhappily the female did not come. At the end of two or three hours of expectation Tartarin grew weary. The ground was damp; the night grew cold; the sea-breeze stung him.

"Suppose I take a nap while awaiting the dawn?" thought he; and then, in order to avoid rheumatism, he had recourse to the shelter-tent. . . But the devil was in it! that shelter-tent was constructed on a system so ingenious, so very ingenious, that he could not succeed in opening it.

In vain he wrestled and sweated for an hour; that damned tent would not open. . . I have known umbrellas amuse themselves in torrential rains by playing just such tricks... Weary of the struggle Tartarin flung that utensil to earth and lay upon it swearing, like the true Provençal that he was...

"*Ta, ta, ra, ta Tarata!* .."

"What's that?" cried Tartarin, waking with a start.

It was the bugles of the *chasseurs d'Afrique* sounding reveillee in the barracks at Mustapha... The lion-killer, stupefied, rubbed his eyes... He had thought himself in the middle of the desert!.. Do you know where he was? In a bed of artichokes, between a patch of cabbage and a patch of beetroots.

His Sahara had vegetables... Close to him, on the pretty green slope of Upper Mustapha, the pure white Algerine villas were shining in the glow of the rising sun; you might have thought yourself in the environs of Marseilles, amid the *bastides* and the *bastidons*.

The commonplace, kitchen-garden physiognomy of the landscape about him amazed the poor man and put him out of temper.

"These people are crazy," he said to himself, "to plant artichokes close to lions... for... I certainly did not dream it... lions come here... And here's the proof.."

The proof — 'twas the blood-stains left by the beast as it fled away. Following this bloody trail, his eye on the watch, his revolver in his fist, the valiant Tarasconese came, from artichoke to artichoke, to a little field of oats. . . On the trampled stalks, in a pool of blood, lay upon its flank with a wound in its head, a . . . Guess what!

"A lion, *parbleu!*"

No! a jackass; one of those tiny little donkeys so common in Algiers, which go by the name over there of *bourriquots*.

VI.

Arrival of the female. Terrible combat.
The Rendezvous of the "Lapins."

THE first feeling of Tartarin at the sight of his unlucky victim was one of vexation. There is such a difference between a lion and a jackass! . . His second emotion was altogether pity. The poor donkey was so pretty, he looked so good! The skin of his flanks, still warm, was crinkling like a wave. Tartarin knelt down, and with the end of his Algerine waistband he tried to stanch the blood of the unfortunate animal; and the sight of this great man succouring the little jackass was really the most touching thing you can imagine.

At the silken contact of the waistbelt, the donkey, which had still about a farthing's worth of life left in him, opened a great gray eye and shook his long ears once or twice, as if to say: "Thank you! thank you! . ." Then a last convulsion stirred him from head to tail and he moved no more.

"Noiraud! Noiraud!" suddenly cried a voice that was choked with anxiety. At the same moment the bushes in a neighbouring coppice rustled. . . Tartarin had scarcely time to rise and put himself on guard. . . 'Twas the female!

She came, terrible and bellowing, under the form of an old Alsatian woman in a turban, armed with a great red umbrella, and demanding back her donkey from the echoes of Algeria. Certainly it would have been better for Tartarin to have had to do with a lioness in her fury than with this malignant old woman. Vainly did the poor man try to make her understand the thing just as it happened. When he told her that he had taken Noiraud for a lion the old woman thought he was laughing at her, and emitting an energetic "*Tarteifle!*" she fell upon our hero with the red umbrella. Tartarin, a little confused, defended himself as best he could, warded her blows with his carbine, puffed, sweated, and bounded around, crying out: "But, madame! . . but, madame. . ."

Va te promener! Madame was deaf, and proved it.

Happily, a third person appeared upon the battle-field. This was the husband of the old woman, Alsatian himself, a tavern-keeper, and a very good reckoner besides. When he saw with whom he had to do, and that the murderer asked no better than to pay the value of the victim, he disarmed his spouse and they came to terms.

Tartarin paid two hundred francs; the donkey was worth ten. That is the price current of *bourriquots* in the Arabian markets. Then they buried poor Noiraud at the roots of a fig-tree, and the Alsatian, in high good humour at seeing the colour of Tarasconese money, invited the hero to break a crust at his tavern, which was only a few steps distant, at the side of the highway.

Algerine huntsmen were in the habit of dining there every Sunday, for the plain was brimful of game, and for a couple of leagues around the town there was no better place for rabbits.

"And lions?" asked Tartarin.

The Alsatian looked at him, much surprised. "Lions?" he said.

"Yes . . . lions . . . don't you see them sometimes?" said poor Tartarin, with rather less assurance.

The tavern-keeper burst out laughing.

"Ha! good! no, thank you. . . Lions! . . what should we do with lions?"

"Are there no lions in Algeria?"

"Faith! I never saw any . . . And yet I have lived over twenty years in the province; though I think I have heard tell . . . seems to me it was in the newspaper. . . But that 's ever so far off, down there, in Southern Africa. . ."

At this moment they reached the tavern. A suburban tavern, such as we see at Vanves or Pantin, with a withered bough above the door, billiard-cues painted on the walls, and this inoffensive sign: —

THE RENDEZ-VOUS OF LAPINS.

The Rendez-vous of Lapins! . . O Bravida! What recollections!

VII.

History of an omnibus, of a Moorish dame, and of a chaplet of jasmine flowers.

THIS first adventure would have been enough to discourage many persons; but men of Tartarin's stamp do not allow themselves to be so easily beaten back.

"The lions are in the South," thought he; "very good! then to the South I will go."

And as soon as he had swallowed his last mouthful he rose, thanked his host, embraced the old woman without rancour, shed a last tear to the luckless Noiraud, and started as fast as possible for Algiers with the firm intention of buckling his trunks and departing that very same day for the South.

Unfortunately, the highroad to Mustapha appeared to have lengthened since the previous evening; there was such a sun, and such dust! the shelter-tent was so heavy! . . Tartarin felt he had not the courage to return to the town on foot, so he made a sign to the first omnibus that passed him and got into it. . .

Ah! poor Tartarin of Tarascon! how much better for his name, for his fame, had he not entered that fatal and lengthy vehicle, but continued his pedestrian way, at the risk of falling asphyxiated under the weight of the atmosphere, the shelter-tent, and those ponderous double-barrelled rifled guns. . .

Tartarin having got in, the omnibus was full. At the farther end was a vicar of the Church with his nose in his breviary, and a big black beard. Opposite sat a young Moorish merchant, smoking thick cigarettes. Next, a Maltese sailor and four or five Moorish ladies, masked and swathed in white linen, of whom nothing could be seen but their eyes. These ladies had just been performing their devotions in the cemetery of Abd-el-Kader; but that visit of mourning did not seem to have saddened them. They were heard to laugh and chatter to one another behind their masks, all the while sucking sugar-plums.

Tartarin perceived that they looked at him much. One especially, the one who was seated in front of him, planted her eyes upon his and never withdrew them the whole way. Though the lady was veiled, the vivacity of that great black eye, lengthened by khol, a delicate, delightful wrist laden with bracelets seen from time to time amid the veils, all — even to the sound of her voice, the graceful, almost infantine motions of her head — all told that behind those veils was something young, lovely, adorable. . . The unhappy Tartarin did not know where to hide himself. The mute caress of those beauteous eyes of Orient troubled him, agitated him, made him feel like dying; he was hot, he was cold. . .

To complete his emotion, the lady's slipper took part in the affair. Over his heavy hunting-boots he felt it gliding, that dainty slipper, gliding and frisking like a little red mouse. . . What must he do? Respond of course to that look, to that pressure! Yes, but the consequences. . . A love-intrigue in Orient! why, it is something terrifying! . . And the brave Tarasconese, with his romantic, Southern imagination, saw himself falling into the hands of eunuchs, decapitated, or, worse still, sown up in a leathern sack and rolling in the sea, his head beside him. Such thoughts chilled him a good deal. Meanwhile the little slipper continued its play, and the two eyes opposite opened wide upon him like black velvet flowers, as if to say:

"Gather us! . ."

The omnibus stopped. They were now in the Theatre square, at the entrance of the rue Bab-Azoun. One by one, impeded by their full trousers and gathering their veils around them with native grace, the Moorish ladies descended from the omnibus. Tartarin's opposite neighbour rose last, and in rising her face came so near to that of the hero that he breathed her breath, a veritable bouquet of youth and jasmine, musk and pastry.

The Tarasconese hero could not resist. Intoxicated with love and ready for all, he sprang out after the Moorish lady. . . At the rattle of his caparisons she turned her head, put a finger on her mask as if to say "hush!" and quickly, with the other hand, tossed him a little perfumed chaplet of jasmine flowers. Tartarin of Tarascon stooped to pick it up; but as our hero was rather ponderous and much weighted down with his armour, the operation was long.

When he rose, the jasmine chaplet on his heart, the Moorish lady had disappeared.

VIII.

Lions of Atlas, sleep in peace!

LIONS of Atlas, sleep! Sleep tranquilly in the depths of your lairs among the aloes and the cactuses. . . For some days yet you will not be massacred by Tartarin of Tarascon. At the present moment his paraphernalia of war — chests of weapons, pharmacy, shelter-tent and aliments — repose unpacked in a corner of room No. 36, Hôtel de l'Europe.

Sleep, ye grand ruddy lions! sleep without fear. The hero seeks his Moorish lady. Ever since that trip in the omnibus the hapless man perpetually feels upon his foot, the gigantic foot of a trapper, the lively friskings of a little red mouse; and the sea-breeze, kissing his lips, is ever perfumed — do what he will — with an amorous odour of aniseseed and pastry.

He wants his Maugrabine!

But to get her is not so easy! To find in a city of a hundred thousand souls a person of whom one knows nothing but her breath, her slippers, and her eyes! None but a Tarasconese, smitten by love, would be capable of attempting such an enterprise.

The terrible point was that all Moorish women look alike behind those great veils of theirs; moreover, these ladies seldom go out, and if you want to see them you must go to the upper town, the Arab town, the town of the *Teurs.*

A regular cut-throat place that upper town. Little narrow black alleys clambering upward on steps between two rows of mysterious houses, whose overhanging roofs, meeting together, form a tunnel. Low doors, small windows, silent, sad, and barred. And then, to right and left a mass of booths, very dark, where savage *Teurs* with pirate heads — whites of eyes and shining teeth — smoke their long pipes and talk in low voices to one another as if concerting evil deeds.

To say that our Tartarin threaded this formidable city without emotion would be false. He was, on the contrary, much agitated, and along these gloomy alleys, where his big stomach filled all the space, the worthy man advanced with great precaution, watchful eyes, and finger on the trigger of his revolver. Precisely as he did at Tarascon on his way to the club. At every turn he expected to receive upon his back an avalanche of eunuchs and janissaries; but the desire to see once more his Moorish lady gave him audacity and the strength of a giant.

For eight consecutive days the intrepid Tartarin never left that upper town. Sometimes standing sentinel in front of the Moorish baths, awaiting the hour when the ladies issued in clusters, shivering and fragrant with the bath; sometimes crouching at the door of the mosques, sweating and puffing in the effort to get off his stout boots before entering the sanctuary. . .

Often, at nightfall, when returning broken-hearted at making no discovery in bath or mosque, the hero, passing beside those Moorish houses, could hear monotonous chants, the stifled tones of a guitar, the roll of a tambourine, the silvery laugh of women, that made his heart beat.

" She may be there ! " he said to himself.

Then, if the street was deserted, he approached the house, raised the heavy knocker of the postern door, and gave a timid rap. . . Instantly the songs, the laughter ceased. Behind the wall nothing was heard but vague little whisperings as in a sleeping dove-cote.

" Keep firm ! " thought the hero. " Something will happen to me ! "

That which usually happened to him was a potful of cold water on his head, or a handful of orange-peel and Barbary figs. . . Never anything worse. . .

Lions of Atlas, sleep in peace !

IX.

Prince Gregory of Montenegro.

FOR two long weeks the unfortunate Tartarin searched for his Moorish lady, and, in all probability, he would be searching for her still if the Providence of lovers had not come to his assistance in the shape of a nobleman of Montenegro. In this wise: —

Every Saturday night during the winter the great theatre of Algiers gives its masked ball, neither more nor less like the Opera. It is, in fact, the eternal and insipid masked ball of the provinces. In the theatre itself, poor company; a few stray waifs from Bullier or the Casino, foolish virgins following the army, ragged revellers, *débardeurs* the worse for wear, and five or six little Mahonese washerwomen on their promotion, but still retaining from their days of virtue a flavour of garlic and saffron sauces. . . The real *coup d'œil* is not there. It is in the foyer, transformed for this occasion into a gambling-room. . . A nervous, variegated crowd jostle around those long green tables: turcos on furlough are staking in coppers their advanced pay, Moorish merchants from the upper town, negroes, Maltese, settlers from the interior coming forty leagues to risk upon an ace the price of a cart or a couple of oxen . . . all quivering, pale, with clenched teeth and that singular glance of the gambler, dim, sidelong, and become a squint by dint of fixing the eyes so long on the same card.

Farther on, are tribes of Algerine Jews discussing the game *en famille*. The men are in Eastern costume hideously accompanied with blue stockings and velvet caps. The women, puffy and pale, stand rigidly erect in their tight gold stomachers. Grouped around the tables the whole tribe bawl, lay their heads together, count upon their fingers, and stake little. Now and then, but rarely, and after long confabulation, some old patriarch with a Father-Eternal beard detaches himself from the group and goes to the table to risk the family stake. . . Then, as long as that game lasts, a scintillation of Hebraic eyes falls upon the table, terrible, black-magnet eyes, which make those bits of gold on the green cloth quiver, and end by gently drawing them in as if by a thread. . .

Then quarrels, battles, oaths of all nations, savage cries in every tongue, knives unsheathed, police arriving, money lost. . .

'T was into the midst of such saturnalia that our great Tartarin wandered one evening in search of forgetfulness and peace of mind.

The hero was walking alone through the crowd, thinking of his Moorish flame, when suddenly, at a gambling-table, above the clink of gold, two irritated voices rose: —

"I tell you I'm lacking twenty francs, — M'sieu! . ."

"M'sieu! . ."

"Well, what? . . M'sieu!"

"Know to whom you speak, M'sieu!"

"That's what I wish to know, M'sieu!"

"I am Prince Gregory of Montenegro, M'sieu! . ."

At that name Tartarin, quite excited, pushed through the crowd and put himself in the front rank proud and happy at finding his prince, that polite Montenegrin prince whose acquaintance he had begun to make on the packet-boat. . .

Unfortunately, the title of Highness, so dazzling to our worthy Tarasconese, produced not the slightest impression on the cavalry officer with whom the prince was having his skirmish.

"What of that? . ." sneered the military gentleman. "Gregory of Montenegro" (talking to the gallery), — "does any one know him? . . No one! . ."

Tartarin, very indignant, made one step forward.

"Pardon me. . . I know the *préïnce*," he said in a very firm voice and his finest Tarasconese accent.

The cavalry officer looked him full in the face for a moment and then said, shrugging his shoulders: —

"Well, well, all right. . . Share that twenty francs between you, and we'll say no more about it."

With that he turned his back upon them and was lost in the crowd.

The fiery Tartarin attempted to rush after him but the prince prevented.

"Let him alone . . . it is my affair."

And taking our hero by the arm he led him rapidly from the *foyer*.

As soon as they reached the open street Prince Gregory of Montenegro took off his hat, offered his hand to his defender, and, vaguely recalling his name, began in a vibrant voice: —

"Monsieur Barbarin . . ."

"Tartarin," whispered the other, timidly.

"Tartarin, Barbarin, no matter which! . . Between us two for life, or death, henceforth!"

And the noble Montenegrin shook his hand with savage energy. You can imagine Tartarin's pride.

"Préïnce! . . Préïnce!" he repeated deliriously.

A quarter of an hour later the two gentlemen were installed at the Café des Platanes, an agreeable night resort with terraces overhanging the sea, and there, before a strong Russian salad washed down with Crescia, they renewed acquaintance.

You can imagine nothing more seductive than this Montenegrin prince. Thin, slender, hair curling and crimped with irons, face shaved as if with a pumice-stone, starred with mysterious orders, his eyes shrewd, his gesture coaxing, his accent vaguely Italian (which gave him a sham air of Mazarin without a moustache); well versed, moreover, in the Latin languages and quoting on all occasions Tacitus, Horace, and the Commentaries. Such was Gregory, Prince of Montenegro.

Of an old hereditary race, his brothers, it appeared, had banished him when ten years of age on account of his liberal opinions, and since then he had roamed the world, for his education and pleasure, as a philosophical royalty. . . Curious coincidence! the prince had spent three years in Tarascon, and when Tartarin expressed surprise at never having met him at the club or on the Esplanade, " I went out but little," his Highness said evasively. And Tartarin was discreetly afraid to question him further. All great existences have mysterious sides! . .

But, at any rate, a very good prince this Gregory of Montenegro. While sipping the rosy wine of Crescia, he listened patiently to Tartarin's tale of his Moorish love, he even promised, knowing all those ladies, to find her promptly.

They drank deep and long. They toasted " The ladies of Algiers ! " and " Montenegro free ! "

Outside, beneath the terrace, rolled the sea, and the waves in the darkness beat the shore with the sound of wet sheets flapping. The air was warm, the heavens filled with stars, the nightingales were singing in the plane-trees.

It was Tartarin who paid the bill.

X.

Tell me the name of thy father, and I will tell thee the name of this flower.

THERE is no one who can land his fish so easily as a Montenegrin prince.

On the morrow of this evening at the Café des Platanes, at dawn of day, Prince Gregory appeared in Tartarin's chamber.

"Quick! dress yourself quickly! . . Your Moorish lady is found. . . Her name is Baïa. . . Twenty years old, pretty as heart could wish, and already a widow. . ."

"Widow! . . what luck!" joyfully exclaimed Tartarin, who mistrusted the husbands of Orient.

"Yes, but closely watched by a brother."

"Ah! the deuce! . ."

"A savage Moor who peddles pipes in the Orléans bazaar. . ."

Silence.

"Pooh!" resumed the prince, "you are not the man to be frightened at so little. Besides, we can probably get round that pirate by buying his pipes. . . Come, make haste, dress yourself. . . Lucky dog!"

Pale, agitated, his heart full of love, Tartarin sprang from the bed, and hastily buttoning his vast flannel drawers, —

"What must I do?" he said.

"Simply write to the lady and ask for a rendezvous."

"Then she knows French?" exclaimed the artless Tartarin, with a look of disappointment, for he dreamed of his Orient unmixed.

"Not one word of it," replied the prince, imperturbably. . . "But you will dictate the letter to me and I shall translate it."

"Oh, prince, what goodness!"

And Tartarin began to walk up and down his room with long strides, silent and collecting his thoughts.

You can well suppose that letters are not written to a Moorish lady of Algiers as they are to a grisette of Beaucaire. Most fortunately our hero possessed the fruits of a varied reading which enabled him, by amalgamating the Apache rhetoric of Gustave Aimard's Indians with Lamartine's "Voyage en Orient" and a few reminiscences of the "Song of Songs," to compose the most truly oriental letter that was ever written. It began with: —

> "Like the ostrich on the sands of the desert —"

and it ended with: —

> "Tell me the name of thy father, and I will tell thee the name of this flower."

To this missive, the romantic Tartarin would fain have added a bouquet of flowers emblematical, after the fashion of the East; but Prince Gregory thought it was better to buy pipes of the brother, which might soften the savage temper of that gentleman, and would certainly give pleasure to the lady, who smoked a great deal.

"Let us go at once and buy the pipes," cried Tartarin, full of ardour.

"No! . . no! . . Let me go alone. I can buy them cheaper. . ."

"What! will you really? . . Oh, prince . . . prince. . ." And the worthy man, quite confused, held out his purse to the obliging Montenegrin, urging him to spare nothing to please the lady.

Unfortunately the affair — though well started — did not advance as rapidly as might have been expected. Deeply touched, it appeared, by Tartarin's eloquence and already three-parts won, the Moorish lady herself desired to receive him; but the brother had scruples, and in order to allay them it was necessary to buy dozens, in fact many gross, even cargoes of pipes. . .

"What the devil can Baïa do with all those pipes?" Tartarin sometimes asked himself — but he paid all the same and never haggled.

At last, after purchasing mountains of pipes and shedding on his love vast floods of Oriental poesy, a rendezvous was obtained.

I need not tell you with what a beating heart the Tarasconese hero prepared himself; with what care he trimmed and glossed and perfumed that harsh beard of his; not forgetting — for one should foresee everything — not forgetting to slip into his pocket a knuckle-duster with spikes and two or three revolvers.

The prince, always obliging, came to the first rendezvous in the quality of interpreter. The lady lived at the top of the town. Before her door a young Moor some thirteen or fourteen years of age was smoking cigarettes. This was the famous Ali, the brother in question. On seeing the arrival of the visitors he gave two raps on the postern door and retired discreetly.

The door was opened. A negress appeared, who, without uttering a single word, conducted the two gentlemen across a narrow courtyard to a cool little chamber where the lady awaited them, half rising on her elbow from a low bed. . . At first sight, she seemed to Tartarin much shorter and stouter than the lady of the omnibus. . . Was it she, after all? . . But this suspicion only crossed the hero's brain like a flash.

The lady was very pretty, lying thus with bare feet ; her plump little fingers loaded with rings were rosy and so delicate ; and beneath her corselet of cloth of gold, beneath the folds of her flowery robe, it was easy to divine a charming person, rather portly, enticing to the last degree, and rounded in all its angles. . . The amber mouthpiece of a narghilé was at her lips, and the glow of its golden smoke enveloped her.

As he entered, the hero laid one hand upon his heart and bowed, as Moorishly as possible, rolling his big eyes passionately. . . Baïa looked at him a moment without saying a word ; then, letting fall the amber mouthpiece, she threw herself backward and hid her head in her hands, leaving nothing visible but her white throat, which a frantic laugh caused to heave and dance like a bag of pearls.

XI.

Sidi Tart'ri ben Tart'ri.

If you should enter, of an evening, any one of the Algerine cafés in the upper town you would hear Moors talking, even now, with many winks and laughs, of a certain Sidi Tart'ri ben Tart'ri, an amiable and rich European, who — it was a good many years ago — lived in the upper quarters of the town with a little lady of the population named Baïa.

The Sidi Tart'ri in question, who has left such gay memories around the Kasbah, is no other, as the reader has divined, than our Tartarin. . .

But what of it? We find the like in the lives of saints and heroes, — hours of blindness, confusion, weakness. The illustrious Tarasconese was not more exempt than others, and that is why,— for the space of two months, — oblivious of lions and of glory, he became intoxicated with oriental love and slept, like Hannibal at Capua, in the soft elysium of Algiers the White.

The worthy man had hired in the heart of the Arab town a pretty little native house, with an interior courtyard, banana-trees, fountains, and cool galleries. He lived there, far from tongues, with his Moorish lady, himself a Moor from head to foot, puffing all day long at his narghilé and eating sweetmeats flavoured with musk.

Stretched upon a divan before him, Baïa, guitar in hand, sang monotonous airs through her nose, or, the better to amuse her lord and master, danced the stomach-dance, holding in her hand a little mirror in which she smiled at her ivory teeth and made various grimaces.

As the lady did not know one word of French, nor Tartarin a word of Arabic, the conversation was apt to languish, and the garrulous Tarasconese had time to do penance for the intemperate language of which he was often guilty in Bézuquet's pharmacy and the shop of the gunsmith Costecalde.

But such repentance was not without its charm; 't was a species of voluptuous spleen to say nothing day by day and listen to the gurgle of the narghilé, the tinkle of the guitar, and the gentle drip of the fountain on the mosaics of the courtyard.

The narghilé, the bath, and love filled all his life. He went out seldom. Sometimes Sidi Tart'ri, mounted on a mule, his lady behind him, would go to eat pomegranates in a little garden he had purchased in the environs. . . But never, oh, never, would he descend into the European city. With its drunken Zouaves, its alcazars crammed with officers, and its everlasting jangle of sabres dragging along the arcades, the Algiers that lay below was to him as intolerable and ugly as a Western guardhouse.

In short, the Tarasconese was happy. Tartarin-

Sancho, always very greedy after Turkish confectionery, declared himself wholly satisfied with his new existence. . . Tartarin-Quixote did certainly, now and then, feel some trifling remorse when he thought of Tarascon and all his fine promises; but it did not last. To chase away such sad ideas nothing was needed but a glance from Baïa, and a spoonful of those diabolical sweetmeats, odoriferous and muddling as Circe's drinks.

In the evenings Prince Gregory would come to talk of his free Montenegro. . . Unwearied in kindness, this amiable noble performed in Sidi Tart'ri's house the functions of interpreter, and even those of steward; and all for nothing! just for the pleasure of it. . . Excepting the prince, Tartarin received none but *Teurs.* Those pirates with savage heads, who formerly frightened him in the depths of their dark booths, proved to be, when he knew them, harmless shop-keepers, embroiderers, sellers of spices, turners of pipe-stems, all most worthy persons, humble, shrewd, discreet, and strong at cards. Four or five times a week these gentry would come and spend the evening with Sidi Tart'ri, win his money, eat his sweetmeats, and, on the stroke of ten, retire discreetly, giving thanks to the Prophet.

After their departure, Sidi Tart'ri and his faithful spouse ended the evening on their terrace, a broad white terrace that was really the roof of the house and commanded the whole town. All around them hundreds of other white terraces, tranquil in the moonlight, sloped downward, in echelon, to the shore, the tinkle of their guitars rising upward, borne by the breeze.

Suddenly, like a bouquet of stars, a grand, clear melody diffused itself in ether, and on the minaret of a neighbouring mosque stood a stately muezzin, his white form outlined on the deep, dark blue of the night as he chanted the glory of Allah in a marvellous voice that filled the horizon.

Instantly Baïa let fall her guitar, and her great eyes, turned to the muezzin, seemed to drink in his prayer with rapture. As long as the chant lasted, she stood there quivering, in ecstasy, like an Eastern Saint Teresa. . . Tartarin, all emotion, looked at her as she prayed, and thought to himself that it must be a fine and strong religion that could cause such ecstasies of faith as that.

Tarascon! veil thy face! thy Tartarin is thinking to make himself a renegade.

XII.

They write to us from Tarascon.

ON a beautiful afternoon of azure skies and balmy breezes, Sidi Tart'ri, astride of his mule, was returning all alone from his little garden. . . With his legs parted by large bags of matweed big with lemons and watermelons, his body rocking to the sound of his own spurs and yielding itself wholly to the swaying of the mule, the worthy man was making his way through a lovely landscape, both hands crossed on his stomach, and he himself three-fourths asleep from warmth and comfort.

All of a sudden, as he entered the town, a formidable call awoke him.

"Hey! who 's this? Why, sure, 't is Monsieur Tartarin!"

At the name of Tartarin, at that joyous Southern accent, the Tarasconese raised his head and saw, within two steps of him, the brave tanned face of Maître Barbassou, captain of the "Zouave," who was drinking absinthe as he smoked his pipe before the door of a little café.

"Hey! adieu, Barbassou," cried Tartarin, stopping his mule.

Instead of replying, Barbassou gazed at the rider for a moment with his eyes wide open; then off he went into a laugh, and such a laugh! so that Sidi Tart'ri sat confused behind his watermelons.

"Hey! a turban! my poor Monsieur Tartarin! .. Then it is true what they say of you — that you have made yourself a *Teur?* .. And that little Baïa, does she still sing *Marco la Belle?*"

"*Marco la Belle!*" cried Tartarin, indignantly. "I would have you know, captain, that the person of whom you speak is a virtuous Moorish lady who does not know one word of French."

"Baïa! not know one word of French? Where do you come from? . ."

And the worthy captain began to laugh louder than ever.

Then, seeing how the face of poor Sidi Tart'ri was lengthening, he checked himself.

"Perhaps, after all, she is not the same," he said. "Let's say I was mistaken. . . Only, don't you see, Monsieur Tartarin, you would do well to distrust all Algerine Moorish ladies and all Montenegrin princes! . ."

Tartarin rose in his stirrups, with his terrible grimace.

"The prince is my friend, captain."

"Well, well, don't get angry. . . Won't you take an absinthe? No. Any message for home? . . Nothing . . . Well, then! good-bye. . . Oh! apropos, here's some good French tobacco, and if you would like a few pipes of it . . . take them! take them! they'll do you good. . . None of your cursèd Oriental tobacco which fuddles one's brain."

Thereupon the captain returned to his absinthe, and Tartarin, quite pensive, resumed his way home at a slow trot. Although his great soul refused to believe a word of them, Barbassou's insinuations saddened him; besides, those accents of home, those oaths — all, all awoke within him a vague remorse.

Entering his house he found no one. Baïa was at the bath . . . the negress seemed to him ugly, the house dismal. . . A prey to indefinable melancholy, he seated himself beside the fountain and filled a pipe with Barbassou's tobacco. That tobacco was wrapped in a fragment of the "Semaphore." As he unfolded it his eye lighted on the name of his native town: —

"*They write us from Tarascon:* —

"'The town is greatly stirred. Tartarin the lion-killer, who started to hunt the great felines of Africa, has sent no news of his doings for several months. . . What has become of our heroic compatriot? . . We scarcely dare to ask, knowing as we do that ardent spirit, its audacity, and its need of adventure. . . Has he, like others, been engulfed in the desert? or has he fallen within the murderous jaws of those monsters of Africa whose skins he promised to the municipality? . . Terrible uncertainty! Nevertheless, certain negro merchants, coming to the fair at Beaucaire, assert that they met in the open desert a European whose description corresponds to his, and who was then on his way to Timbuctoo. . . May God preserve our Tartarin! . .'"

When he read those words the Tarasconese hero blushed, turned pale, and shuddered. All Tarascon appeared before him: the club, the cap-sportsmen, the green arm-chair at Costecalde's, and — hovering, like a spread-eagle, above all else — the solemn moustache of the brave Commander Bravida.

Then, beholding himself as he was, basely squatting on his mat when they believed him in process of slaying wild beasts, Tartarin of Tarascon felt ashamed of himself, and wept.

Suddenly the hero bounded up.

"To the lions! to the lions!" he cried.

And springing to the dusty hole where slept the shelter-tent, the pharmacy, the aliments, the case of weapons, he dragged them, each and all, to the middle of the courtyard.

Tartarin-Sancho had expired. Tartarin-Quixote alone remained.

There was only time to inspect his war material, to arm himself, accoutre himself, pull on his great boots, write a line to the prince and confide to him Baïa, only time to slip a few blue notes (moistened with tears) into the same envelope, before our intrepid hero was rolling in the diligence along the road to Blidah, leaving the stupefied negress in the house with the narghilé, the turban, the slippers, in short, all the cast-off Mussulman apparel of Sidi Tart'ri, lying piteously about on the trefoiled pavement of the gallery.

THIRD EPISODE.

AMONG THE LIONS.

I.

The exiled diligence.

It was an old diligence of other days, lined, in ancient fashion, with coarse blue cloth now faded, and those enormous bunches of rough wool which end, after some hours' travel, in blistering your back. . . Tartarin of Tarascon had one corner of the rotunda; there he installed himself as best he could, and while awaiting the musky emanations from the great felines of Africa, he was forced to content himself with that good old smell of a diligence, curiously compounded of a thousand smells, — men, horses, women, leather, victuals, and damp straw.

A little of all was in this rotunda: A Trappist monk, Jew merchants, two *cocottes* rejoining their regiment (Third Hussars), a photographer from Orléansville. . . But, varied and charming as the company was, Tartarin was not inclined to talk; he sat quite pensive, his arm through the strap, his carbines between his legs. . . This abrupt departure, those black eyes of Baïa, the terrible hunt he was about to undertake, all these things harassed his brain; not to mention the fact that this European diligence with its good old patriarchal air recalled to him, vaguely, the Tarascon of his youth, his rambles in the suburbs, the nice little dinners on the banks of the Rhone; in short, a crowd of memories. . .

Little by little darkness fell. The conductor lighted his lanterns. . . The diligence bumped and squeaked on its rusty springs; the horses trotted, the bells tinkled. . . Now and then, from beneath the tarpaulin of the imperial, came a terrible clatter of iron — this was the war-material.

Tartarin of Tarascon, three parts dozing, looked for awhile at the other travellers comically shaken by jolts, and dancing before him like the shadows of a rushlight; then his eyes grew dim, his thought hazy, and he heard but vaguely the grinding sound of the axles and the lumbering complaints of the vehicle.

Suddenly, a voice, the voice of an old witch, hoarse, cracked, broken, called the hero by name: "Monsieur Tartarin! Monsieur Tartarin!"

"Who calls?"

"'T is I, Monsieur Tartarin; don't you know me? . . I 'm the old diligence that used to ply — twenty years ago — between Nîmes and Tarascon. . . How many times I 've carried you, you and your friends, when you went to hunt the caps about Joncquières or Bellegarde! . . I did n't recognize you at first, on account of that *Teur* cap of yours and the flesh you have put on; but as soon as you began to snore, faith! I knew you then."

"Very good! very good!" exclaimed Tartarin, hastily and rather vexed.

Then, softening his tone: —

"But, my poor old soul, what are you doing here?"

"Ah! my good Monsieur Tartarin, I did n't come of my own accord, I can assure you. . . As soon as that railway to Beaucaire was finished they said I was good for nothing and packed me off to Africa. . . And I 'm not the only one! nearly all the diligences of France have been exiled like me. They thought us too reactionary; so here we are, leading the life of galley-slaves. . . That 's what you call in France Algerine railroads."

Here the old diligence heaved a heavy sigh; then she resumed: —

"Ah! Monsieur Tartarin, how I regret it, my beautiful Tarascon! Those were the good days for me, the days of my youth! 'T was fine to see me start of a morning, washed and shining, with my wheels all varnished fresh, my lanterns like two suns, and that tarpaulin overhead always rubbed up with oil! Oh, yes! 't was fine when the postilion cracked his whip to the tune of: *Lagadigadeou, la Tarasque! la Tarasque!* and the conductor, his percussion-gun slung across his shoulders, his embroidered cap on one ear, tossed that puppy of ours, always furious, on the top of the tarpaulin and sprang up himself, crying out: 'Off with you! off you go!' And then, don't you remember how my four horses started to the sound of the bells, the barks, the bugles; the windows opened, and all Tarascon looked out with pride as the diligence rolled off along the royal highroad.

"And what a fine road, Monsieur Tartarin! broad, well-kept, with its finger-posts and its heaps of stones for mending, all regularly placed; and right and left the pretty plains of olive-trees and vineyards. . . And those wayside inns every ten steps, and relays every five minutes! . . And my travellers too, such nice people! mayors and rectors going to Nîmes to see their prefect or their bishop; honest mercers returning from the Mazet; school-boys off for the holidays; peasants in their new embroidered blouses, shaved clean that very morning; and up there, on the imperial, you gentlemen, hunting caps, — always good-humoured, and singing, each of you *his own*, to the stars as you came back! . ."

"Now it is another story. . . God knows the sort of people I have to cart! — a lot of miscreants from I don't know where, who fill me with vermin; negroes, bedouins, straggling soldiers, adventurers from all countries, settlers in rags who taint me with their pipes, and all of them talking a language that God the Father himself could n't understand. . . And then, you see how I am treated! Never brushed, never washed. People complain of the cart-grease on my axles. . . Instead of the four good quiet horses that I used to have, now it is those little Arab beasts with the devil in 'em; fighting, biting, skipping along like goats and breaking my shafts with their heels. . . Aïe! . . aïe! . . there! . . now it is beginning. . . And the roads! Just here they are tolerable, because it is near the government; but down there! why, there 's no road at all. You go as you can; over mountains and plains, among the dwarf palms and the mastic-trees. There 's not a single fixed relay. You stop where the conductor fancies; sometimes at one farm-house, sometimes at another.

"There are times when that rascal makes me go two leagues out of my way that he may drink absinthe or *champoreau* with a friend. . . After which, whip up, postilion! catch up lost time! The sun bakes, the dust burns! Whip up! Bang against something and nearly over! Whip up! whip up! Over rivers in flood, wet through, take cold, drown! . . Whip! whip! whip! . . Then at night, all dripping, (is that good for one of my age? and with rheumatism too?) I am forced to sleep out in the open air, in the courtyard of a caravansary, exposed to all winds. In the darkness the jackals and the hyenas come and smell me, and the rabble that fear the dew get into my compartments to keep themselves warm. . . That 's the life I lead, my good Monsieur Tartarin, and I shall have to lead it till the day when, baked by the sun, rotted by the damp nights, I shall break down — not being able to do otherwise — in some angle of this vile road, and the Arabs will boil their kouss-kouss with the fragments of my old carcass. . ."

"Blidah! Blidah!" called the conductor, opening the door.

II.

Brief acquaintance with a little gentleman.

VAGUELY, through windows dulled by steam, Tartarin of Tarascon saw the pretty square of a sub-prefecture, laid out regularly, surrounded by arcades and planted with orange-trees, in the centre of which were small leaden soldiers doing the exercise in the rosy mists of dawn. The cafés were taking down their shutters. In a corner was the market, full of vegetables. . . 'T was charming but — the lion was not yet smelt.

"The South! . . Farther South!" murmured the worthy Tartarin as he settled himself back in his corner.

At this moment the door opened. A waft of fresh air came in, bringing on its wings a fragrance of orange-blossoms and a very little gentleman in a nut-brown overcoat, elderly, withered, wrinkled, starched, a face the size of my fist, a black silk cravat five inches high, a leather bag, an umbrella, — a perfect village notary.

On catching sight of the hero's war-material the little gentleman, who sat in front of him, seemed excessively surprised, and looked at Tartarin with a persistency that grew rather embarrassing.

The horses were taken out, others put in, and the diligence started. The little gentleman still looked at Tartarin. . . Finally the hero was nettled.

"Does that surprise you?" he asked, looking the little gentleman full in the face.

"No. It inconveniences me," replied the other, tranquilly. The truth is, that what with his shelter-tent, his revolver, his two guns, and his hunting-knife in its case — not to speak of his natural corpulence — Tartarin of Tarascon took a great deal of room. . .

The answer of the little gentleman made him angry.

"Do you happen to suppose that I am going to hunt lions with your umbrella?" said the great man, proudly.

The little gentleman looked at his umbrella, smiled softly, and said, with the same phlegm:

"Then, monsieur, you are. . ?"

"Tartarin of Tarascon, lion-slayer!"

In pronouncing those words the intrepid hero shook the tassel of his fez as if it were a mane.

A moment of stupor occurred in the diligence.

The monk crossed himself, the cocottes emitted little cries of alarm, and the Orléansville photographer drew nearer to the lion-slayer already seeking the signal honour of taking his photograph.

The little gentleman, however, was not disconcerted.

"Have you killed many lions, Monsieur Tartarin?" he asked very quietly.

The hero received that query in his finest manner.

"Have I killed many, monsieur? . . I could wish you had as many hairs upon your head."

All the diligence began to laugh and to look at the three yellow hairs of Cadet-Roussel, which were all that bristled on the skull of the little gentleman.

The Orléansville photographer now spoke up.

"Terrible profession yours, Monsieur Tartarin! . . You must spend dreadful moments sometimes. . . For instance that poor Monsieur Bombonnel. . ."

"Ah! yes, killer of panthers. . ." said Tartarin, rather disdainfully.

"Did you know him?" asked the little gentleman.

"Hey! *pardi!* . . If I know him! . . We have hunted a score of times together."

The little gentleman smiled. "Then you do hunt the panther sometimes, Monsieur Tartarin?"

"Occasionally — to pass the time," said the ruffled Tartarin.

Then he added, raising his head with an heroic gesture that inflamed the hearts of the two cocottes: —

"They are nothing to lions!"

"In fact," ventured the photographer, "a panther is only a big cat. . ."

"Precisely," said Tartarin, not sorry to reduce the fame of Bombonnel, especially in presence of ladies.

Here the diligence stopped; the conductor opened the door, and addressing the little old gentleman, said with a very respectful air: —

"Here we are, monsieur."

The little gentleman rose, got out of the diligence, but before closing the door, he turned and said:

"Will you permit me to give you a piece of advice, Monsieur Tartarin?"

"What is it, monsieur?"

"Listen. You look to me a worthy man, and I would like to tell you the real truth. . . Return at once to Tarascon, Monsieur Tartarin. . . You will lose your time here. . . There are still a few panthers left in the provinces, but fie! that is much too small game for *you*. . . As for lions, that 's all over. There is not a lion left in Algeria. . . My friend Chassaing killed the last."

On which the little gentleman bowed, shut the door, and went off laughing with his bag and his umbrella.

"Conductor," demanded Tartarin, with his terrible grimace, "Who is that man?"

"What! don't you know him? Why, that is Monsieur Bombonnel."

III.

A convent of lions.

At Milianah Tartarin of Tarascon abandoned the diligence, leaving it to continue its way to the South.

Two days of rough jolting, two nights spent with eyes wide open, gazing through the window in hopes of perceiving in the fields or on the borders of the highroad the formidable shadow of the king of beasts, — such insomnia needed relief. Besides, since I must tell all, after his misadventure with Bombonnel, Tartarin, in spite of his weapons, his fez, and his terrible grimace, felt ill at ease before the Orléansville photographer and the two young ladies of the Third Hussars.

He now proceeded through the wide streets of Milianah, full of beautiful trees and fountains, in search of an inn to suit him; but all the while thinking, poor man! of Bombonnel's last words. . . Suppose they were true? Suppose there were really no more lions in Algeria? . . What, then, was the good of these travels, these toils? . .

Suddenly, at the turn of a street, our hero found himself face to face . . . with what? Guess. . . With a superb lion, waiting before the door of a café, seated royally on his hind-quarters, his tawny mane in the sunlight.

"Why did they tell me there were none?" cried the Tarasconese, jumping backward. Hearing this exclamation, the lion lowered his head, and taking in his jaws a wooden bowl which stood before him on the sidewalk he held it humbly towards Tartarin standing motionless and stupefied. . . Just then a passing Arab flung a sou into the bowl; the lion waved his tail. . . Then Tartarin comprehended all. He saw, what emotion had hitherto prevented him from seeing, namely, the crowd of people gathered around that poor, tame, blinded lion, and two big negroes armed with cudgels, who were tramping the animal across the town as Savoyards do their marmots.

The blood of the hero gave one bound. "Wretches!" he cried, in a voice of thunder, "thus to degrade these noble beasts!" And, springing upon the lion, he tore that filthy bowl from his royal jaws. . . The two negroes, thinking him a robber, rushed upon the intruder with uplifted clubs. . . The tussle was terrible. . . The negroes banged, the women bawled, the children laughed. An old Jewish cobbler called out, from the depths of his shop: "To the joustice of peace! the joustice of peace!" Even the lion, in his benighted state, essayed a roar, and the unfortunate Tartarin, after a desperate struggle, was rolled in the dust 'mid the sous and the sweepings.

At this juncture a man forced his way through the crowd, scattered the negroes with a word, the women and children with a sign, picked up Tartarin, brushed him, shook him, and seated him, completely out of breath, upon a milestone.

"O *préïnce*, is it you?" cried the worthy Tartarin, rubbing his sides.

"Yes, my valiant friend, 't is I. . . No sooner was your letter received than I confided Baïa to her brother, hired a post-chaise, did fifty leagues at top speed, and here I am, just in time to save you from the brutality of these boors. . . What have you done, just heaven! to get yourself into such danger?"

"I could not help it, *préïnce*. . . To see that unhappy lion with a bowl between his teeth! humiliated, vanquished, derided! an object of ridicule to these beggarly mussulmans!"

"But you are mistaken, my noble friend. This lion is, on the contrary, an object of respect and adoration among them. It is a sacred animal, and forms part of a convent of lions, founded about three hundred years ago by Mahommed-ben-Aouda, a sort of La Trappe, stupendous and savage, full of roars and wild-beast odours, where a strange class of monks raise and tame lions by the hundred, and send them from there to all parts of Northern Africa accompanied by mendicant friars. . . The gifts received through these friars support the convent and its mosque; and if the two negroes showed temper just now, it was only because if a single sou of those charitable gifts is lost or stolen by their fault the lion will instantly devour them."

While listening to this improbable, though truthful, narrative, Tartarin of Tarascon hugged himself in joy, and snuffed the air noisily.

"What gratifies me in all this," he said, by way of conclusion, "is that, in spite of Monsieur Bombonnel, there are still lions in Algeria! . ."

"Lions in Algeria!" cried the prince with enthusiasm. . . "To-morrow we will go and beat the plain of the Chéliff, and you shall see! you shall see! . ."

"What, *préïnce!* . . you, yourself? Do you intend to hunt?"

"*Parbleu!* do you suppose I would leave you to go alone into the heart of Africa among those savage tribes whose language and customs are unknown to you? . . No! no! illustrious Tartarin, I quit you no more. . . Wherever you are, I will be."

"Oh! *préïnce, préïnce*. . ."

And Tartarin, radiant, pressed the valiant Gregory to his heart, proudly reflecting that, like Jules Gérard, Bombonnel, and all the other famous lion-slayers, he, too, would have a foreign prince to accompany his adventures.

IV.

The caravan on the march.

THE next day, at the earliest hour, the intrepid Tartarin and the no less intrepid Prince Gregory, followed by half a dozen negro porters, issued from Milianah and descended toward the plain of the Chéliff by a delightful path shady with jasmine, palm-trees, locust-trees and wild olives, between two hedges of native gardens where thousands of joyous springs leaped bubbling and singing from rock to rock. . . A scene of Libanus.

Prince Gregory, loaded with weapons like the great Tartarin, had donned a magnificent and singular képi adorned with gold lace and a design of oak leaves embroidered in silver filigree, which gave his Highness a false air of a Mexican general, or station-master on the banks of the Danube.

That devil of a képi puzzled Tartarin exceedingly, and he timidly asked an explanation.

"Indispensable head-gear for travelling in Africa," replied the prince, with gravity; and polishing the visor with the sleeve of his coat, he proceeded to instruct his guileless companion about the important rôle played by the képi in our national relations with the Arabs, the terror that that military symbol alone has the privilege to inspire; so much so that the civil administration has been obliged to cover the heads of its employés, from the labourer on the roads to the receiver of taxes, with képis. In short, to govern Algeria — 't is the prince who speaks — it is not a strong head, nor even a head at all, that is needed; a képi suffices; a fine gold-laced képi, shining at the top of a numskull, like Gessler's helmet.

Thus talking and philosophizing, the caravan went its way. The porters skipped, barefooted, from rock to rock like monkeys. The weapons rattled in their cases. The guns glittered. The natives as they passed bowed down to earth before that magic képi. . . Above, on the ramparts of Milianah, the head of the Arabian department walking in the cool of the morning with his lady, heard these unusual noises, saw the shining of the muzzles through the branches, and, supposing it a sudden attack, ordered the drawbridge opened, called the garrison to arms, and put the town incontinently into a state of siege.

A fine début, truly, for the caravan!

Unfortunately, before the close of the day matters went wrong. Of the negroes who carried the baggage, one was taken with atrocious colicky pains, after eating the diachylon of the medicine chest. Another fell down dead drunk by the roadside, having drunk up the camphorated brandy. A third, he who bore the album of travel, seduced by the gilded clasps and persuaded that he was carrying off the treasures of Mecca, ran away at top speed into the Zaccar. . . It was necessary to consider matters. The caravan halted and held counsel under the flickering shade of an old fig-tree.

"My advice is," said the prince, endeavouring, but without success, to melt a tablet of pemmican in a perfected species of saucepan with a triple bottom, "my advice is to renounce those negro porters at once. There's an Arab market close by. Our best plan is to go there immediately and buy a lot of donkeys. . ."

"No! . . no! . . not donkeys," interrupted the great Tartarin, hastily, flushing red with the recollection of Noiraud.

Then he added — the hypocrite: —

"How do you expect such little animals to carry all our paraphernalia?"

The prince smiled.

"You are mistaken as to that, my illustrious friend," he said. "Lean and puny as he looks to you, the Algerine *bourriquot* has solid loins. . . He must have them to carry all he does carry . . . ask the Arabs. Here's how they explain our colonial organization: At the top, they say, is the *mouci*, governor, with a great stick, who raps his staff; the staff to avenge themselves, rap the soldier, the soldier raps the settler, the settler raps the Arab, the Arab raps the negro, the negro raps the Jew, the Jew raps the *bourriquot;* and the poor little donkey, having no one to rap, bears all. So you see, he can very well bear your cases."

"All the same," persisted Tartarin of Tarascon, "I think that for the look of our caravan donkeys are not the thing. . . I prefer something more oriental. . . For instance, if we could buy a camel. . ."

" Just as you like," said his Highness, and they took their way to the Arab market.

The market was only a short distance off on the banks of the Chéliff. . . In it were some five or six thousand Arabs in rags, swarming in the sun, and noisily bargaining amid jars of black olives, pots of honey, sacks of spices, heaps of cigars; and all around them fires, where sheep, streaming with butter, were roasting whole, and shambles in the open air, where naked negroes, their feet in blood, their arms reddened with gore, were cutting up with little knives the animals that were hanging from a pole.

In a corner, under a tent patched with a hundred colours, sits a Moorish clerk with a big book and spectacles. Near by, a group of Arabs uttering shouts of rage; they are playing a game of roulette stuck on a sack of wheat; a number of Kabyles watching the game and fanning themselves. . . Farther on, much stamping, joy, and shouts of laughter from a crowd who are watching a Jewish merchant and his mule drowning in the river. . . And scorpions, dogs, buzzards, flies! . . oh, flies! . .

But as fate would have it, camels lacked. However, they ended by finding one which some M'zabites were seeking to get rid of. 'T was a camel of the desert, the classic camel, bald, melancholy, with a long bedouin head, and his hump, now grown limp from much fasting, hanging sadly to one side.

Tartarin thought him so fine that he wished to mount the whole caravan on top of him. . . Always the Oriental craze! . .

The beast knelt down. The baggage was strapped on.

The prince installed himself on the animal's neck. Tartarin, desiring more majesty, caused himself to be hoisted to the top of the hump, between two cases; and there, proud and securely wedged in, he saluted with a noble gesture the assembled market and gave the signal of departure. . . Thunder! if Tarascon could only have seen him then! . .

The camel rose, stretched out his knotty legs, and began his flight. . .

Oh, horrors! After a few strides, behold Tartarin turning pale, and the heroic fez resuming, one by one, its former positions on board the "Zouave." That devil of a camel rolled like a frigate.

"*Préïnce! préïnce!*" murmured Tartarin, livid, and clutching at the tuft on the camel's hump; "préïnce, let us get down. . . I feel . . . I feel . . . that I am about to . . . make France a . . . spectacle! . ."

Va te promener! the camel was off and nothing could stop him. Four thousand Arabs ran behind on naked feet, gesticulating, laughing like madmen, and making their six hundred thousand ivory teeth glitter in the sunshine. . .

The great man of Tarascon was forced to resign himself. He sank down sadly on the hump. The fez took any and all of the positions it chose and — France was made a spectacle.

V.

The night-watch in a copse of oleanders.

HOWEVER picturesque may have been their new mount, the lion-slayers, in the end, were forced to renounce it, on account of the fez. They therefore continued their way, as before, on foot, and the caravan went calmly on, by short stages, to the South; the Tarasconese at its head, the Montenegrin at its tail, the camel between with the weapons, etc.

The expedition lasted nearly a month.

During that month, the indomitable Tartarin, seeking lions unfindable, wandered from village to village on the vast plain of the Chéliff, across that formidable and preposterous French Algeria, where the perfumes of the Far East are complicated with a strong odour of absinthe and barracks, Abraham and Zouzou mingled; something fairy like and artlessly burlesque, like a page of the Old Testament recited by Sergeant Ramée or Corporal Pitou. . . Curious spectacle to eyes that can see. . . A savage and rotten population which we are civilizing by giving them our vices . . . the ferocious and uncontrolled authority of fantastic pachas who blow their noses on their ribbons of the Legion of honour, and for a yes or a no administer bastinado to their people . . . justice without conscience applied by cadis in big spectacles, regular Tartuffes of the Koran and the law, who dream of a 15th of August and promotion beneath the palm-trees, and sell their verdicts, as Esau his birthright, for a dish of lentils, or of kouss-kouss and sugar . . . licentious and drunken sheiks, former orderlies of some General Tussuf or other, who guzzle champagne with the Mahonese washerwomen, and junket on roast mutton, while before their very tents their tribes are starving, and quarrelling with the hounds for the scraps that fall from their master's orgy.

Then, all around, plains laid waste, grass burned up, thorn-bushes everywhere, thickets of cactus and prickly-pear, the granary of France ! . . Granary void of grain, forsooth ! rich only in jackals and bed-bugs. . . Abandoned settlements, terrified tribes, going they know not where, flying from hunger, and sowing the highways with dead bodies. At long intervals, a French village, with its houses in ruins, fields uncultivated, grasshoppers rampant, eating up even the curtains at the windows, and all the colonists in the cafés drinking absinthe and discussing the constitution and schemes of reform.

This is what Tartarin might have seen had he given himself the trouble to observe ; but, consumed by his leonine passion, the man of Tarascon went straight before him, looking neither to the right hand nor to the left, his eye obstinately fixed on those imaginary monsters who never appeared.

As the shelter-tent obstinately refused to open and the tablets of pemmican to melt, the caravan was obliged to put up, night and morning, with the natives. Everywhere, thanks to the képi of Prince Gregory, our hunters were received with open arms. They lodged with agas in strange palaces, huge windowless farm-houses, where they saw, pell-mell, narghilés and mahogany bureaus, Smyrna rugs and moderator-lamps, chests of cedar-wood filled with Turkish sequins, and clocks in the style Louis-Philippe. . . Wherever they went splendid fêtes, *diffas, fantasias* were given to Tartarin. . . In his honour whole goums [native contingent to the French army] made powder speak and showed off their burnous in the sun. Then, when the powder had spoken, the worthy aga came round and presented his bill. . . That is what is called Arab hospitality.

But still no lions. No more lions than there are on the Pont Neuf. . .

And yet the hero was not discouraged. Plunging bravely into the South he spent whole days in beating up the coppices, poking among the dwarf palm-trees with the end of his carbine, and calling "Scat! scat!" at every bush. Moreover, every evening before he went to bed he lay in wait for two or three hours. Vain trouble! the lion never showed himself.

But one evening, towards six o'clock, as the caravan was threading its way through a grove of violet mastic-trees, where plump quail, dulled by the heat, were fluttering here and there in the grass, Tartarin of Tarascon thought he heard — but so far-off, so vague, so broken by the breeze — that wondrous roar he had often listened to in Tarascon behind the menagerie Mitaine.

At first our hero thought he dreamed . . . But an instant later, still far off though more distinct, the roar was heard again; and this time, while from all corners of the horizon howled the dogs of the natives, the hump of the camel, so shaken by terror that the weapons and the aliments clattered, quivered visibly.

No longer any doubt. 'T was a lion . . . Quick, quick! on the watch! Not a minute to lose!

Close at hand was an old *marabout* (tomb of a saint), with a white cupola and the yellow slippers of the deceased deposited in a niche above the door, together with a medley of fantastic *ex-votos*, flaps of burnous, gold thread, red hair, etc., hanging to the walls. Tartarin of Tarascon put his prince and his camel in that retreat, and went himself in quest of an ambush. Prince Gregory wished to follow him, but the hero declined; he was bent on confronting the lion alone. Nevertheless, he requested his Highness not to go away, and, as a measure of precaution, he confided to him his wallet, a fat wallet, filled with precious papers and bank bills, which he feared might be scarified by the claws of the lion. That done, the hero proceeded to seek for his post.

A hundred steps in front of the *marabout* a little copse of oleanders fluttered in the twilight haze, on the bank of a river that was almost dry. There our hero lay in wait, one knee to earth, according to the formula, his carbine in his hands, and his hunting-knife planted proudly before him in the sand of the shore.

Night came on. The rosy light of nature turned to violet, then to a sombre blue . . . Below, among the pebbles of the river, a little pool of clear, still water shone like a mirror. This was plainly the drinking-place of wild animals. On the slope of the opposite bank could be seen the path their big paws made among the mastics. That mysterious slope caused a shudder. Add to all this the vague, low, swarming noises of an African night, rustling branches, velvet steps of rodent creatures, the shrilly bark of jackals, and above, in the sky, one hundred, two hundred yards above him, great flocks of cranes passing with a cry like that of strangled children, — you must admit there was enough in all this to agitate any one.

Tartarin was agitated. Very much so, in fact. His teeth chattered, poor man! and on the handle of the hunting-knife planted in the sand the muzzle of his carbine rattled like a pair of castanets . . . But what do you expect? There *are* days when persons are not in the mood; besides, where would be the merit if heroes were never afraid? . .

Well, yes! Tartarin was afraid, and afraid all the time, too. Nevertheless he held good one hour, two hours — but heroism has its limits . . . Very near to him, in the dry bed of the river, he suddenly heard steps, and the rolling of pebbles. This time terror overcame him. He fired two shots at random and ran with all his legs to the *marabout*, leaving his cutlass upright in the sand as a commemorative cross of the greatest panic that ever assailed the soul of a slayer of hydras.

"Help, préïnce, help! . . the lion! . ."

Silence.

"Préïnce, préïnce! are you there?"

The prince was not there. Against the white wall of the *marabout* that excellent camel alone projected, in the moonlight, the fantastic shadow of his hump . . . Prince Gregory had just made off with the wallet and the bank-bills — his Highness having awaited the opportunity for more than a month . . .

VI.

At last! . .

THE day following this tragic and adventurous evening, when our hero woke at dawn and acquired full certainty that the prince and his funds were really gone — gone without return, when he found himself alone in that little white tomb, betrayed, robbed, abandoned in the wilds of savage Africa with a dromedary and a few coppers for all resource, — then, for the first time, the Tarasconese hero doubted. He doubted friendship, he doubted fame, he even doubted lions; and, hero though he was, the great man wept.

Now, while he was pensively seated on the steps of the *marabout*, his head in his two hands, his carbine between his legs, and the camel looking sadly at him, suddenly the branches of the grove before him parted, and Tartarin, stupefied, saw, ten steps before him, a gigantic lion, advancing, with head raised high and formidable roars that shook the white walls of the *marabout* and the tinsel that hung there, and even the slippers of the deceased in their niche.

The hero, alone, did not tremble.

"At last!" he cried, bounding up, his gun to shoulder. . . Pan! . . pan! pfft! pfft! 'T was done. . . In the lion's head were two explosive balls. For an instant, on the glowing background of an African sky, rose frightful fireworks of scattered brains and smoking blood and tawny fur. Then all subsided, and Tartarin beheld . . . two big and furious negroes rushing at him with uplifted cudgels. The negroes of Milianah!

Oh, misery! 't was the tamed lion, the poor blind beast of Mohammed's convent, which the Tarasconese bullets had now laid low!

This time, by Mahomet! Tartarin had a fine escape. Drunk with fanatic fury the negro mendicants would surely have torn him to pieces if the God of Christians had not sent to his aid a liberating angel, the *garde-champêtre* of the district of Orléansville, who arrived, his sabre under his arm, by a woodpath.

The sight of the municipal képi calmed the wrath of the negroes instantly. Peaceful and majestic the man with the badge drew up the *procès-verbal*, loaded what remained of the lion upon the camel, ordered complainants and delinquent to follow him, and took the way to Orléansville, where the whole affair was placed in the hands of the authorities.

'T was a long and terrible investigation.

After the Algeria of the nomads, which he had just travelled over, Tartarin of Tarascon now knew another Algeria, no less preposterous and formidable, the Algeria of the towns, litigious and pettifogging. He now knew the squinting judiciary which plots in the corners of cafés, the bohemia of the limbs of the law, the briefs that smelt of absinthe, the white cravats discoloured with crescia; he knew the bailiffs, the solicitors, the business agents, all those stamped-paper grasshoppers, hungry and lean, who devour the colonist to the heels of his boots, and strip him, leaf by leaf, like a stalk of wheat. . .

First of all it became necessary to discover whether the lion was killed on civil territory or on military territory. In the first case, the affair was the concern of the tribunal of commerce; in the second, Tartarin would be brought before the council of war. At those words, "council of war," the impressionable Tarasconese already saw himself shot at the foot of the ramparts, or crouching in dungeon depths. . .

The terrible thing was, that the boundaries of the two territories are so vague in Algeria. . . At last, however, after a month of sendings to and fro, intrigues, waitings in the sun in the courtyards of the officials, it was established that if, on the one hand, the lion was killed on military territory, on the other, Tartarin, when he fired, was on civil territory. The affair was therefore judged in the civil courts and our hero got off with a fine of *two thousand five hundred francs* indemnity, without costs.

But how could he pay it? The few piastres that escaped the prince's raid had long since gone in legal papers and judiciary absinthes.

The unfortunate lion-slayer was therefore reduced to selling his case of weapons piecemeal, carbine by carbine. He sold the daggers, the Malay krishes, the tomahawks. . . A grocer bought the alimentary preserves. An apothecary all that was left of the diachylon. Even the big boots themselves departed and followed the perfected shelter-tent to the shop of a merchant of bric-à-brac, who raised them to the dignity of Cochin-Chinese curiosities. . . The fine paid, nothing remained to Tartarin but the lion's skin and the dromedary. The skin he packed up carefully and sent to Tarascon, directed to his good friend the brave Commander Bravida (we shall presently see what came of that fabulous hide). As for the camel, he intended to use that to convey him to Algiers, not by mounting it, but by selling it to pay the diligence; which is a better way of travelling than camel-back. Unfortunately, the animal was difficult to dispose of; not a soul would offer a single farthing.

Tartarin was, however, determined to get back to Algiers. He longed to see his Baïa's blue corselet, his little house, his fountains, and to lie at rest upon the trefoiled pavement of his cloister, while awaiting the arrival of funds from France. Consequently, our hero did not hesitate; distressed, but not discouraged, he started to make the journey on foot, without money, and by short marches.

In this conjuncture, the camel did not abandon him. That weird animal was possessed by an inexplicable fondness for his master, and, seeing him depart from Orléansville, he set out religiously to follow at a walk behind him, measuring his steps to his master's, and not leaving him by so much as an inch.

At first, Tartarin thought this touching; such fidelity, such tried devotion went to his heart, all the more because the animal was accommodating and fed on nothing. But after a few days' march, the hero began to be bored by having such a melancholy companion perpetually at his heels; a companion who recalled to him his many misadventures. Presently, bitterness supervening, he grew angry with the dromedary's mournful air, his hump, and his general look of silliness. To tell the honest truth, he came to hate him, and to think only of how to get rid of him; but the animal held tight. . . Tartarin tried to lose him, the camel found him; he tried to run, the camel ran faster. . . He shouted to him: "Go away!" and flung stones at him. The camel stopped, gazed upon him with a melancholy eye, then, a moment later, started again and caught up with him. Tartarin was forced to resign himself.

But when, after a march of eight full days, the Tarasconese hero, dusty, jaded, saw from afar, sparkling amid the verdure, the first white terraces of Algiers, when he reached the gates of the town on the noisy highway from Mustapha crowded with zouaves, biskris, Mahonese, all swarming around him and watching him defile with the dromedary, his patience came to an end: "No! no!" he said to himself, "it is impossible. . . I cannot enter Algiers with such a beast!" and, taking advantage of a block of vehicles he made a dart into the fields and hid in a ditch. . .

An instant later, he saw above his head on the pavement of the highway, the dromedary swinging past him with mighty strides and stretching out his neck with an anxious air.

Then, relieved of a heavy burden, the hero issued from his hiding-place and entered the town by a byway, which ran along the wall of his little garden.

VII.

Catastrophes on catastrophes.

ARRIVING in front of his Moorish house, Tartarin stopped short, much astonished. It was evening, the street was deserted. Through the low arched door, which the negress had forgotten to shut, came laughter, the rattle of glasses, the popping of corks, and, rising high above that pretty racket, the voice of a woman singing, clearly and merrily: —

Lovest thou, Marco la Belle,
To dance in the flowery salons?

"Throne of God!" exclaimed the Tarasconese, turning white, and he rushed into the courtyard.

Unhappy Tartarin! What a spectacle awaited him! . . Beneath the arcades of the little cloister, amid flasks, confectionery, scattered cushions, pipes, tambourines, guitars, stood Baïa, without corselet or jacket, nothing but a chemise of silver gauze and pale rose trousers, singing *Marco la Belle* with the cap of a naval officer perched on one ear. . . On a mat at her feet, stuffed with love and sweetmeats, Barbassou, that infamous Barbassou, was bursting with laughter as he listened to her.

The apparition of Tartarin, haggard, thinner, dusty; his eyes flashing, the fez bristling, cut short this amiable Turco-Marseillaise orgy. Baïa gave the little cry of a frightened hare and ran into the house. Barbassou, not disturbing himself, laughed louder than ever.

"Hey! hey! Monsieur Tartarin, what do you say now? Does n't she speak French?"

Tartarin of Tarascon advanced, furious.

"Captain!"

"*Digo-li qué vengué, moun bon!*" cried Baïa, bending over the gallery of the upper floor and making a pretty *canaille* gesture. The poor man, thunderstruck, let himself drop upon a cushion. His Moorish lady knew the Marseillaise jargon!

"Did n't I tell you to beware of the Algerine women?" said Captain Barbassou, sententiously. "They are just the same as that Montenegrin prince of yours."

Tartarin raised his head.

"Do you know where the prince is now?" he asked.

"Oh! not far off. He is living for five years in that fine prison at Mustapha. The scamp was caught with his hand in the bag. . . But it is not the first time they have had him in limbo. His Highness has already done three years in a house of detention somewhere . . . and, bless me! if I don't think it was at Tarascon."

"At Tarascon! . ." cried Tartarin, suddenly enlightened. . . "That 's why he knew only one half of the town. . ."

"No doubt! no doubt! Tarascon seen from the prison windows. . . Ah! my poor Monsieur Tartarin, we have to keep our eyes well open in this damnable country; if not, we are liable to very disagreeable things . . . such as your affair with the muezzin. . ."

"What affair? what muezzin?"

"Hey! *pardi!* why, the muezzin opposite, who made love to Baïa. . . The Akbar related the affair the other day, and all Algiers is still laughing over it. . . 'T was droll how that muezzin on the top of his minaret, chanting his prayers, contrived, under your very nose, to make his proposals to the little one and fix a rendezvous while invoking the name of Allah. . ."

"Is every one a villain in this cursèd land?" roared Tartarin.

Barbassou made the gesture of a philosopher.

"My dear fellow, you know, new countries! . . Never mind! if you take my advice, you 'll go back as fast as you can to Tarascon."

"Go back . . . that 's easy enough to say . . . But where 's the money? . . You don't know how they 've plucked me, down there, in the desert."

"Never mind that!" cried the captain, laughing. "The 'Zouave' starts to-morrow and, if you like, I 'll take you back to your native land. . . Will that suit you, compatriot? All right. You have only one thing more to do. There 's a few bottles of champagne and half a crust still left . . . sit you down there . . . and no rancour! . ."

After a moment's hesitation, demanded by his dignity, Tartarin bravely chose his course. He sat down; they touched glasses; Baïa descended on hearing the corks, and sang the last verses of *Marco la Belle*, the fête lasting far into the night.

Towards three in the morning, his head light and his foot heavy, the worthy Tartarin was returning with his friend the captain when, on passing the mosque, the recollection of the muezzin and his tricks made him laugh, and suddenly a fine idea of vengeance came into his head. The door was open. He went in; followed the long passages covered with mats, went up, up, and still up, until he found himself in a little Turkish oratory, where an open-worked iron lantern was swaying from the roof and casting fantastic shadows on the walls.

The muezzin was seated on a divan, with his big turban, his white mantle, his Mostaganem pipe, and before him a large glass of fresh absinthe, which he sipped religiously while awaiting the hour to call the faithful to prayer. . . Seeing Tartarin, he let fall his pipe in terror.

" Not a word, priest," said the hero, full of his idea. " Quick, your turban! your mantle! . .

The muezzin, trembling violently, gave his turban, his pelisse, anything demanded. Tartarin put them on, and went gravely to the terrace of the minaret.

The sea was shining in the distance. The white roofs gleamed in the moonlight. Sounds of belated guitars came softly on the breeze. . . The Tarascon muezzin collected himself for a moment, then, raising his arm, he began his psalmody in a high-pitched voice: —

"*La Allah il Allah*... Mahomet is an old rogue... Orient, Koran, pachas, lions, Moorish women are not worth a damn... There are no *Teurs*... Only swindlers... Vive Tarascon!"

And while, in fantastic jargon mingled with Arabic and Provençal, the illustrious Tartarin was thus casting to the four corners of the horizon, on town, plain, mountain, and ocean, his jovial malediction, the clear, grave voices of the other muezzins answered him from minaret to minaret, and the faithful in rapt devotion beat their breasts.

VIII.

Tarascon! Tarascon!

MIDDAY. The "Zouave" has her steam up, ready to start. Overhead, on the balcony of the Café Valentin, military officers level their telescopes and come, one by one, according to rank, the colonel at their head, to watch the departure of the happy little boat about to go to France. This is the great amusement of headquarters. . . Below, the roadstead sparkles. The breeches of certain old Turkish cannon buried along the quay flame in the sun. The passengers are hurrying. Biskris and Mahonese pile the baggage on the boats.

Tartarin of Tarascon has no baggage; and here he comes, down the rue de la Marine, through the little market full of bananas and watermelon, accompanied by his friend, Captain Barbassou. The unfortunate hero has left upon the Moorish shores his weapons and his illusions; he is now preparing himself to sail back to Tarascon, his hands in his pockets. . . But scarcely had he jumped into the captain's gig, before a breathless animal rushed headlong from the market-place, and precipitated itself towards him at a gallop. 'T was the camel, the faithful camel, which for twenty-four consecutive hours had been seeking its master in Algiers.

Tartarin, on seeing him, changed colour, and feigned not to know him. But the camel was in earnest. He wriggled at the edge of the quay. He called to his friend; he looked at him tenderly. "Take me! take me!" his sad eyes seemed to say; "take me in that boat, far, far away from this pasteboard painted Araby, this ridiculous Orient, full of locomotives and diligences, where I — poor misplaced dromedary — know not what will become of me. *You* are the last Turk, *I* am the last camel. . . Let us part no more, O my Tartarin! . ."

"Is that camel yours?" asked the captain.

"Not at all!" responded Tartarin, who shuddered at the idea of re-entering Tarascon with that ridiculous attendant; and, impudently disowning the companion of his misfortunes he spurned the soil of Algiers with his foot, and gave the boat an impetus that sent it from the shore. . . The camel smelt of the water, stretched his long neck till his joints all cracked, and springing headlong behind the boat he swam in company toward the "Zouave," his big hump floating like a gourd, and his great neck rising high out of water like the prow of a trireme.

Boat and camel arrived together under the steamer's quarter.

"I feel badly for that poor dromedary," said Captain Barbassou, quite touched. "I think I'll take him aboard, and make a present of him, when I reach Marseilles, to the Zoological Garden."

Accordingly the camel, now weighty with sea-water, was hoisted on board by a great force of ropes and pulleys, and the "Zouave" set sail.

During the two days the voyage lasted, Tartarin remained alone in his cabin; not that the sea was rough, nor that the fez had much to suffer, but that devil of a camel persisted in making ridiculous demonstrations whenever his master appeared on deck. . . You never saw a camel advertise his master like that one! . .

Hour by hour, through the porthole of the cabin (from which he occasionally looked out) Tartarin watched the paling of the Algerine blue sky; till, at last, one morning, through a silvery mist he heard, with joy, the clanging of the steeples of Marseilles. The voyage was over . . . the "Zouave" anchored.

Our man, who had no baggage, landed, without saying a word, crossed Marseilles in haste, afraid of being followed by the camel, and only breathed freely when he found himself ensconced in a third-class railway-carriage, and moving at a good pace toward Tarascon. . . Deceptive security! Hardly had they gone two leagues from Marseilles, when the heads of all the passengers were at the windows. They shouted, they wondered. Tartarin in turn looked out, and . . . what did he perceive? . . The camel, sir, the inevitable camel, loping along the rails behind the train and keeping up with it. Tartarin, in consternation, sank back into his corner, and closed his eyes.

After this disastrous expedition, he counted on returning to his house incognito. But the presence of this incumbering quadruped rendered the thing impossible. What a re-entrance he was about to make, good God! Not a sou; not a lion, nothing. . . A camel! . .

"Tarascon! . . Tarascon! . ."

He had to get out. . .

Oh, stupefaction! scarcely had the hero's fez appeared at the carriage door than a great cry: "Vive Tartarin!" made every pane of glass in the roof of the station tremble. "Vive Tartarin! . . Long live the lion-killer!" Trumpets flourished, the choirs of the Orphic societies burst forth. . . Tartarin felt like dying; he thought it was a hoax. But no! all Tarascon was there, hats in the air, and sympathetic. The brave Commander Bravida, the gunsmith Costecalde, the judge, the apothecary, and the noble army of sportsmen (of caps) pressed around their leader and bore him in triumph down the stairway.

Singular effects of mirage! the skin of the blind lion, sent to Bravida, was the cause of this ovation. That modest pelt, placed on exhibition at the club, had turned the heads of the Tarascon people, and behind them the whole South. The *Semaphore* spoke of it. A drama was constructed. It was not one lion that Tartarin had killed, it was ten lions, twenty lions, a marmalade of lions! So Tartarin, disembarking at Marseilles, was already illustrious unawares, and an enthusiastic telegram had preceded him by two hours to his native town.

But that which put a climax to the popular joy was the sight of a strange, fantastic animal, covered with dust and sweat, which appeared behind the hero and descended, clopetty-clop, the stairway of the station. Tarascon fancied for a moment that La Tarasque had returned.

Tartarin reassured his compatriots.

"That is my camel," he said.

And — being under the influence of the Tarasconese sun, that splendid sun, which makes them lie so ingenuously — he added, caressing the hump of his dromedary: —

"'T is a noble beast! . . He saw me kill all my lions."

Whereupon, he took, familiarly, the arm of the brave commander, flushed with happiness, and, followed by his camel, surrounded by his fellow-sportsmen, acclaimed by all the inhabitants, he proceeded tranquilly to the house of the baobab, and as he walked along he began the recital of his mighty hunts.

"Imagine to yourselves that on a certain evening, in the midst of the great Sahara . . ."

TARTARIN ON THE ALPS.

TARTARIN ON THE ALPS.

I.

Apparition on the Rigi-Kulm. Who is it? What was said around a table of six hundred covers. Rice and Prunes. An improvised ball. The Unknown signs his name on the hotel register. P. C. A.

On the 10th of August, 1880, at that fabled hour of the setting sun so vaunted by the guide-books Joanne and Baedeker, an hermetic yellow fog, complicated with a flurry of snow in white spirals, enveloped the summit of the Rigi (*Regina montium*) and its gigantic hotel, extraordinary to behold on the arid waste of those heights, — that Rigi-Kulm, glassed-in like a conservatory, massive as a citadel, where alight for a night and a day a flock of tourists, worshippers of the sun.

While awaiting the second dinner-gong, the transient inmates of the vast and gorgeous caravansary, half frozen in their chambers above, or gasping on the divans of the reading-rooms in the damp heat of lighted furnaces, were gazing, in default of the promised splendours, at the whirling white atoms and the lighting of the great lamps on the portico, the double glasses of which were creaking in the wind.

To climb so high, to come from all four corners of the earth to see that. . . Oh, Baedeker! . .

Suddenly, something emerged from the fog and advanced toward the hotel with a rattling of metal, an exaggeration of motions, caused by strange accessories.

At a distance of twenty feet through the fog the torpid tourists, their noses against the panes, the *misses* with curious little heads trimmed like those of boys, took this apparition for a cow, and then for a tinker bearing his utensils.

Ten feet nearer the apparition changed again, showing a crossbow on the shoulder, and the visored cap of an archer of the middle ages, with the visor lowered, an object even more unlikely to meet with on these heights than a strayed cow or an ambulating tinker.

On the portico the archer was no longer anything but a fat, squat, broad-backed man, who stopped to get breath and to shake the snow from his leggings, made like his cap of yellow cloth, and from his knitted comforter, which allowed scarcely more of his face to be seen than a few tufts of grizzling beard and a pair of enormous green spectacles made as convex as the glass of a stereoscope. An alpenstock, knapsack, coil of rope worn in saltire, crampons and iron hooks hanging to the belt of an English blouse with broad pleats, completed the accoutrement of this perfect Alpinist.

On the desolate summits of Mont Blanc or the Finsteraarhorn this clambering apparel would have seemed very natural, but on the Rigi-Kulm ten feet from a railway track! —

The Alpinist, it is true, came from the side opposite to the station, and the state of his leggings testified to a long march through snow and mud.

For a moment he gazed at the hotel and its surrounding buildings, seemingly stupefied at finding, two thousand and more yards above the sea, a building of such importance, glazed galleries, colonnades, seven storeys of windows, and a broad portico stretching away between two rows of globe-lamps which gave to this mountain-summit the aspect of the Place de l'Opéra of a winter's evening.

But, surprised as he may have been, the people in the hotel were more surprised still, and when he entered the immense antechamber an inquisitive hustling took place in the doorways of all the salons: gentlemen armed with billiard-cues, others with open newspapers, ladies still holding their book or their work pressed forward, while in the background, on the landing of the staircase, heads leaned over the baluster and between the chains of the lift.

The man said aloud, in a powerful deep bass voice, the chest voice of the South, resounding like cymbals: —

"*Coquin de bon sort!* what an atmosphere!"

Then he stopped short, to take off his cap and his spectacles.

He was suffocating.

The dazzle of the lights, the heat of the gas and furnace, in contrast with the cold darkness without, and this sumptuous display, these lofty ceilings, these porters bedizened with REGINA MONTIUM in letters of gold on their naval caps, the white cravats of the waiters and the battalion of Swiss girls in their native costumes coming forward at sound of the gong, all these things bewildered him for a second — but only one.

He felt himself looked at and instantly recovered his self-possession, like a comedian facing a full house.

"Monsieur desires . . ?"

This was the manager of the hotel, making the inquiry with the tips of his teeth, a very dashing manager, striped jacket, silken whiskers, the head of a lady's dressmaker.

The Alpinist, not disturbed, asked for a room, "A good little room, *au mouain*," perfectly at ease with that majestic manager, as if with a former schoolmate.

But he came near being angry when a Bernese servant-girl, advancing, candle in hand, and stiff in her gilt stomacher and puffed muslin sleeves, inquired if Monsieur would be pleased to take the lift. The proposal to commit a crime would not have made him more indignant.

"A lift! he! . . for him! . ." And his cry, his gesture, set all his metals rattling.

Quickly appeased, however, he said to the maiden, in an amiable tone: "*Pedibusse cum jam-*

bisse, my pretty little cat. . ." And he went up behind her, his broad back filling the stairway, parting the persons he met on his way, while throughout the hotel the clamorous questions ran: "Who is he? What's this?" muttered in the divers languages of all four quarters of the globe. Then the second dinner-gong sounded, and nobody thought any longer of this extraordinary personage.

A sight to behold, that dining-room of the Rigi-Kulm.

Six hundred covers around an immense horseshoe table, where tall, shallow dishes of rice and of prunes, alternating in long files with green plants, reflected in their dark or transparent sauces the flame of the candles in the chandeliers and the gilding of the panelled ceiling.

As in all Swiss *tables d'hôte*, rice and prunes divided the dinner into two rival factions, and merely by the looks of hatred or of hankering cast upon those dishes it was easy to tell to which party the guests belonged. The Rices were known by their anæmic pallor, the Prunes by their congested skins.

That evening the latter were the most numerous, counting among them several important personalities, European celebrities, such as the great historian Astier-Réhu, of the French Academy, Baron von Stolz, an old Austro-Hungarian diplomat, Lord Chipendale (?), a member of the Jockey-Club and his niece (h'm, h'm!), the illustrious doctor-professor Schwanthaler, from the University of Bonn, a Peruvian general with eight young daughters.

To these the Rices could only oppose as a picket-guard a Belgian senator and his family, Mme. Schwanthaler, the professor's wife, and an Italian tenor, returning from Russia, who displayed his cuffs, with buttons as big as saucers, upon the tablecloth.

It was these opposing currents which no doubt caused the stiffness and embarrassment of the company. How else explain the silence of six hundred half-frozen, scowling, distrustful persons, and the sovereign contempt they appeared to affect for one another? A superficial observer might perhaps have attributed this stiffness to stupid Anglo-Saxon haughtiness which, nowadays, gives the tone in all countries to the travelling world.

No! no! Beings with human faces are not born to hate one another thus at first sight, to despise each other with their very noses, lips, and eyes for lack of a previous introduction. There must be another cause.

Rice and Prunes, I tell you. There you have the explanation of the gloomy silence weighing upon this dinner at the Rigi-Kulm, which, considering the number and international variety of the guests, ought to have been lively, tumultuous, such as we imagine the repasts at the foot of the Tower of Babel to have been.

The Alpinist entered the room, a little overcome by this refectory of monks, apparently doing penance beneath the glare of chandeliers; he coughed noisily without any one taking notice of him, and seated himself in his place of last-comer at the end of the room. Divested of his accoutrements, he was now a tourist like any other, but of aspect more amiable, bald, barrel-bellied, his beard pointed and bunchy, his nose majestic, his eyebrows thick and ferocious, overhanging the glance of a downright good fellow.

Rice or Prunes? No one knew as yet.

Hardly was he installed before he became uneasy, and leaving his place with an alarming bound: "Ouf! what a draught!" he said aloud, as he sprang to an empty chair with its back laid over on the table.

He was stopped by the Swiss maid on duty — from the canton of Uri, that one — silver chains and white muslin chemisette.

" Monsieur, this place is engaged. . ."

Then a young lady, seated next to the chair, of whom the Alpinist could see only her blond hair rising from the whiteness of virgin snows, said, without turning round, and with a foreign accent:

"That place is free; my brother is ill, and will not be down."

" Ill? . ." said the Alpinist, seating himself, with an anxious, almost affectionate manner. . . " Ill? Not dangerously, *au moins*."

He said *au mouain*, and the word recurred in all his remarks, with other vocable parasites, such as *hé*, *qué*, *té*, *zou*, *vé*, *vaï*, *et autrement*, *différemment*, etc., still further emphasized by a Southern accent, displeasing, apparently, to the young lady, for she answered with a glacial glance of a black blue, the blue of an abyss.

His neighbour on the right had nothing encouraging about him either; this was the Italian tenor, a gay bird with a low forehead, oily pupils, and the moustache of a matador, which he twirled with nervous fingers at being thus separated from his pretty neighbour. But the good Alpinist had a habit of talking as he ate; it was necessary for his health.

"*Vé!* the pretty buttons . . ." he said to himself, aloud, eying the cuffs of his neighbour. "Notes of music, inlaid in jasper — why, the effect is *charmain!* . ."

His metallic voice rang on the silence, but found no echo.

"Surely monsieur is a singer, *qué?*"

"*Non capisco,*" growled the Italian into his moustache.

For a moment the man resigned himself to devour without uttering a word, but the morsels choked him. At last, as his opposite neighbour, the Austro-Hungarian diplomat, endeavoured to reach the mustard-pot with the tips of his shaky old fingers, covered with mittens, he passed it to him obligingly. "Happy to serve you, Monsieur le baron," for he had heard some one call him so.

Unfortunately, poor M. de Stoltz, in spite of his shrewd and knowing air contracted in diplomatic juggling, had now lost both words and ideas, and was travelling among the mountains for the special purpose of recovering them. He opened his eyes wide upon that unknown face, and shut them again without a word. It would have taken ten old diplomats of his present intellectual force to have constructed in common a formula of thanks.

At this fresh failure the Alpinist made a terrible grimace, and the abrupt manner in which he seized the bottle standing near him might have made one fear he was about to cleave the already cracked head of the diplomatist. Not so! It was only to offer wine to his pretty neighbour, who did not hear him, being absorbed by a semi-whispered conversation in a soft and lively foreign warble with two young men seated next to her. She bent to them, and grew animated. Little frizzles of hair were seen shining in the light against a dainty, transparent, rosy ear. . . Polish, Russian, Norwegian? . . from the North certainly; and a pretty song of those distant lands coming to his lips, the man of the South began tranquilly to hum: —

O coumtesso gento,
Estelo dou Nord,
Qué la neu argento,
Qu' Amour friso en or.[1]

The whole table turned round; they thought him mad. He coloured, subsided into his plate, and did not issue again except to repulse vehemently one of the sacred compote-dishes that was handed to him.

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[1] O pretty countess,
Light of the North,
Which the snow silvers,
And Love curls in gold. (*Frédéric Mistral.*)

"Prunes! again! . . Never in my life!"

This was too much.

A grating of chairs was heard. The academician, Lord Chipendale (?), the Bonn professor, and other notabilities rose, and left the room as if protesting.

The Rices followed almost immediately, on seeing the second compote-dish rejected as violently as the first.

Neither Rice nor Prunes! . . then what? . .

All withdrew; and it was truly glacial, that silent defile of scornful noses and mouths with their corners disdainfully turned down at the luckless man, who was left alone in the vast gorgeous dining-room, engaged in sopping his bread in his wine after the fashion of his country, crushed beneath the weight of universal disdain.

My friends, let us never despise any one. Contempt is the resource of parvenus, prigs, ugly folk, and fools; it is the mask behind which nonentity shelters itself, and sometimes blackguardism; it dispenses with mind, judgment, and good-will. All humpbacked persons are contemptuous; all crooked noses wrinkle with disdain when they see a straight one.

He knew that, this worthy Alpinist. Having passed, by several years, his "fortieth," that landing on the fourth storey where man discovers and picks up the magic key which opens life to its recesses, and reveals its monotonous and deceptive labyrinth; conscious, moreover, of his value, of the importance of his mission, and of the great name he bore, he cared nothing for the opinion of such persons as these. He knew that he need only name himself and cry out "'T is I. . ." to change to grovelling respect those haughty lips; but he found his incognito amusing.

He suffered only at not being able to talk, to make a noise, unbosom himself, press hands, lean familiarly on shoulders, and call men by their Christian names. That is what oppressed him on the Rigi-Kulm.

Oh! above all, not being able to speak.

"I shall have dyspepsia as sure as fate," said the poor devil, wandering about the hotel and not knowing what to do with himself.

He entered a café, vast and deserted as a church on a week day, called the waiter, "My good friend," and ordered "a mocha without sugar, *qué*." And as the waiter did not ask, "Why no sugar?" the Alpinist added quickly, "'T is a habit I acquired in Africa, at the period of my great hunts."

He was about to recount them, but the waiter had fled on his phantom slippers to Lord Chipendale, stranded, full length, upon a sofa and crying, in mournful tones: "Tchempègne! . . tchempègne! . ." The cork flew with its silly noise, and nothing more was heard save the gusts of wind in the monumental chimney and the hissing click of the snow against the panes.

Very dismal too was the reading-room; all the journals in hand, hundreds of heads bent down around the long green tables beneath the reflectors. From time to time a yawn, a cough, the rustle of a turned leaf; and soaring high above the calm of this hall of study, erect and motionless, their backs to the stove, both solemn and both smelling equally musty, were the two pontiffs of official history, Astier-Réhu and Schwanthaler, whom a singular fatality had brought face to face on the summit of the Rigi, after thirty years of insults and of rending each other to shreds in explanatory notes referring to "Schwanthaler, jackass," "*vir ineptissimus*, Astier-Réhu."

You can imagine the reception which the kindly Alpinist received on drawing up a chair for a bit of instructive conversation in that chimney corner. From the height of these two caryatides there fell upon him suddenly one of those currents of air of which he was so afraid. He rose, paced the hall, as much to warm himself as to recover self-confidence, and opened the bookcase. A few English novels lay scattered about in company with several heavy Bibles and tattered volumes of the Alpine Club. He took up one of the latter, and carried it off to read in bed, but was forced to leave it at the door, the rules not allowing the transference of the library to the chambers.

Then, still continuing to wander about, he opened the door of the billiard-room, where the Italian tenor, playing alone, was producing effects of torso and cuffs for the edification of their pretty neighbour, seated on a divan, between the two young men, to whom she was reading a letter. On the entrance of the Alpinist she stopped, and one of the young men rose, the taller, a sort of moujik, a dog-man, with hairy paws, and long, straight, shining black hair joining an unkempt beard. He made two steps in the direction of the new-comer, looked at him provocatively, and so fiercely that the worthy Alpinist, without demanding an explanation, made a prudent and judicious half-turn to the right.

"*Différemment*, they are not affable, these Northerners," he said aloud; and he shut the door noisily, to prove to that savage that he was not afraid of him.

The salon remained as a last refuge; he went there. . . *Coquin de sort!* . . . The morgue, my good friends, the morgue of the Saint-Bernard where the monks expose the frozen bodies found beneath the snows in the various attitudes in which congealing death has stiffened them, can alone describe that salon of the Rigi-Kulm.

All those numbed, mute women, in groups upon the circular sofas, or isolated and fallen into chairs here and there; all those misses, motionless beneath the lamps on the round tables, still holding in their hands the book or the work they were employed on when the cold congealed them. Among them were the daughters of the general, eight little Peruvians with saffron skins, their features convulsed, the vivid ribbons on their gowns contrasting with the dead-leaf tones of English fashions; poor little *sunny-climes*, easy to imagine as laughing and frolicking beneath their cocoa-trees, and now more distressing to behold than the rest in their glacial, mute condition. In the background, before the piano, was the death-mask of the old diplomat, his mittened hands resting inert upon the keyboard, the yellowing tones of which were reflected on his face.

Betrayed by his strength and his memory, lost in a polka of his own composition, beginning it again and again, unable to remember its conclusion, the unfortunate Stoltz had gone to sleep while playing, and with him all the ladies on the Rigi, nodding, as they slumbered, romantic curls, or those peculiar lace caps, in shape like the crust of a vol-au-vent, that English dames affect, and which seem to be part of the cant of travelling.

The entrance of the Alpinist did not awaken them, and he himself had dropped upon a divan, overcome by such icy discouragement, when the sound of vigorous, joyous chords burst from the vestibule; where three "musicos," harp, flute, and violin, ambulating minstrels with pitiful faces, and long overcoats flapping their legs, who infest the Swiss hostelries, had just arrived with their instruments.

At the very first notes our man sprang up as if galvanized.

"*Zou!* bravo! . . forward, music!"

And off he went, opening the great doors, fêting the musicians, soaking them with champagne, drunk himself without drinking a drop, solely with the music which brought him back to life. He mimicked the piston, he mimicked the harp, he snapped his fingers over his head, and rolled his eyes and danced his steps, to the utter stupefaction of the tourists running in from all sides at the racket. Then suddenly, as the exhilarated musicos struck up a Strauss waltz with the fury of true tziganès, the Alpinist, perceiving in the doorway the wife of Professor Schwanthaler, a rotund little Viennese with mischievous eyes, still youthful in spite of her powdered gray hair, he sprang to her, caught her by the waist, and whirled her into the room, crying out to the others: "Come on! come on! let us waltz!"

The impetus was given, the hotel thawed and twirled, carried off its centre. People danced in the vestibule, in the salon, round the long green table of the reading-room. 'Twas that devil of a man who set fire to ice. He, however, danced no more, being out of breath at the end of a couple of turns; but he guided his ball, urged the musicians, coupled the dancers, cast into the arms of the Bonn professor an elderly Englishwoman, and into those of the austere Astier-Réhu the friskiest of the Peruvian damsels. Resistance was impossible. From that terrible Alpinist issued I know not what mysterious aura which lightened and buoyed up every one. And *zou! zou! zou!* No more contempt and disdain. Neither Rice nor Prunes, only waltzers. Presently the madness spread; it reached the upper storeys, and up through the well of the staircase could be seen to the sixth-floor landing the heavy and high-coloured skirts of the Swiss maids on duty, twirling with the stiffness of automatons before a musical chalet.

Ah! the wind may blow without and shake the lamp-posts, make the telegraph wires groan, and whirl the snow in spirals across that desolate summit. Within all are warm, all are comforted, and remain so for that one night.

"*Différemment*, I must go to bed, myself," thought the worthy Alpinist, a prudent man, coming from a country where every one packs and unpacks himself rapidly. Laughing in his grizzled beard, he slipped away, covertly escaping Madame Schwanthaler, who was seeking to hook him again ever since that initial waltz.

He took his key and his bedroom candle; then, on the first landing, he paused a moment to enjoy his work and to look at the mass of congealed ones whom he had forced to thaw and amuse themselves.

A Swiss maid approached him all breathless from the waltz, and said, presenting a pen and the hotel register: —

"Might I venture to ask *mossié* to be so good as to sign his name?"

He hesitated a moment. Should he, or should he not preserve his incognito?

After all, what matter! Supposing that the news of his presence on the Rigi should reach *down there*, no one would know what he had come to do in Switzerland. And besides, it would be so droll to see, to-morrow morning, the stupor of those "Inglichemans" when they should learn the truth. . . For that Swiss girl, of course, would not hold her tongue. . . What surprise, what excitement throughout the hotel! . .

"Was it really he? . . he? . . himself? . ."

These reflections, rapid and vibrant, passed through his head like the notes of a violin in an orchestra. He took the pen, and with careless hand he signed, beneath Schwanthaler, Astier-Réhu, and other notabilities, the name that eclipsed them all, his name; then he went to his room, without so much as glancing round to see the effect, of which he was sure.

Behind him the Swiss maid looked at the name:

TARTARIN OF TARASCON,

beneath which was added:

P. C. A.

She read it, that Bernese girl, and was not the least dazzled. She did not know what P. C. A. signified, nor had she ever heard of "Dardarin."

Barbarian, *Vaï!*

II.

Tarascon, five minutes' stop! The Club of the Alpines. Explanation of P. C. A. Rabbits of warren and cabbage rabbits. This is my last will and testament. The Sirop de cadavre. First ascension. Tartarin takes out his spectacles.

When that name "Tarascon" sounds trumpet-like along the track of the Paris-Lyons-Mediterranean, in the limpid, vibrant blue of a Provençal sky, inquisitive heads are visible at all the doors of the express train, and from carriage to carriage the travellers say to each other: "Ah! here is Tarascon! . . Now, for a look at Tarascon."

What they can see of it is, nevertheless, nothing more than a very ordinary, quiet, clean little town with towers, roofs, and a bridge across the Rhone. But the Tarasconese sun and its marvellous effects of mirage, so fruitful in surprises, inventions, delirious absurdities, this joyous little populace, not much larger than a chick-pea, which reflects and sums up in itself the instincts of the whole French South, lively, restless, gabbling, exaggerated, comical, impressionable — that is what the people on the express-train look out for as they pass, and it is that which has made the popularity of the place.

In memorable pages, which modesty prevents him from mentioning more explicitly, the historiographer of Tarascon essayed, once upon a time, to depict the happy days of the little town, leading its club life, singing its romantic songs (each his own) and, for want of real game, organizing curious cap-hunts. Then, war having come and the dark times, Tarascon became known by its heroic defence, its torpedoed esplanade, the club and the Café de la Comédie, both made impregnable; all the inhabitants enrolled in guerilla companies, their breasts braided with death's head and cross-bones, all beards grown, and such a display of battle-axes, boarding cutlasses, and American revolvers that the unfortunate inhabitants ended by frightening themselves and no longer daring to approach one another in the streets.

Many years have passed since the war, many a worthless almanac has been put in the fire, but Tarascon has never forgotten; and, renouncing the futile amusements of other days, it thinks of nothing now but how to make blood and muscle for the service of future revenge. Societies for pistol-shooting and gymnastics, costumed and equipped, all having band and banners; armouries, boxing-gloves, single-sticks, list-shoes; foot races and flat-hand fights between persons in the best society; these things have taken the place of the former cap-hunts and the platonic cynegetical discussions in the shop of the gunsmith Costecalde.

And finally the club, the old club itself, abjuring bouillotte and bézique, is now transformed into a "Club Alpin" under the patronage of the famous Alpine Club of London, which has borne even to India the fame of its climbers. With this difference, that the Tarasconese, instead of expatriating themselves on foreign summits, are content with those they have in hand, or rather underfoot, at the gates of their town.

"The Alps of Tarascon?" you ask. No; but the Alpines, that chain of mountainettes, redolent of thyme and lavender, not very dangerous, nor yet very high (five to six hundred feet above sea-level), which make an horizon of blue waves along the Provençal roads and are decorated by the local imagination with the fabulous and characteristic names of: *Mount Terrible; The End of the World; The Peak of the Giants*, etc.

'T is a pleasure to see, of a Sunday morning, the gaitered Tarasconese, pickaxe in hand, knapsack and tent on their backs, starting off, bugles in advance, for ascensions, of which the *Forum*, the local journal, gives full account with a descriptive luxury and wealth of epithets — abysses, gulfs, terrifying gorges — as if the said ascension were among the Himalayas. You can well believe that from this exercise the aborigines have acquired fresh strength and the "double muscles" heretofore reserved to the only Tartarin, the good, the brave, the heroic Tartarin.

If Tarascon epitomizes the South, Tartarin epitomizes Tarascon. He is not only the first citizen of the town, he is its soul, its genius, he has all its finest whimseys. We know his former exploits, his triumphs as a singer (oh! that duet of "Robert le Diable" in Bézuquet's pharmacy!), and the amazing odyssey of his lion-hunts, from which he returned with that splendid camel, the last in Algeria, since deceased, laden with honours and preserved in skeleton at the town museum among other Tarasconese curiosities.

Tartarin himself has not degenerated; teeth still good and eyes good, in spite of his fifties; still that amazing imagination which brings nearer and enlarges all objects with the power of a telescope. He remains the same man as he of whom the brave Commander Bravida used to say: "He's a *lapin*. . ."

Or, rather, *two lapins!* For in Tartarin, as in all the Tarasconese, there is a warren race and a cabbage race, very clearly accentuated: the roving rabbit of the warren, adventurous, headlong; and the cabbage-rabbit, homekeeping, coddling, nervously afraid of fatigue, of draughts, and of any and all accidents that may lead to death.

We know that this prudence did not prevent him from showing himself brave and even heroic on occasion; but it is permissible to ask what he was doing on the Rigi (*Regina Montium*) at his age, when he had so dearly bought the right to rest and comfort.

To that inquiry the infamous Costecalde can alone reply.

Costecalde, gunsmith by trade, represents a type that is rather rare in Tarascon. Envy, base, malignant envy, is visible in the wicked curve of his thin lips, and a species of yellow bile, proceeding from his liver in puffs, suffuses his broad, clean-shaven, regular face, with its surface dented as if by a hammer, like an ancient coin of Tiberius or Caracalla. Envy with him is a disease, which he makes no attempt to hide, and, with the fine Tarasconese temperament that overlays everything, he sometimes says in speaking of his infirmity: "You don't know how that hurts me. . ."

Naturally the curse of Costecalde is Tartarin. So much fame for a single man! He everywhere! always he! And slowly, subterraneously, like a worm within the gilded wood of an idol, he saps from below for the last twenty years that triumphant renown, and gnaws it, and hollows it. When, in the evening, at the club, Tartarin relates his encounters with lions and his wanderings in the great Sahara, Costecalde sits by with mute little laughs, and incredulous shakes of the head.

"But the skins, *au mouain*, Costecalde . . . those lions' skins he sent us, which are there, in the salon of the club? . ."

"*Té! pardi*. . . Do you suppose there are no furriers in Algeria? . ."

"But the marks of the balls, all round, in the heads?"

"*Et autremain*, did n't we ourselves in the days of the cap-hunts see ragged caps torn with bullets at the hatters' for sale to clumsy shots?"

No doubt the long established fame of Tartarin as a slayer of wild beasts resisted these attacks; but the Alpinist in himself was open to criticism, and Costecalde did not deprive himself of the opportunity, being furious that a man should be elected as president of the "Club of the Alpines" whom age had visibly overweighted and whose liking, acquired in Algeria, for Turkish slippers and flowing garments predisposed to laziness.

In fact, Tartarin seldom took part in the ascensions; he was satisfied to accompany them with votive wishes, and to read in full session, with rolling eyes, and intonations that turned the ladies pale, the tragic narratives of the expeditions.

Costecalde, on the contrary, wiry, vigorous "Cock-leg," as they called him, was always the foremost climber; he had done the Alpines, one by one, planting on their summits inaccessible the banner of the Club, *La Tarasque*, starred in silver. Nevertheless, he was only vice-president, V. P. C. A. But he manipulated the place so well that evidently, at the coming elections, Tartarin would be made to skip.

Warned by his faithfuls — Bézuquet the apothecary, Excourbaniès, the brave Commander Bravida — the hero was at first possessed by black disgust, by that indignant rancour which ingratitude and injustice arouse in the noblest soul. He wanted to quit everything, to expatriate himself, to cross the bridge and go and live in Beaucaire, among the Volsci; after that, he grew calmer.

To quit his little house, his garden, his beloved habits, to renounce his chair as president of the Club of the Alpines, founded by himself, to resign that majestic P. C. A. which adorned and distinguished his cards, his letter-paper, and even the lining of his hat! Not possible, *vé!* Suddenly there came into his head an electrifying idea. . .

In a word, the exploits of Costecalde were limited to excursions among the Alpines. Why should not Tartarin, during the three months that still intervened before the elections, why should he not attempt some grandiose adventure? plant, for instance, the standard of the Club on the highest peak of Europe, the Jungfrau or the Mont Blanc?

What triumph on his return! what a slap in the face to Costecalde when the *Forum* should publish an account of the ascension! Who would dare to dispute his presidency after that?

Immediately he set to work; sent secretly to Paris for quantities of works on Alpine adventure: Whymper's "Scrambles," Tyndall's "Glaciers," the "Mont-Blanc" of Stéphen d'Arve, reports of the Alpine Club, English and Swiss; cramming his head with a mass of mountaineering terms — chimneys, couloirs, moulins, névés, séracs, moraines, rotures — without knowing very well what they meant.

At night, his dreams were fearful with interminable slides and sudden falls into bottomless crevasses. Avalanches rolled him down, icy arêtes caught his body on the descent; and long after his waking and the chocolate he always took in bed, the agony and the oppression of that nightmare clung to him. But all this did not hinder him, once afoot, from devoting his whole morning to the most laborious training exercises.

Around Tarascon is a promenade planted with trees which, in the local dictionary, is called the "Tour de Ville." Every Sunday afternoon, the Tarasconese, who, in spite of their imagination, are a people of routine, make the tour of their town, and always in the same direction. Tartarin now exercised himself by making it eight times, ten times, of a morning, and often reversed the way. He walked, his hands behind his back, with short mountain-steps, both slow and sure, till the shopkeepers, alarmed by this infraction of local habits, were lost in suppositions of all possible kinds.

At home, in his exotic garden, he practised the art of leaping crevasses, by jumping over the basin in which a few gold-fish were swimming about among the water-weeds. On two occasions he fell in, and was forced to change his clothes. Such mishaps inspired him only the more, and, being subject to vertigo, he practised walking on the narrow masonry round the edge of the water, to the terror of his old servant-woman, who understood nothing of these performances.

During this time, he ordered, *in Avignon*, from an excellent locksmith, crampons of the Whymper pattern, and a Kennedy ice-axe; also he procured himself a reed-wick lamp, two impermeable coverlets, and two hundred feet of rope of his own invention, woven with iron wire.

The arrival of these different articles from Avignon, the mysterious goings and comings which their construction required, puzzled the Tarasconese much, and it was generally said about town: "The president is preparing a stroke." But what? Something grand, you may be sure, for, in the beautiful words of the brave and sententious Commander Bravida, retired captain of equipment, who never spoke except in apothegms: "Eagles hunt no flies."

With his closest intimates Tartarin remained impenetrable. Only, at the sessions of the Club, they noticed the quivering of his voice and the lightning flash of his eyes whenever he addressed Costecalde — the indirect cause of this new expedition, the dangers and fatigues of which became more pronounced to his mind the nearer he approached it. The unfortunate man did not attempt to disguise them; in fact he took so black a view of the matter that he thought it indispensable to set his affairs in order, to write those last wishes, the expression of which is so trying to the Tarasconese, lovers of life, that most of them die intestate.

On a radiant morning in June, beneath a cloudless arched and splendid sky, the door of his study open upon the neat little garden with its gravelled paths, where the exotic plants stretched forth their motionless lilac shadows, where the fountain tinkled its silvery note 'mid the merry shouts of the Savoyards, playing at marbles before the gate, behold Tartarin! in Turkish slippers, wide flannel under-garments, easy in body, his pipe at hand, reading aloud as he wrote the words: —

"This is my last will and testament."

Ha! one may have one's heart in the right place and solidly hooked there, but these are cruel moments. Nevertheless, neither his hand nor his voice trembled while he distributed among his fellow-citizens all the ethnographical riches piled in his little home, carefully dusted and preserved in immaculate order.

"To the Club of the Alpines, my baobab (*arbos gigantea*), to stand on the chimney-piece of the hall of sessions;"

To Bravida, his carbines, revolvers, hunting knives, Malay krishes, tomahawks, and other murderous weapons;

To Excourbaniès, all his pipes, calumets, narghilés, and pipelets for smoking kif and opium;

To Costecalde — yes, Costecalde himself had his legacy — the famous poisoned arrows (Do not touch).

Perhaps beneath this gift was the secret hope that the traitor would touch and die; but nothing of the kind was exhaled by the will, which closed with the following words, of a divine meekness:

"I beg my dear Alpinists not to forget their president. . . I wish them to forgive my enemy as I have forgiven him, although it is he who has caused my death. . ."

Here Tartarin was forced to stop, blinded by a flood of tears. For a minute he beheld himself crushed, lying in fragments at the foot of a high mountain, his shapeless remains gathered up in a barrow, and brought back to Tarascon. Oh, the power of that Provençal imagination! he was present at his own funeral; he heard the lugubrious chants, and the talk above his grave: "Poor Tartarin, *péchère!*" and, mingling with the crowd of his faithful friends, he wept for himself.

But immediately after, the sight of the sun streaming into his study and glittering on the weapons and pipes in their usual order, the song of that thread of a fountain in the middle of the garden recalled him to the actual state of things. *Différemment*, why die? Why go, even? Who obliged him? What foolish vanity! Risk his life for a presidential chair and three letters! . .

'T was a passing weakness, and it lasted no longer than any other. At the end of five minutes the will was finished, signed, the flourish added, sealed with an enormous black seal, and the great man had concluded his last preparations for departure.

Once more had the warren Tartarin triumphed over the cabbage Tartarin. It could be said of the Tarasconese hero, as was said of Turenne: "His body was not always willing to go into battle, but his will led him there in spite of himself."

The evening of that same day, as the last stroke of ten was sounding from the tower of the town-hall, the streets being already deserted, a man, after brusquely slamming a door, glided along through the darkened town, where nothing lighted the fronts of the houses, save the hanging-lamps of the streets and the pink and green bottles of the pharmacy Bézuquet, which projected their reflections on the pavement, together with a silhouette of the apothecary himself resting his elbows on his desk and sound asleep on the Codex; — a little nap, which he took every evening from nine to ten, to make himself, so he said, the fresher at night for those who might need his services. That, between ourselves, was a mere tarasconade, for no one ever waked him at night, in fact he himself had cut the bell-wire, in order that he might sleep more tranquilly.

Suddenly Tartarin entered, loaded with rugs, carpet-bag in hand, and so pale, so discomposed, that the apothecary, with that fiery local imagination from which the pharmacy was no preservative, jumped to the conclusion of some alarming misadventure and was terrified. "Unhappy man!" he cried, "what is it? . . you are poisoned? . . Quick! quick! some ipeca. . ."

And he sprang forward, bustling among his bottles. To stop him, Tartarin was forced to catch him round the waist. "Listen to me, *qué diable!*" and his voice grated with the vexation of an actor whose entrance has been made to miss fire. As soon as the apothecary was rendered motionless behind the counter by an iron wrist, Tartarin said in a low voice:—

"Are we alone, Bézuquet?"

"*Bé!* yes," ejaculated the other, looking about in vague alarm . . . "Pascalon has gone to bed." [Pascalon was his pupil.] "Mamma too; why do you ask?"

" Shut the shutters," commanded Tartarin, without replying; " we might be seen from without."

Bézuquet obeyed, trembling. An old bachelor, living with his mother, whom he never quitted, he had all the gentleness and timidity of a girl, contrasting oddly with his swarthy skin, his hairy lips, his great hooked nose above a spreading moustache; in short, the head of an Algerine pirate before the conquest. These antitheses are frequent in Tarascon, where heads have too much character, Roman or Saracen, heads with the expression of models for a school of design, but quite out of place in bourgeois trades among the manners and customs of a little town.

For instance, Excourbaniès, who has all the air of a *conquistador*, companion of Pizarro, rolls flaming eyes in selling haberdashery to induce the purchase of two sous' worth of thread. And Bézuquet, labelling liquorice and *sirupus gummi*, resembles an old sea-rover of the Barbary coast.

When the shutters were put up and secured by iron bolts and transversal bars, " Listen, Ferdinand . . . " said Tartarin, who was fond of calling people by their Christian names. And thereupon he unbosomed himself, emptied his heart full of bitterness at the ingratitude of his compatriots, related the manœuvres of "Cockleg," the trick about to be played upon him at the coming elections, and the manner in which he expected to parry the blow.

Before all else, the matter must be kept very secret; it must not be revealed until the moment when success was assured, unless some unforeseen accident, one of those frightful catastrophes — "Hey, Bézuquet! don't whistle in that way when I talk to you."

This was one of the apothecary's ridiculous habits. Not talkative by nature (a negative quality seldom met with in Tarascon, and which won him this confidence of the president), his thick lips, always in the form of an O, had a habit of perpetually whistling that gave him an appearance of laughing in the nose of the world, even on the gravest occasions.

So that, while the hero made allusion to his possible death, saying, as he laid upon the counter a large sealed envelope, "This is my last will and testament, Bézuquet; it is you whom I have chosen as testamentary executor. . ." "Hui . . . hui . . . hui . . . " whistled the apothecary, carried away by his mania, while at heart he was deeply moved and fully conscious of the grandeur of his rôle.

Then, the hour of departure being at hand, he desired to drink to the enterprise, "something good, *qué?* a glass of the elixir of Garus, hey?" After several closets had been opened and searched, he remembered that mamma had the keys of the Garus. To get them it would be necessary to awaken her and tell who was there. The elixir was therefore changed to a glass of the *sirop de Calabre*, a summer drink, inoffensive and modest, which Bézuquet invented, advertising it in the *Forum* as follows: *Sirop de Calabre, ten sous a bottle, including* *the glass* (*verre*). "Sirop de Cadavre, including the worms (*vers*)," said that infernal Costecalde, who spat upon all success. But, after all, that horrid play upon words only served to swell the sale, and the Tarasconese to this day delight in their *sirop de cadavre.*

Libations made and a few last words exchanged, they embraced, Bézuquet whistling as usual in his moustache, adown which rolled great tears.

"Adieu, *au mouain*" . . . said Tartarin in a rough tone, feeling that he was about to weep himself, and as the shutter of the door had been lowered the hero was compelled to creep out of the pharmacy on his hands and knees.

This was one of the trials of the journey now about to begin.

Three days later he landed in Vitznau at the foot of the Rigi. As the mountain for his début, the Rigi had attracted him by its low altitude (5900 feet, about ten times that of Mount Terrible, the highest of the Alpines) and also on account of the splendid panorama to be seen from the summit — the Bernese Alps marshalled in line, all white and rosy, around the lakes, awaiting the moment when the great ascensionist should cast his ice-axe upon one of them.

Certain of being recognized on the way and perhaps followed — 't was a foible of his to believe that throughout all France his fame was as great and popular as it was at Tarascon — he had made a great détour before entering Switzerland and did not don his accoutrements until after he had crossed the frontier. Luckily for him; for never could his armament have been contained in one French railway-carriage.

But, however convenient the Swiss compartments might be, the Alpinist, hampered with utensils to which he was not, as yet, accustomed, crushed toe-nails with his crampons, harpooned travellers who came in his way with the point of his alpenstock, and wherever he went, in the stations, the steamers, and the hotel salons, he excited as much amazement as he did maledictions, avoidance, and angry looks, which he could not explain to himself though his affectionate and communicative nature suffered from them. To complete his discomfort, the sky was always gray, with flocks of clouds and a driving rain.

It rained at Bâle, on the little white houses, washed and rewashed by the hands of a maid and the waters of heaven. It rained at Lucerne, on the quay where the trunks and boxes appeared to be saved, as it were, from shipwreck, and when he arrived at the station of Vitznau, on the shore of the lake of the Four-Cantons, the same deluge was descending on the verdant slopes of the Rigi, straddled by inky clouds and striped with torrents that leaped from rock to rock in cascades of misty sleet, bringing down as they came the loose stones and the pine-needles. Never had Tartarin seen so much water.

He entered an inn and ordered a *café au lait* with honey and butter, the only really good things he had as yet tasted during his journey. Then, reinvigorated, and his beard sticky with honey, cleaned on a corner of his napkin, he prepared to attempt his first ascension.

"*Et autremain*," he asked, as he shifted his knapsack, "how long does it take to ascend the Rigi?"

"One hour, one hour and a quarter, monsieur; but make haste about it; the train is just starting."

"A train upon the Rigi! . . you are joking! . ."

Through the leaded panes of the tavern window he was shown the train that was really starting. Two great covered carriages, windowless, pushed by a locomotive with a short, corpulent chimney, in shape like a saucepan, a monstrous insect, clinging to the mountain and clambering, breathless up its vertiginous slopes.

The two Tartarins, cabbage and warren, both, at the same instant, revolted at the thought of going up in that hideous mechanism. One of them thought it ridiculous to climb the Alps in a lift; as for the other, those aerial bridges on which the track was laid, with the prospect of a fall of 4000 feet at the slightest derailment, inspired him with all sorts of lamentable reflections, justified by the little cemetery of Vitznau, the white tombs of which lay huddled together at the foot of the slope, like linen spread out to bleach in the yard of a wash-house. Evidently the cemetery is there by way of precaution, so that, in case of accident, the travellers may drop on the very spot.

"I'll go afoot," the valiant Tarasconese said to himself; "'t will exercise me . . . *zou!*"

And he started, wholly preoccupied with manœuvring his alpenstock in presence of the staff of the hotel, collected about the door and shouting directions to him about the path, to which he did not listen. He first followed an ascending road, paved with large irregular, pointed stones like a lane at the South, and bordered with wooden gutters to carry off the rains.

To right and left were great orchards, fields of rank, lush grass crossed by the same wooden conduits for irrigation through hollowed trunks of trees. All this made a constant rippling from top to bottom of the mountain, and every time that the ice-axe of the Alpinist became hooked as he walked along in the lower branches of an oak or a walnut-tree, his cap crackled as if beneath the nozzle of a watering-pot.

"*Diou!* what a lot of water!" sighed the man of the South. But it was much worse when the pebbly path abruptly ceased and he was forced to puddle along in the torrent or jump from rock to rock to save his gaiters. Then a shower joined in, penetrating, steady, and seeming to get colder the higher he went. When he stopped to recover breath he could hear nothing else than a vast noise of waters in which he seemed to be sunk, and he saw, as he turned round, the clouds descending into the lake in delicate long filaments of spun glass through which the chalets of Vitznau shone like freshly varnished toys.

Men and children passed him with lowered heads and backs bent beneath hods of white-wood, containing provisions for some villa or *pension*, the balconies of which could be distinguished on the slopes. "Rigi-Kulm?" asked Tartarin, to be sure he was heading in the right direction. But his extraordinary equipment, especially that knitted muffler which masked his face, cast terror along the way, and all whom he addressed only opened their eyes wide and hastened their steps without replying.

Soon these encounters became rare. The last human being whom he saw was an old woman washing her linen in the hollowed trunk of a tree under the shelter of an enormous red umbrella, planted in the ground.

"Rigi-Kulm?" asked the Alpinist.

The old woman raised an idiotic, cadaverous face, with a goitre swaying upon her throat as large as the rustic bell of a Swiss cow. Then, after gazing at him for a long time, she was seized with inextinguishable laughter, which stretched her mouth from ear to ear, wrinkled up the corners of her little eyes, and every time she opened them the sight of Tartarin, planted before her with his ice-axe on his shoulder, redoubled her joy.

"*Tron de l'air!*" growled the Tarasconese, "lucky for her that she 's a woman. . ." Snorting with anger, he continued his way and lost it in a pine-wood, where his boots slipped on the oozing moss.

Beyond this point the landscape changed. No more paths, or trees, or pastures. Gloomy, denuded slopes, great boulders of rock which he scaled on his knees for fear of falling; sloughs full of yellow mud, which he crossed slowly, feeling before him with his alpenstock and lifting his feet like a knife-grinder. At every moment he looked at the compass hanging to his broad watch-ribbon; but whether it were the altitude or the variations of the temperature, the needle seemed untrue. And how could he find his bearings in a thick yellow fog that hindered him from seeing ten steps about him — steps that were now, within a moment, covered with an icy glaze that made the ascent more difficult.

Suddenly he stopped; the ground whitened vaguely before him. . . Look out for your eyes! . .

He had come to the region of snows. . .

Immediately he pulled out his spectacles, took them from their case, and settled them securely on his nose. The moment was a solemn one. Slightly agitated, yet proud all the same, it seemed to Tartarin that in one bound he had risen 3000 feet toward the summits and his greatest dangers.

He now advanced with more precaution, dreaming of crevasses and fissures such as the books tell of, and cursing in the depths of his heart those people at the inn who advised him to mount straight and take no guide. After all, perhaps he had mistaken the mountain! More than six hours had he tramped, and the Rigi required only three. The wind blew, a chilling wind that whirled the snow in that crepuscular fog.

Night was about to overtake him. Where find a hut? or even a projecting rock to shelter him? All of a sudden, he saw before his nose on the arid, naked plain a species of wooden chalet, bearing, on a long placard in gigantic type, these letters, which he deciphered with difficulty: PHO. . . TO . . . GRA . . . PHIE DU RI . . . GI KULM. At the same instant the vast hotel with its three hundred windows loomed up before him between the great lamp-posts, the globes of which were now being lighted in the fog.

III.

An alarm on the Rigi. "Keep cool! Keep cool!" The Alpine horn. What Tartarin saw, on awaking, in his looking-glass. Perplexity. A guide is ordered by telephone.

"QUÈS aco? . . Qui vive?" cried Tartarin, ears alert and eyes straining hard into the darkness.

Feet were running through the hotel, doors were slamming, breathless voices were crying: "Make haste! make haste! . . " while without was ringing what seemed to be a trumpet-call, as flashes of flame illumined both panes and curtains.

Fire! . .

At a bound he was out of bed, shod, clothed, and running headlong down the staircase, where the gas still burned and a rustling swarm of *misses* were descending, with hair put up in haste, and they themselves swathed in shawls and red woollen jackets, or anything else that came to hand as they jumped out of bed.

Tartarin, to fortify himself and also to reassure the young ladies, cried out, as he rushed on, hustling everybody: "Keep cool! Keep cool!" in the voice of a gull, pallid, distraught, one of those voices that we hear in dreams sending chills down the back of the bravest man. Now, can you understand those young *misses*, who laughed as they looked at him and seemed to think it very funny? Girls have no notion of danger, at that age! . .

Happily, the old diplomatist came along behind them, very cursorily clothed in a top-coat below which appeared his white drawers with trailing ends of tape-string.

Here was a man, at last! . .

Tartarin ran to him waving his arms: "Ah! Monsieur le baron, what a disaster! . . Do you know about it? . . Where is it? . . How did it take? . ."

"Who? What?" stuttered the terrified baron, not understanding.

"Why, the fire. . ."

"What fire? . ."

The poor man's countenance was so inexpressibly vacant and stupid that Tartarin abandoned him and rushed away abruptly to "organize help. . ."

"Help!" repeated the baron, and after him four or five waiters, sound asleep on their feet in the antechamber, looked at one another completely bewildered and echoed, "Help! . ."

At the first step that Tartarin made out-of-doors he saw his error. Not the slightest conflagration! Only savage cold, and pitchy darkness, scarcely lighted by the resinous torches that were being carried hither and thither, casting on the snow long, blood-coloured traces.

On the steps of the portico, a performer on the Alpine horn was bellowing his modulated moan, that monotonous *ranz des vaches* on three notes, with which the Rigi-Kulm is wont to waken the worshippers of the sun and announce to them the rising of their star.

It is said that it shows itself, sometimes, on rising, at the extreme top of the mountain behind the hotel. To get his bearings, Tartarin had only to follow the long peal of the misses' laughter which now went past him. But he walked more slowly, still full of sleep and his legs heavy with his six hours' climb.

"Is that you, Manilof? . ." said a clear voice from the darkness, the voice of a woman. "Help me. . . I have lost my shoe."

He recognized at once the foreign warble of his pretty little neighbour at the dinner-table, whose delicate silhouette he now saw in the first pale gleam of the coming sun.

"It is not Manilof, mademoiselle, but if I can be useful to you. . ."

She gave a little cry of surprise and alarm as she made a recoiling gesture that Tartarin did not perceive, having already stooped to feel about the short and crackling grass around them.

"*Té, pardi!* here it is!" he cried joyfully. He shook the dainty shoe which the snow had powdered, and putting a knee to earth, most gallantly in the snow and the dampness, he asked, for all reward, the honour of replacing it on Cinderella's foot.

She, more repellent than in the tale, replied with a very curt "no;" and endeavoured, by hopping on one foot, to reinstate her silk stocking in its little bronze shoe; but in that she could never have succeeded without the help of the hero, who was greatly moved by feeling for an instant that delicate hand upon his shoulder.

"You have good eyes," she said, by way of thanks as they now walked side by side, and feeling their way.

"The habit of watching for game, mademoiselle."

"Ah! you are a sportsman?"

She said it with an incredulous, satirical accent. Tartarin had only to name himself in order to convince her, but, like the bearers of all illustrious names, he preferred discretion, coquetry. So, wishing to graduate the surprise, he answered: —

"I am a sportsman, *effectivemain*."

She continued in the same tone of irony: —

"And what game do you prefer to hunt?"

"The great carnivora, wild beasts . . ." uttered Tartarin, thinking to dazzle her.

"Do you find many on the Rigi?"

Always gallant, and ready in reply, Tartarin was about to say that on the Rigi he had so far met none but gazelles, when his answer was suddenly cut short by the appearance of two shadows, who called out: —

"Sonia! . . Sonia! . ."

"I'm coming," she said, and turning to Tartarin, whose eyes, now accustomed to the darkness, could distinguish her pale and pretty face beneath her mantle, she added, this time seriously: —

"You have undertaken a dangerous enterprise, my good man . . . take care you do not leave your bones here."

So saying, she instantly disappeared in the darkness with her companions.

Later, the threatening intonation that emphasized those words was fated to trouble the imagination of the Southerner; but now, he was simply vexed at the term "good man," cast upon his elderly embonpoint, and also at the abrupt departure of the young girl just at the moment when he was about to name himself, and enjoy her stupefaction.

He made a few steps in the direction the group had taken, hearing a confused murmur, with coughs and sneezes, of the clustering tourists waiting impatiently for the rising of the sun, the most vigorous among them having climbed to a little belvedere, the steps of which, wadded with snow, could be whitely distinguished in the vanishing darkness.

A gleam was beginning to light the Orient, saluted by a fresh blast from the Alpine horn, and that "Ah!!" of relief, always heard in theatres when the third bell raises the curtain.

Slight as a ray through a shutter, this gleam, nevertheless, enlarged the horizon, but, at the same moment a fog, opaque and yellow, rose from the valley, a steam that grew more thick, more penetrating as the day advanced. 'T was a veil between the scene and the spectators.

All hope was now renounced of the gigantic effects predicted in the guide-books. On the other hand, the heteroclite array of the dancers of the night before, torn from their slumbers, appeared in fantastic and ridiculous outline like the shades of a magic lantern; shawls, rugs, and even bedquilts wrapped around them. Under varied headgear, nightcaps of silk or cotton, broad-brimmed female hats, turbans, fur caps with ear-pads, were haggard faces, swollen faces, heads of shipwrecked beings cast upon a desert island in mid-ocean, watching for a sail in the offing with staring eyes.

But nothing — everlastingly nothing!

Nevertheless, certain among them strove, in a gush of good-will, to distinguish the surrounding summits, and, on the top of the belvedere could be heard the clucking of the Peruvian family, pressing around a big devil, wrapped to his feet in a checked ulster, who was pointing out imperturbably, the invisible panorama of the Bernese Alps, naming in a loud voice the peaks that were lost in the fog.

"You see on the left the Finsteraarhorn, thirteen thousand seven hundred and ninety-five feet high . . . the Schreckhorn, the Wetterhorn, the Monk, the Jungfrau, the elegant proportions of which I especially point out to these young ladies. . ."

"*Bé! vé!* there's one who does n't lack cheek!" thought Tartarin; then, on reflection, he added: "I know that voice, *au mouain*."

He recognized the accent, that accent of the South, distinguishable from afar like garlic; but, quite preoccupied in finding again his fair Unknown, he did not pause, and continued to inspect the groups — without result. She must have reentered the hotel, as they all did now, weary with standing about, shivering, to no purpose, so that presently no one remained on the cold and desolate plateau of that gray dawn but Tartarin and the Alpine horn-player, who continued to blow a melancholy note through his huge instrument, like a dog baying the moon.

He was a short old man, with a long beard, wearing a Tyrolese hat adorned with green woollen tassels that hung down upon his back and, in letters of gold, the words (common to all the hats and caps in the service of the hotel) *Regina Montium.* Tartarin went up to give him a pourboire, as he had seen all the other tourists do. "Let us go to bed again, my old friend," he said, tapping him on the shoulder with Tarasconese familiarity. "A fine humbug, *qué!* the sunrise on the Rigi."

The old man continued to blow into his horn, concluding his ritornelle in three notes with a mute laugh that wrinkled the corners of his eyes and shook the green glands of his head-gear.

Tartarin, in spite of all, did not regret his night. That meeting with the pretty blonde repaid him for his loss of sleep, for, though nigh upon fifty, he still had a warm heart, a romantic imagination, a glowing hearthstone of life. Returning to bed, and shutting his eyes to make himself go to sleep, he fancied he felt in his hand that dainty little shoe, and heard again the gentle call of the fair young girl: "Is it you, Manilof?"

Sonia . . . what a pretty name! . . She was certainly Russian; and those young men were travelling with her; friends of her brother, no doubt.

Then all grew hazy; the pretty face in its golden curls joined the other floating visions, — Rigi slopes, cascades like plumes of feathers, — and soon the heroic breathing of the great man, sonorous and rhythmical, filled the little room and the greater part of the long corridor. . .

The next morning, before descending at the first gong for breakfast, Tartarin was about to make sure that his beard was well brushed, and that he himself did not look too badly in his Alpine costume, when, all of a sudden, he quivered. Before him, open, and gummed to his looking-glass by two wafers, was an anonymous letter, containing the following threats: —

"*Devil of a Frenchman, your queer old clothes do not conceal you. You are forgiven once more for this attempt; but if you cross our path again, beware!*"

Bewildered, he read this two or three times over without understanding it. Of whom, of what must he beware? How came that letter there? Evidently during his sleep; for he did not see it on returning from his auroral promenade. He rang for the maid on duty; a fat, white face, all pitted with the small-pox, a perfect gruyère cheese, from which nothing intelligible could be drawn, except that she was of "bon famille," and never entered the rooms of the gentlemen unless they were there.

"A queer thing, *au mouain*," thought Tartarin, turning and returning the letter, and much impressed by it. For a moment the name of Costecalde crossed his mind, — Costecalde, informed of his projects of ascension, and endeavouring to prevent them by manœuvres and threats. On reflection, this appeared to him unlikely, and he ended by persuading himself that the letter was a joke . . . perhaps those little misses who had laughed at him so heartily . . . they are so free, those English and American young girls!

The second breakfast gong sounded. He put the letter in his pocket: "After all, we 'll soon see . . ." and the formidable grimace with which he accompanied that reflection showed the heroism of his soul.

Fresh surprise when he sat down to table. Instead of his pretty neighbour, "whom Love had curled with gold," he perceived the vulture throat of an old Englishwoman, whose long lappets swept the cloth. It was rumoured about him that the young lady and her companions had left the hotel by one of the early morning trains.

"*'Cré nom!* I 'm fooled . . ." exclaimed aloud the Italian tenor, who, the evening before, had so rudely signified to Tartarin that he could not speak French. He must have learned it in a single night! The tenor rose, threw down his napkin, and hurried away, leaving the Southerner completely nonplussed.

Of all the guests of the night before, none now remained but himself. That is always so on the Rigi-Kulm; no one stays there more than twenty-four hours. In other respects the scene was invariably the same; the compote-dishes in files divided the factions. But on this particular morning the Rices triumphed by a great majority, reinforced by certain illustrious personages, and the Prunes did not, as they say, have it all their own way.

Tartarin, without taking sides with one or the other, went up to his room before the dessert, buckled his bag, and asked for his bill. He had had enough of *Regina Montium* and its dreary table d'hôte of deaf mutes.

Abruptly recalled to his Alpine madness by the touch of his ice-axe, his crampons, and the rope in which he rewound himself, he burned to attack a real mountain, a summit deprived of a lift and a photographer. He hesitated between the Finsteraarhorn, as being the highest, and the Jungfrau, whose pretty name of virginal whiteness made him think more than once of the little Russian.

Ruminating on these alternatives while they made out his bill, he amused himself in the vast, lugubrious, silent hall of the hotel by looking at the coloured photographs hanging to the walls, representing glaciers, snowy slopes, famous and perilous mountain passes: here, were ascensionists in file, like ants on a quest, creeping along an icy *arête* sharply defined and blue; farther on was a deep crevasse, with glaucous sides, over which was thrown a ladder, and a lady crossing it on her knees, with an abbé after her raising his cassock.

The Alpinist of Tarascon, both hands on his ice-axe, had never, as yet, had an idea of such difficulties; he would have to meet them, *pas mouain!* . .

Suddenly he paled fearfully.

In a black frame, an engraving from the famous drawing of Gustave Doré, reproducing the catastrophe on the Matterhorn, met his eye. Four human bodies on the flat of their backs or stomachs were coming headlong down the almost perpendicular slope of a *névé*, with extended arms and clutching hands, seeking the broken rope which held this string of lives, and only served to drag them down to death in the gulf where the mass was to fall pell-mell, with ropes, axes, veils, and all the gay outfit of Alpine ascension, grown suddenly tragic.

"Awful!" cried Tartarin, speaking aloud in his horror.

A very civil maître d'hôtel heard the exclamation, and thought best to reassure him. Accidents of that nature, he said, were becoming very rare: the essential thing was to commit no imprudence and, above all, to procure good guides.

Tartarin asked if he could be told of one there, "with confidence. . ." Not that he himself had any fear, but it was always best to have a sure man.

The waiter reflected, with an important air, twirling his moustache. "With confidence? . . Ah! if monsieur had only spoken sooner; we had a man here this morning who was just the thing . . . the courier of that Peruvian family. . ."

"He understands the mountain?" said Tartarin, with a knowing air.

"Oh, yes, monsieur, all the mountains, in Switzerland, Savoie, Tyrol, India, in fact, the whole world; he has done them all, he knows them all, he can tell you all about them, and that's something! . . I think he might easily be induced. . . With a man like that a child could go anywhere without danger."

"Where is he? How could I find him?"

"At the Kaltbad, monsieur, preparing the rooms for his party. . . I could telephone to him."

A telephone! on the Rigi!

That was the climax. But Tartarin could no longer be amazed.

Five minutes later the man returned bringing an answer.

The courier of the Peruvian party had just started for the Tellsplatte, where he would certainly pass the night.

The Tellsplatte is a memorial chapel, to which pilgrimages are made in honour of William Tell. Some persons go there to see the mural pictures which a famous painter of Bâle has lately executed in the chapel. . .

As it only took by boat an hour or an hour and a half to reach the place, Tartarin did not hesitate. It would make him lose a day, but he owed it to himself to render that homage to William Tell, for whom he had always felt a peculiar predilection. And, besides, what a chance if he could there pick up this marvellous guide and induce him to do the Jungfrau with him.

Forward, *zou!*

He paid his bill, in which the setting and the rising sun were reckoned as extras, also the candles and the attendance. Then, still preceded by the rattle of his metals, which sowed surprise and terror on his way, he went to the railway station, because to descend the Rigi as he had ascended it, on foot, would have been lost time, and, really, it was doing too much honour to that very artificial mountain.

IV.

On the boat. It rains. The Tarasconese hero salutes the Ashes. The truth about William Tell. Disillusion. Tartarin of Tarascon never existed. " Té! Bompard."

He had left the snows of the Rigi-Kulm; down below, on the lake, he returned to rain, fine, close, misty, a vapour of water through which the mountains stumped themselves in, graduating in the distance to the form of clouds.

The " Föhn " whistled, raising white caps on the lake where the gulls, flying low, seemed borne upon the waves; one might have thought one's self on the open ocean.

Tartarin recalled to mind his departure from the port of Marseilles, fifteen years earlier, when he started to hunt the lion — that spotless sky, dazzling with silvery light, that sea so blue, blue as the water of dye-works, blown back by the mistral in sparkling white saline crystals, the bugles of the forts and the bells of all the steeples echoing joy, rapture, sun — the fairy world of a first journey.

What a contrast to this black dripping wharf, almost deserted, on which were seen, through the mist as through a sheet of oiled paper, a few passengers wrapped in ulsters and formless india-rubber garments, and the helmsman standing motionless, muffled in his hooded cloak, his manner grave and sibylline, behind this notice printed in three languages: —

"Forbidden to speak to the man at the wheel."

Very useless caution, for nobody spoke on board the "Winkelried," neither on deck, nor in the first and second saloons crowded with lugubrious-looking passengers, sleeping, reading, yawning, pell-mell, with their smaller packages scattered on the seats — the sort of scene we imagine that a batch of exiles on the morning after a coup-d'État might present.

From time to time the hoarse bellow of the steam-pipe announced the arrival of the boat at a stopping-place. A noise of steps, and of baggage dragged about the deck. The shore, looming through the fog, came nearer and showed its slopes of a sombre green, its villas shivering amid inundated groves, files of poplars flanking the muddy roads along which sumptuous hotels were formed in line with their names in letters of gold upon their façades, Hôtel Meyer, Müller, du Lac, etc., where heads, bored with existence, made themselves visible behind the streaming window-panes.

The wharf was reached, the passengers disembarked and went upward, all equally muddy, soaked, and silent. 'T was a coming and going of umbrellas and omnibuses, quickly vanishing. Then a great beating of the wheels, churning up the water with their paddles, and the shore retreated, becoming once more a misty landscape with its *pensions* Meyer, Müller, du Lac, etc., the windows of which, opened for an instant, gave fluttering handkerchiefs to view from every floor, and outstretched arms that seemed to say: "Mercy! pity! take us, take us . . . if you only knew! . ."

At times the "Winkelried" crossed on its way some other steamer with its name in black letters on its white paddle-box: "Germania." . . "Guillaume Tell". . . The same lugubrious deck, the same refracting caoutchoucs, the same most lamentable pleasure trip as that of the other phantom vessel going its different way, and the same heart-broken glances exchanged from deck to deck.

And to say that those people travelled for enjoyment! and that all those boarders in the Hôtels du Lac, Meyer, and Müller were captives for pleasure!

Here, as on the Rigi-Kulm, the thing that above all suffocated Tartarin, agonized him, froze him, even more than the cold rain and the murky sky, was the utter impossibility of talking. True, he had again met faces that he knew — the member of the Jockey Club with his niece (h'm! h'm! . .), the academician Astier-Réhu, and the Bonn Professor Schwanthaler, those two implacable enemies condemned to live side by side for a month manacled to the itinerary of a Cook's Circular, and others. But none of these illustrious Prunes would recognize the Tarasconese Alpinist, although his mountain muffler, his metal utensils, his ropes in saltire, distinguished him from others, and marked him in a manner that was quite peculiar. They all seemed ashamed of the night before, and the inexplicable impulse communicated to them by the fiery ardour of that fat man.

Mme. Schwanthaler, alone, approached her partner, with the rosy, laughing face of a plump little fairy, and taking her skirt in her two fingers as if to suggest a minuet. "Ballir. . . dantsir. . . very choli. . ." remarked the good lady. Was this a memory that she evoked, or a temptation that she offered? At any rate, as she did not let go of him, Tartarin, to escape her pertinacity, went up on deck, preferring to be soaked to the skin rather than be made ridiculous.

And it rained! . . and the sky was dirty! . . To complete his gloom, a whole squad of the Salvation Army, who had come aboard at Beckenried, a dozen stout girls with stolid faces, in navy-blue gowns and Greenaway bonnets, were grouped under three enormous scarlet umbrellas, and were singing verses, accompanied on the accordion by a man, a sort of David-la-Gamme, tall and fleshless with crazy eyes. These sharp, flat, discordant voices, like the cry of gulls, rolled dragging, drawling through the rain and the black smoke of the engine which the wind beat down upon the deck. Never had Tartarin heard anything so lamentable.

At Brunnen the squad landed, leaving the pockets of the other travellers swollen with pious little tracts; and almost immediately after the songs and the accordion of these poor larvæ ceased, the sky began to clear and patches of blue were seen.

They now entered the lake of Uri, closed in and darkened by lofty, untrodden mountains, and the tourists pointed out to each other, on the right at the foot of the Seelisberg, the field of Grütli, where Melchtal, Fürst, and Stauffacher made oath to deliver their country.

Tartarin, with much emotion, took off his cap, paying no attention to environing amazement, and waved it in the air three times, to do honour to the ashes of those heroes. A few of the passengers mistook his purpose, and politely returned his bow.

The engine at last gave a hoarse roar, its echo repercussioning from cliff to cliff of the narrow space. The notice hung out on deck before each new landing-place (as they do at public balls to vary the country dances) announced the Tellsplatte.

They arrived.

The chapel is situated just five minutes' walk from the landing, at the edge of the lake, on the very rock to which William Tell sprang, during the tempest, from Gessler's boat. It was to Tartarin a most delightful emotion to tread, as he followed the travellers of the Circular Cook along the lakeside, that historic soil, to recall and live again the principal episodes of the great drama which he knew as he did his own life.

From his earliest years, William Tell had been his type. When, in the Bézuquet pharmacy, they played the game of preference, each person writing secretly on folded slips the poet, the tree, the odour, the hero, the woman he preferred, one of the papers invariably ran thus: —

"Tree preferred?	the baobab.
Odour?	gunpowder.
Writer?	Fenimore Cooper.
What I would prefer to be	William Tell."

And every voice in the pharmacy cried out: "That 's Tartarin!"

Imagine, therefore, how happy he was and how his heart was beating as he stood before that memorial chapel raised to a hero by the gratitude of a whole people. It seemed to him that William Tell in person, still dripping with the waters of the lake, his crossbow and his arrows in hand, was about to open the door to him.

"No entrance. . . I am at work. . . This is not the day. . ." cried a loud voice from within, made louder by the sonority of the vaulted roof.

"Monsieur Astier-Réhu, of the French Academy. . ."

"Herr Doctor Professor Schwanthaler. . ."

"Tartarin of Tarascon. . ."

In the arch above the portal, perched upon a scaffolding, appeared a half-length of the painter in working-blouse, palette in hand.

"My *famulus* will come down and open to you, messieurs," he said with respectful intonations.

"I was sure of it, *pardi!*" thought Tartarin; "I had only to name myself."

However, he had the good taste to stand aside modestly, and only entered after all the others.

The painter, superb fellow, with the gilded, ruddy head of an artist of the Renaissance, received his visitors on the wooden steps which led to the temporary staging put up for the purpose of painting the roof. The frescos, representing the principal episodes in the life of William Tell, were finished, all but one, namely: the scene of the apple in the market-place of Altorf. On this he was now at work, and his young *famulus*, as he called him, feet and legs bare under a toga of the middle ages, and his hair archangelically arranged, was posing as the son of William Tell.

All these archaic personages, red, green, yellow, blue, made taller than nature in narrow streets and under the posterns of the period, intended, of course, to be seen at a distance, impressed the spectators rather sadly. However, they were there to admire, and they admired. Besides, none of them knew anything.

"I consider that a fine characterization," said the pontifical Astier-Réhu, carpet-bag in hand.

And Schwanthaler, a camp-stool under his arm, not willing to be behindhand, quoted two verses of Schiller, most of it remaining in his flowing beard. Then the ladies exclaimed, and for a time nothing was heard but: —

"Schön! . . schön. . ."

"Yes . . . lovely. . ."

"Exquisite! delicious! . ."

One might have thought one's self at a confectioner's.

Abruptly a voice broke forth, rending with the ring of a trumpet that composed silence.

"Badly shouldered, I tell you... That crossbow is not in place..."

Imagine the stupor of the painter in presence of this exorbitant Alpinist, who, alpenstock in hand and ice-axe on his shoulder, risking the annihilation of somebody at each of his many evolutions, was demonstrating to him by A + B that the motions of his William Tell were not correct.

"I know what I am talking about, *au mouain*... I beg you to believe it..."

"Who are you?"

"Who am I!" exclaimed the Alpinist, now thoroughly vexed... So it was not to him that the door was opened; and drawing himself up he said: "Go ask my name of the panthers of the Zaccar, of the lions of Atlas... they will answer you, perhaps."

The company recoiled; there was general alarm.

"But," asked the painter, "in what way is my action wrong?"

"Look at me, *té!*"

Falling into position with a thud of his heels that made the planks beneath them smoke, Tartarin, shouldering his ice-axe like a crossbow, stood rigid.

"Superb! He's right... Don't stir..."

Then to the *famulus:* "Quick! a block, charcoal!.."

The fact is, the Tarasconese hero was something worth painting, — squat, round-shouldered, head bent forward, the muffler round his chin like a strap, and his flaming little eye taking aim at the terrified *famulus*.

Imagination, O magic power! . . He thought himself on the marketplace of Altorf, in front of his own child, he, who had never had any; an arrow in his bow, another in his belt to pierce the heart of the tyrant. His conviction became so strong that it conveyed itself to others.

"'T is William Tell himself! . ." said the painter, crouched on a stool and driving his sketch with a feverish hand. "Ah! monsieur, why did I not know you earlier? What a model you would have been for me! . ."

"Really! then you see some resemblance?" said Tartarin, much flattered, but keeping his pose.

Yes, it was just so that the artist imagined his hero.

"The head, too?"

"Oh! the head, that's no matter . . ." and the painter stepped back to look at his sketch. "Yes, a virile mask, energetic, just what I wanted — inasmuch as nobody knows anything about William Tell, who probably never existed."

Tartarin dropped the cross-bow from stupefaction.

"*Outre!* [1] . . Never existed! . . What is that you are saying?"

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[1] "*Outre*" and "*boufre*" are Tarasconese oaths of mysterious etymology.

" Ask these gentlemen. . ."

Astier-Réhu, solemn, his three chins in his white cravat, said: "That is a Danish legend."

"Icelandic. . . " affirmed Schwanthaler, no less majestic.

"Saxo Grammaticus relates that a valiant archer named Tobé or Paltanoke . . ."

"Es ist in der Vilkinasaga geschrieben . . ."

Both together: —

was condemned by the King of Denmark Harold of the Blue Teeth . . ."

dass der Isländische König Necding . . ."

With staring eyes and arms extended, neither looking at nor comprehending each other, they both talked at once, as if on a rostrum, in the doctoral, despotic tones of professors certain of never being refuted; until, getting angry, they only shouted names: "Justinger of Berne! . . Jean of Winterthur! . ."

Little by little, the discussion became general, excited, and furious among the visitors. Umbrellas, camp-stools, and valises were brandished; the unhappy artist, trembling for the safety of his scaffolding, went from one to another imploring peace. When the tempest had abated, he returned to his sketch and looked for his mysterious model, for him whose name the panthers of the Zaccar and the lions of Atlas could alone pronounce; but he was nowhere to be seen; the Alpinist had disappeared.

At that moment he was clambering with furious strides up a little path among beeches and birches that led to the Hôtel Tellsplatte, where the courier of the Peruvian family was to pass the night; and under the shock of his deception he was talking to himself in a loud voice and ramming his alpenstock furiously into the sodden ground: —

Never existed! William Tell! William Tell a myth! And it was a painter charged with the duty of decorating the Tellsplatte who said that calmly. He hated him as if for a sacrilege; he hated those learned men, and this denying, demolishing impious age, which respects nothing, neither fame nor grandeur — *coquin de sort!*

And so, two hundred, three hundred years hence, when TARTARIN was spoken of there would always be Astier-Réhus and Professor Schwanthalers to deny that he ever existed — a Provençal myth! a Barbary legend! . . He stopped, choking with indignation and his rapid climb, and seated himself on a rustic bench.

From there he could see the lake between the branches, and the white walls of the chapel like a new mausoleum. A roaring of steam and the bustle of getting to the wharf announced the arrival of fresh visitors. They collected on the bank, guide-books in hand, and then advanced with thoughtful gestures and extended arms, evidently relating the "legend." Suddenly, by an abrupt revulsion of ideas, the comicality of the whole thing struck him.

He pictured to himself all historical Switzerland living upon this imaginary hero; raising statues and chapels in his honour on the little squares of the little towns, and placing monuments in the museums of the great ones; organizing patriotic fêtes, to which everybody rushed, banners displayed, from all the cantons, with banquets, toasts, speeches, hurrahs, songs, and tears swelling all breasts, and this for a great patriot, whom everybody knew had never existed.

Talk of Tarascon indeed! There 's a tarasconade for you, the like of which was never invented down there!

His good-humour quite restored, Tartarin in a few sturdy strides struck the highroad to Fluelen, at the side of which the Hôtel Tellsplatte spreads out its long façade. While awaiting the dinner-bell the guests were walking about in front of a cascade over rock-work on the gullied road, where landaus were drawn up, their poles on the ground among puddles of water in which was reflected a copper-coloured sun.

Tartarin inquired for his man. They told him he was dining. "Then take me to him, *zou!*" and this was said with such authority that in spite of the respectful repugnance shown to disturbing so important a personage, a maid-servant conducted the Alpinist through the whole hotel, where his advent created some amazement, to the invaluable courier who was dining alone in a little room that looked upon the court-yard.

"Monsieur," said Tartarin as he entered, his ice axe on his shoulder, "excuse me if. . ."

He stopped stupefied, and the courier, tall, lank, his napkin at his chin, in the savoury steam of a plateful of hot soup, let fall his spoon.

"*Vé!* Monsieur Tartarin. . ."

"*Té!* Bompard."

It was Bompard, former manager of the Club, a good fellow, but afflicted with a fabulous imagination which rendered him incapable of telling a word of truth, and had caused him to be nicknamed in Tarascon "The Impostor."

Called an impostor in Tarascon! you can judge what he must have been. And this was the incomparable guide, the climber of the Alps, the Himalayas, the Mountains of the Moon.

"Oh! now, then, I understand," ejaculated Tartarin, rather nonplussed; but, even so, joyful to see a face from home and to hear once more that dear, delicious accent of the Cours.

"*Différemment*, Monsieur Tartarin, you 'll dine with me, *qué?*"

Tartarin hastened to accept, delighted at the pleasure of sitting down at a private table opposite to a friend, without the very smallest litigious compote-dish between them, to be able to hobnob, to talk as he ate, and to eat good things, carefully cooked and fresh; for couriers are admirably treated by innkeepers, and served apart with all the best wines and the extra dainties.

Many were the *au mouains*, *pas mouains*, and *différemments*.

"Then, my dear fellow, it was really you I heard last night, up there, on the platform? . ."

"Hey! *parfaitemain*. . . I was making those young ladies admire. . . Fine, is n't it, sunrise on the Alps?"

"Superb!" cried Tartarin, at first without conviction and merely to avoid contradicting him, but caught the next minute; and after that it was really bewildering to hear those two Tarasconese enthusiasts lauding the splendours they had found on the Rigi. It was Joanne capping Baedeker.

Then, as the meal went on, the conversation became more intimate, full of confidences and effusive protestations, which brought real tears to their Provençal eyes, lively, brilliant eyes, but keeping always in their facile emotion a little corner of jest and satire. In that alone did the two friends resemble each other; for in person one was as lean, tanned, weatherbeaten, seamed with the wrinkles special to the grimaces of his profession, as the other was short, stocky, sleek-skinned, and sound-blooded.

He had seen all, that poor Bompard, since his exodus from the Club. That insatiable imagination of his which prevented him from ever staying in one place had kept him wandering under so many suns, and through such diverse fortunes. He related his adventures, and counted up the fine occasions to enrich himself which had snapped, there! in his fingers — such as his last invention for saving the war-budget the cost of boots and shoes. . . Do you know how? . . Oh, *moun Diou!* it is very simple . . . by shoeing the feet of the soldiers."

"*Outre!*" cried Tartarin, horrified.

Bompard continued very calmly, with his natural air of cold madness: —

"A great idea, wasn't it? Eh! *bé!* at the ministry they did not even answer me. . . Ah! my poor Monsieur Tartarin, I have had my bad moments, I have eaten the bread of poverty before I entered the service of the Company. . ."

"Company! what Company?"

Bompard lowered his voice discreetly.

"Hush! presently, not here. . ." Then returning to his natural tones, "*Et autremain*, you people at Tarascon, what are you all doing? You haven't yet told me what brings you to our mountains . . ."

It was now for Tartarin to pour himself out. Without anger, but with that melancholy of declining years, that ennui which attacks as they grow elderly great artists, beautiful women, and all conquerors of peoples and hearts, he told of the defection of his compatriots, the plot laid against him to deprive him of the presidency, the decision he had come to to do some act of heroism, a great ascension, the Tarasconese banner borne higher than it had ever before been planted; in short, to prove to the Alpinists of Tarascon that he was still worthy . . . still worthy of . . . Emotion overcame him, he was forced to keep silence . . . Then he added: —

"You know me, Gonzague . . ." and nothing can ever render the effusion, the caressing charm with which he uttered that troubadouresque Christian name of the courier. It was like one way of pressing his hands, of coming nearer to his heart . . . "You know me, *qué!* You know if I balked when the question came up of marching upon the lion; and during the war, when we organized together the defences of the Club . . ."

Bompard nodded his head with terrible emphasis; he thought he was there still.

"Well, my good fellow, what the lions, what the Krupp cannon could never do, the Alps have accomplished . . . I am afraid."

"Don't say that, Tartarin!"

"Why not?" said the hero, with great gentleness. . . "I say it, because it is so. . ."

And tranquilly, without posing, he acknowledged the impression made upon him by Doré's drawing of that catastrophe on the Matterhorn, which was ever before his eyes. He feared those perils, and being told of an extraordinary guide, capable of avoiding them, he resolved to seek him out and confide in him.

Then, in a tone more natural, he added: "You have never been a guide, have you, Gonzague?"

"*Hé!* yes," replied Bompard, smiling. . . "Only, I never did all that I related."

"That's understood," assented Tartarin.

And the other added in a whisper: —

"Let us go out on the road; we can talk more freely there."

It was getting dark; a warm damp breeze was rolling up black clouds upon the sky, where the setting sun had left behind it a vague gray mist.

They went along the shore in the direction of Fluelen, crossing the mute shadows of hungry tourists returning to the hotel; shadows themselves, and not speaking until they reached a tunnel through which the road is cut, opening at intervals to little terraces overhanging the lake.

"Let us stop here," pealed forth the hollow voice of Bompard, which resounded under the vaulted roof like a cannon-shot. There, seated on the parapet, they contemplated that admirable view of the lake, the downward rush of the fir-trees and beeches pressing blackly together in the foreground, and farther on, the higher mountains with waving summits, and farther still, others of a bluish-gray confusion as of clouds, in the midst of which lay, though scarcely visible, the long white trail of a glacier, winding through the hollows and suddenly illumined with irised fire, yellow, red, and green. They were exhibiting the mountain with Bengal lights!

From Fluelen the rockets rose, scattering their multicoloured stars; Venetian lanterns went and came in boats that remained invisible while bearing bands of music and pleasure-seekers.

A fairylike decoration seen through the frame, cold and architectural, of the granite walls of the tunnel.

"What a queer country, *pas mouain*, this Switzerland . . ." cried Tartarin.

Bompard burst out laughing.

"Ah! *vaī*, Switzerland! . . In the first place, there is no Switzerland."

V.

Confidences in a tunnel.

"SWITZERLAND, in our day, *vé!* Monsieur Tartarin, is nothing more than a vast Kursaal, open from June to September, a panoramic casino, where people come from all four quarters of the globe to amuse themselves, and which is manipulated and managed by a Company *richissime* by hundreds of thousands of millions, which has its offices in London and Geneva. It costs money, you may be sure, to lease and brush up and trick out all this territory, lakes, forests, mountains, cascades, and to keep a whole people of employés, supernumeraries, and what not, and set up miraculous hotels on the highest summits, with gas, telegraphs, telephones! . ."

"That, at least, is true," said Tartarin, thinking aloud, and remembering the Rigi.

"True! . . But you have seen nothing yet. . . Go on through the country and you 'll not find one corner that is n't engineered and machine-worked like the under stage of the Opera,—cascades lighted *à giorno*, turnstiles at the entrance to the glaciers, and loads of railways, hydraulic and funicular, for ascensions. To be sure, the

Company, in view of its clients the English and American climbers, keeps up on the noted mountains, Jungfrau, Monk, Finsteraarhorn, an appearance of danger and desolation, though in reality there is no more risk there than elsewhere . . ."

"But the crevasses, my good fellow, those horrible crevasses . . . Suppose one falls into them?"

"You fall on snow, Monsieur Tartarin, and you don't hurt yourself, and there is always at the bottom a porter, a hunter, at any rate some one, who picks you up, shakes and brushes you, and asks graciously: 'Has monsieur any baggage?'"

"What stuff are you telling me now, Gonzague?"

Bompard redoubled in gravity.

"The keeping up of those crevasses is one of the heaviest expenses of the Company."

Silence fell for a moment under the tunnel, the surroundings of which were quieting down. No more varied fireworks, Bengal lights, or boats on the water; but the moon had risen and made another conventional landscape, bluish, liquidescent, with masses of impenetrable shadow. . .

Tartarin hesitated to believe his companion on his word. Nevertheless, he reflected on the extraordinary things he had seen in four days — the sun on the Rigi, the farce of William Tell — and Bompard's inventions seemed to him all the more probable because in every Tarasconese the braggart is leashed with a gull.

"*Différemment*, my good friend, how do you explain certain awful catastrophes . . . that of the Matterhorn, for instance? . ."

"It is sixteen years since that happened; the Company was not then constituted, Monsieur Tartarin."

"But last year, the accident on the Wetterhorn, two guides buried with their travellers! . ."

"Must, sometimes, *té, pardi!* . . you understand . . . whets the Alpinists . . . The English won't come to mountains now where heads are not broke . . . The Wetterhorn had been running down for some time, but after that little item in the papers the receipts went up at once."

"Then the two guides? . ."

"They are just as safe as the travellers; only they are kept out of sight, supported in foreign parts, for six months . . . A puff like that costs dear, but the Company is rich enough to afford it."

"Listen to me, Gonzague. . ."

Tartarin had risen, one hand on Bompard's shoulder.

"You would not wish to have any misfortune happen to me, *qué?* . . Well, then! speak to me frankly . . . you know my capacities as an Alpinist; they are moderate."

"Very moderate, that 's true."

"Do you think, nevertheless, that I could, without too much danger, undertake the ascension of the Jungfrau?"

"I 'll answer for it, my head in the fire, Monsieur Tartarin. . . You have only to trust to your guide, *vé!*"

"And if I turn giddy?"

"Shut your eyes."

"And if I slip?"

"Let yourself go . . . just as they do on the stage . . . sort of trap-doors . . . there 's no risk. . ."

"Ah! if I could have you there to tell me all that, to keep repeating it to me . . . Look here, my good fellow, make an effort, and come with me."

Bompard desired nothing better, *pécairé!* but he had those Peruvians on his hands for the rest of the season; and, replying to his old friend, who expressed surprise at seeing him accept the functions of a courier, a subaltern, —

"I could n't help myself, Monsieur Tartarin," he said. "It is in our engagement. The Company has the right to employ us as it pleases."

On which he began to count upon his fingers his varied avatars during the last three years . . . guide in the Oberland, performer on the Alpine horn, chamois-hunter, veteran soldier of Charles X., Protestant pastor on the heights . . .

"*Què's aco?*" demanded Tartarin, astonished.

"*Bé!* yes," replied the other, composedly. "When you travel in German Switzerland you will see pastors preaching on giddy heights, standing on rocks or rustic pulpits of the trunks of trees. A few shepherds and cheese-makers, their leather caps in their hands, and women with their heads dressed up in the costume of the canton group themselves about in picturesque attitudes; the scenery is pretty, the pastures green, or the harvest just over, cascades to the road, and flocks with their bells ringing every note on the mountain. All that, *vé!* that 's decorative, suggestive. Only, none but the employés of the Company, guides, pastors, couriers, hotel-keepers are in the secret, and it is their interest not to let it get wind, for fear of startling the clients."

The Alpinist was dumfounded, silent — in him the acme of stupefaction. In his heart, whatever doubt he may have had as to Bompard's veracity, he felt himself comforted and calmed as to Alpine ascensions, and presently the conversation grew joyous. The two friends talked of Tarascon, of their good, hearty laughs in the olden time when both were younger.

"Apropos of *galéjade* [jokes]," said Tartarin, suddenly, "they played me a fine one on the Rigi-Kulm. . . Just imagine that this morning . . ." and he told of the letter gummed to his glass, reciting it with emphasis: "'Devil of a Frenchman' . . . A hoax, of course, *qué?*"

"May be . . . who knows? . ." said Bompard, seeming to take the matter more seriously. He asked if Tartarin during his stay on the Rigi had relations with any one, and whether he had n't said a word too much.

"Ha! *vaï!* a word too much! as if one even opened one's mouth among those English and Germans, mute as carp under pretence of good manners!"

On reflection, however, he did remember having clinched a matter, and sharply too! with a species of Cossack, a certain Mi . . . Milanof.

"Manilof," corrected Bompard.

"Do you know him? . . Between you and me, I think that Manilof had a spite against me about a little Russian girl. . ."

"Yes, Sonia. . ." murmured Bompard.

"Do you know her too? Ah! my friend, a pearl! a pretty little gray partridge!"

"Sonia Wassilief. . . It was she who killed with one shot of her revolver in the open that General Felianine, the president of the Council of War which condemned her brother to perpetual exile."

Sonia an assassin? that child, that little blond fairy! . . Tartarin could not believe it. But Bompard gave precise particulars and details of the affair — which, indeed, is very well known. Sonia had lived for the last two years in Zurich, where her brother Boris, having escaped from Siberia, joined her, his lungs gone; and during the summers she took him for better air to the mountains. Bompard had often met them, attended by friends who were all exiles, conspirators. The Wassiliefs, very intelligent, very energetic, and still possessed of some fortune, were at the head of the Nihilist party, with Bolibine, the man who murdered the prefect of police, and this very Manilof, who blew up the Winter Palace last year.

"*Boufre!*" exclaimed Tartarin, "one meets with queer neighbours on the Rigi."

But here's another thing. Bompard took it into his head that Tartarin's letter came from these young people; it was just like their Nihilist proceedings. The czar, every morning, found warnings in his study, under his napkin. . .

"But," said Tartarin, turning pale, "why such threats? What have I done to them?"

Bompard thought they must have taken him for a spy.

"A spy! I!

"*Bé!* yes." In all the Nihilist centres, at Zurich, Lausanne, Geneva, Russia maintained at great cost, a numerous body of spies; in fact, for some time past she had had in her service the former chief of the French Imperial police, with a dozen Corsicans, who followed and watched all Russian exiles, and took countless disguises in order to detect them. The costume of the Alpinist, his spectacles, his accent, were quite enough to confound him in their minds with those agents.

"*Coquin de sort!* now I think of it," said Tartarin, "they had at their heels the whole time a rascally Italian tenor . . . undoubtedly a spy. . . *Différemment*, what must I do?"

"Above all things, never put yourself in the way of those people again; now that they have warned you they will do you harm. . ."

"Ha! *vaï!* harm! . . The first one that comes near me I shall cleave his head with my ice-axe."

And in the gloom of the tunnel the eyes of the Tarasconese hero glared. But Bompard, less confident than he, knew well that the hatred of Nihilists is terrible; it attacks from below, it undermines, and plots. It is all very well tó be a *lapin* like the president, but you had better beware of that inn bed you sleep in, and the chair you sit upon, and the rail of the steamboat, which will give way suddenly and drop you to death. And think of the cooking-dishes prepared, the glass rubbed over with invisible poison!

"Beware of the kirsch in your flask, and the frothing milk that cow-man in sabots brings you. They stop at nothing, I tell you."

"If so, what's to be done! I'm doomed!" groaned Tartarin; then, grasping the hand of his companion: —

"Advise me, Gonzague."

After a moment's reflection, Bompard traced out to him a programme. To leave the next day, early, cross the lake and the Brunig pass, and sleep at Interlaken. The next day, to Grindelwald and the Little Scheideck. And the day after, the JUNGFRAU! After that, home to Tarascon, without losing an hour, or looking back.

"I'll start to-morrow, Gonzague . . ." declared the hero, in a virile voice, with a look of terror at the mysterious horizon, now dim in the darkness, and at the lake which seemed to him to harbour all treachery beneath the glassy calm of its pale reflections.

VI.

The Brünig pass. Tartarin falls into the hands of Nihilists. Disappearance of an Italian tenor and a rope made at Avignon. Fresh exploits of the cap-sportsman. Pan! pan!

"GET in! get in!"

"But how the devil, *qué!* am I to get in? the places are full . . . they won't make room for me."

This was said at the extreme end of the lake of the Four Cantons, on that shore at Alpnach, damp and soggy as a delta, where the post-carriages wait in line to convey tourists leaving the boat to cross the Brünig.

A fine rain like needle-points had been falling since morning; and the worthy Tartarin, hampered by his armament, hustled by the porters and the custom-house officials, ran from carriage to carriage, sonorous and lumbering as that orchestra-man one sees at fairs, whose every movement sets a-going triangles, big drums, Chinese bells, and cymbals. At all the doors the same cry of terror, the same crabbed "Full!" growled in all dialects, the same swelling-out of bodies and garments to take as much room as possible and prevent the entrance of so dangerous and resounding a companion.

The unfortunate Alpinist puffed, sweated, and replied with "*Coquin de bon sort!*" and despairing gestures to the impatient clamour of the convoy: "En route! . . All right! . . Andiamo! . . Vorwärts! . ." The horses pawed, the drivers swore. Finally, the manager of the post-route, a tall, ruddy fellow in a tunic and flat cap, interfered himself, and opening forcibly the door of a landau, the top of which was half up, he pushed in Tartarin, hoisting him like a bundle, and then stood, majestically, with outstretched hand for his *trinkgeld*.

Humiliated, furious with the people in the carriage who were forced to accept him *manu militari*, Tartarin affected not to look at them, rammed his porte-monnaie back into his pocket, wedged his ice-axe on one side of him with ill-humoured motions and an air of determined brutality, as if he were a passenger by the Dover steamer landing at Calais.

"Good-morning, monsieur," said a gentle voice he had heard already.

He raised his eyes, and sat horrified, terrified before the pretty, round and rosy face of Sonia, seated directly in front of him, beneath the hood of the landau, which also sheltered a tall young man, wrapped in shawls and rugs, of whom nothing could be seen but a forehead of livid paleness and a few thin meshes of hair, golden like the rim of his near-sighted spectacles. A third person, whom Tartarin knew but too well, accompanied them, — Manilof, the incendiary of the Winter Palace.

Sonia, Manilof, what a mouse-trap!

This was the moment when they meant to accomplish their threat, on that Brünig pass, so craggy, so surrounded with abysses. And the hero, by one of those flashes of horror which reveal the depths of danger, beheld himself stretched on the rocks of a ravine, or swinging from the topmost branches of an oak. Fly! yes, but where, how? The vehicles had started in file at the sound of a trumpet, a crowd of little ragamuffins were clambering at the doors with bunches of edelweiss. Tartarin, maddened, had a mind to begin the attack by cleaving the head of the Cossack beside him with his alpenstock; then, on reflection, he felt it was more prudent to refrain. Evidently, these people would not attempt their scheme till farther on, in regions uninhabited, and before that, there might come means of getting out. Besides, their intentions no longer seemed to him quite so malevolent. Sonia smiled gently upon him from her pretty turquoise eyes, the pale young man looked pleasantly at him, and Manilof, visibly milder, moved obligingly aside and helped him to put his bag between them. Had they discovered their mistake by reading on the register of the Rigi-Kulm the illustrious name of Tartarin? . . He wished to make sure, and, familiarly, good-humouredly, he began: —

"Enchanted with this meeting, beautiful young lady . . . only, permit me to introduce myself . . . you are ignorant with whom you have to do, *vé!* whereas, I am perfectly aware who *you* are."

"Hush!" said the little Sonia, still smiling, but pointing with her gloved finger to the seat beside the driver, where sat the tenor with his sleeve-buttons, and another young Russian, sheltering themselves under the same umbrella, and laughing and talking in Italian.

Between the police and the Nihilists, Tartarin did not hesitate.

"Do you know that man, *au mouain*?" he said in a low voice, putting his head quite close to Sonia's fresh cheeks, and seeing himself in her clear eyes, which suddenly turned hard and savage as she answered "yes," with a snap of their lids.

The hero shuddered, but as one shudders at the theatre, with that delightful creeping of the epidermis which takes you when the action becomes Corsican, and you settle yourself in your seat to see and to listen more attentively. Personally out of the affair, delivered from the mortal terrors which had haunted him all night and prevented him from swallowing his usual Swiss coffee, honey, and butter, he breathed with free lungs, thought life good, and this little Russian irresistibly pleasing in her travelling hat, her jersey close to the throat, tight to the arms, and moulding her slender figure of perfect elegance. And such a child! Child in the candour of her laugh, in the down upon her cheeks, in the pretty grace with which she spread her shawl upon the knees of her poor brother. "Are you comfortable? . ." "You are not cold?" How could any one suppose that little hand, so delicate beneath its chamois glove, had had the physical force and the moral courage to kill a man?

Nor did the others of the party seem ferocious: all had the same ingenuous laugh, rather constrained and sad on the drawn lips of the poor invalid, and noisy in Manilof, who, very young behind his bushy beard, gave way to explosions of mirth like a schoolboy in his holidays, bursts of a gayety that was really exuberant.

The third companion, whom they called Bolibine, and who talked on the box with the tenor, amused himself much and was constantly turning back to translate to his friends the Italian's adventures, his successes at the Petersburg Opera, his *bonnes fortunes*, the sleeve-buttons the ladies had subscribed to present to him on his departure, extraordinary buttons, with three notes of music engraved thereon, *la do ré* (l'adoré), which professional pun, repeated in the landau, caused such delight, the tenor himself swelling up with pride and twirling his moustache with so silly and conquering a look at Sonia, that Tartarin began to ask himself whether, after all, they were not mere tourists, and he a genuine tenor.

Meantime the carriages, going at a good pace, rolled over bridges, skirted little lakes and flowery meads, and fine vineyards running with water and deserted; for it was Sunday, and all the peasants whom they met wore their gala costumes, the women with long braids of hair hanging down their backs and silver chainlets. They began at last to mount the road in zigzags among forests of oak and beech; little by little the marvellous horizon displayed itself on the left; at each turn of the zigzag, rivers, valleys with their spires pointing upward came into view, and far away in the distance, the hoary head of the Finsteraarhorn, whitening beneath an invisible sun.

Soon the road became gloomy, the aspect savage. On one side, heavy shadows, a chaos of trees, twisted and gnarled on a steep slope, down which foamed a torrent noisily; to right, an enormous rock overhanging the road and bristling with branches that sprouted from its fissures.

They laughed no more in the landau; but they all admired, raising their heads and trying to see the summit of this tunnel of granite.

"The forests of Atlas! . . I seem to see them again . . . " said Tartarin, gravely, and then, as the remark passed unnoticed, he added: "Without the lion's roar, however."

"You have heard it, monsieur?" asked Sonia.

Heard the lion, he! . . Then, with an indulgent smile: "I am Tartarin of Tarascon, mademoiselle. . ."

And just see what such barbarians are! He might have said, "My name is Dupont;" it would have been exactly the same thing to them. They were ignorant of the name of Tartarin!

Nevertheless, he was not angry, and he answered the young lady, who wished to know if the lion's roar had frightened him: "No, mademoiselle. . . My camel trembled between my legs, but I looked to my priming as tranquilly as before a herd of cows. . . At a distance their cry is much the same, like this, *té!*"

To give Sonia an exact impression of the thing, he bellowed in his most sonorous voice a formidable "Meuh . . ." which swelled, spread, echoed and re-echoed against the rock. The horses reared; in all the carriages the travellers sprang up alarmed, looking round for the accident, the cause of such an uproar; but recognizing the Alpinist, whose head and overwhelming accoutrements could be seen in the uncovered half of the landau, they asked themselves once more: "Who is that animal?"

He, very calm, continued to give details: when to attack the beast, where to strike him, how to despatch him, and about the diamond sight he affixed to his carbines to enable him to aim correctly in the darkness. The young girl listened to him, leaning forward with a little panting of the nostrils, in deep attention.

"They say that Bombonnel still hunts; do you know him?" asked the brother.

"Yes," replied Tartarin, without enthusiasm. . . "He is not a clumsy fellow, but we have better than he."

A word to the wise! Then in a melancholy tone, "*Pas mouain*, they give us strong emotions, these hunts of the great carnivora. When we have them no longer life seems empty; we do not know how to fill it."

Here Manilof, who understood French without speaking it, and seemed to be listening to Tartarin very intently, his peasant forehead slashed with the wrinkle of a great scar, said a few words, laughing, to his friends.

"Manilof says we are all of the same brotherhood," explained Sonia to Tartarin. . . "We hunt, like you, the great wild beasts."

"*Té!* yes, *pardi* . . . wolves, white bears. . ."

"Yes, wolves, white bears, and other noxious animals. . ."

And the laughing began again, noisy, interminable, but in a sharp, ferocious key this time, laughs that showed their teeth and reminded Tartarin in what sad and singular company he was travelling.

Suddenly the carriages stopped. The road became steeper and made at this spot a long circuit to reach the top of the Brunig pass, which could also be reached on foot in twenty minutes less time through a noble forest of birches. In spite of the rain in the morning, making the earth sodden and slippery, the tourists nearly all left the carriages and started, single file, along the narrow path called a *schlittage*.

From Tartarin's landau, the last in line, all the men got out; but Sonia, thinking the path too muddy, settled herself back in the carriage, and as the Alpinist was getting out with the rest, a little delayed by his equipments, she said to him in a low voice: "Stay! keep me company. . ." in such a coaxing way! The poor man, quite overcome, began immediately to forge a romance, as delightful as it was improbable, which made his old heart beat and throb.

He was quickly undeceived when he saw the young girl leaning anxiously forward to watch Bolibine and the Italian, who were talking eagerly together at the opening of the path, Manilof and Boris having already gone forward. The so-called tenor hesitated. An instinct seemed to warn him not to risk himself alone in company with those three men. He decided at last to go on, and Sonia looked at him as he mounted the path, all the while stroking her cheek with a bouquet of purple cyclamen, those mountain violets, the leaf of which is lined with the same fresh colour as the flowers.

The landau proceeded slowly. The driver got down to walk in front with other comrades, and the convoy of more than fifteen empty vehicles, drawn nearer together by the steepness of the road, rolled silently along. Tartarin, greatly agitated, and foreboding something sinister, dared not look at his companion, so much did he fear that a word or a look might compel him to be an actor in the drama he felt impending. But Sonia was paying no attention to him; her eyes were rather fixed, and she did not cease caressing the down of her skin mechanically with the flowers.

"So," she said at length, "so you know who we are, I and my friends. . . Well, what do you think of us? What do Frenchmen think of us?"

The hero turned pale, then red. He was desirous of not offending by rash or imprudent words such vindictive beings; on the other hand, how consort with murderers? He got out of it by a metaphor: —

"*Différemment*, mademoiselle, you were telling me just now that we belonged to the same brotherhood, hunters of hydras and monsters, despots and carnivora. . . It is therefore to a companion of St. Hubert that I now make answer. . . My sentiment is that, even against wild beasts we should use loyal weapons. . . Our Jules Gerard, a famous lion-slayer, employed explosive balls. I myself have never given in to that, I do not use them. . . When I hunted the lion or the panther I planted myself before the beast, face to face, with a good double-barrelled carbine, and pan! pan! a ball in each eye."

"In each eye! . ." repeated Sonia.

"Never did I miss my aim."

He affirmed it and he believed it.

The young girl looked at him with naïve admiration, thinking aloud: —

"That must certainly be the surest way."

A sudden rending of the branches and the underbrush, and the thicket parted above them, so quickly and in so feline a way that Tartarin, his head now full of hunting adventures, might have thought himself still on the watch in the Zaccar. But Manilof sprang from the slope, noiselessly, and close to the carriage. His small, cunning eyes were shining in a face that was flayed by the briers; his beard and his long lank hair were streaming with water from the branches. Breathless, holding with his coarse, hairy hands to the doorway, he spoke in Russian to Sonia, who turned instantly to Tartarin and said in a curt voice: —

"Your rope. . . quick. . ."

"My. . . my rope? . ." stammered the hero.

"Quick, quick. . . you shall have it again in half an hour."

Offering no other explanation, she helped him with her little gloved hands to divest himself of his famous rope made in Avignon. Manilof took the coil, grunting with joy; in two bounds he sprang, with the elasticity of a wild-cat, into the thicket and disappeared.

"What has happened? What are they going to do? . . He looked ferocious. . . " murmured Tartarin, not daring to utter his whole thought.

Ferocious, Manilof! Ah! how plain it was he did not know him. No human being was ever better, gentler, more compassionate; and to show Tartarin a trait of that exceptionally kind nature, Sonia, with her clear, blue glance, told him how her friend, having executed a dangerous mandate of the Revolutionary Committee and jumped into the sledge which awaited him for escape, had threatened the driver to get out, cost what it might, if he persisted in whipping the horse whose fleetness alone could save him.

Tartarin thought the act worthy of antiquity. Then, having reflected on all the human lives sacrificed by that same Manilof, as conscienceless as an earthquake or a volcano in eruption, who yet would not let others hurt an animal in his presence, he questioned the young girl with an ingenuous air: —

"Were there many killed by the explosion at the Winter Palace?"

"Too many," replied Sonia, sadly; "and the only one that ought to have died escaped."

She remained silent, as if displeased, looking so pretty, her head lowered, with her long auburn eyelashes sweeping her pale rose cheeks. Tartarin, angry with himself for having pained her, was caught once more by that charm of youth and freshness which the strange little creature shed around her.

"So, monsieur, the war that we are making seems to you unjust, inhuman?" She said it quite close to him in a caress, as it were, of her breath and her eye; the hero felt himself weakening. . .

"You do not see that all means are good and legitimate to deliver a people who groan and suffocate? . ."

"No doubt, no doubt. . ."

The young girl, growing more insistent as Tartarin weakened, went on: —

"You spoke just now of a void to be filled; does it not seem to you more noble, more interesting to risk your life for a great cause than to risk it in slaying lions or scaling glaciers?"

"The fact is," said Tartarin, intoxicated, losing his head and mad with an irresistible desire to take and kiss that ardent, persuasive little hand which she laid upon his arm, as she had done once before, up there, on the Rigi when he put on her shoe. Finally, unable to resist, and seizing the little gloved hand between both his own, —

"Listen, Sonia," he said, in a good hearty voice, paternal and familiar. . . "Listen, Sonia. . ."

A sudden stop of the landau interrupted him. They had reached the summit of the Brünig; travellers and drivers were getting into their carriages to catch up lost time and reach, at a gallop, the next village where the convoy was to breakfast and relay. The three Russians took their places, but that of the Italian tenor remained unoccupied.

"That gentleman got into one of the first carriages," said Boris to the driver, who asked about him; then, addressing Tartarin, whose uneasiness was visible: —

"We must ask him for your rope; he chose to keep it with him."

Thereupon, fresh laughter in the landau, and the resumption for poor Tartarin of horrid perplexity, not knowing what to think or believe in presence of the good-humour and ingenuous countenances of the suspected assassins. Sonia, while wrapping up her invalid in cloaks and plaids, for the air on the summit was all the keener from the rapidity with which the carriages were now driven, related in Russian her conversation with Tartarin, uttering his pan! pan! with a pretty intonation which her companions repeated after her, two of them admiring the hero, while Manilof shook his head incredulously.

The relay!

This was on the market-place of a large village, at an old tavern with a worm-eaten wooden balcony, and a sign hanging to a rusty iron bracket. The file of vehicles stopped, and while the horses were being unharnessed the hungry tourists jumped hurriedly down and rushed into a room on the lower floor, painted green and smelling of mildew, where the table was laid for twenty guests. Sixty had arrived, and for five minutes nothing could be heard but a frightful tumult, cries, and a vehement altercation between the Rices and the Prunes around the compote-dishes, to the great alarm of the tavern-keeper, who lost his head (as if daily, at the same hour, the same post-carriages did not pass) and bustled about his servants, also seized with chronic bewilderment — excellent method of serving only half the dishes called for by the *carte*, and of giving change in a way that made the white sous of Switzerland count for fifty centimes.

"Suppose we dine in the carriage," said Sonia, annoyed by such confusion; and as no one had time to pay attention to them the young men themselves did the waiting. Manilof returned with a cold leg of mutton, Bolibine with a long loaf of bread and sausages; but the best forager was Tartarin. Certainly the opportunity to get away from his companions in the bustle of relaying was a fine one; he might at least have assured himself that the Italian had reappeared; but he never once thought of it, being solely preoccupied with Sonia's breakfast, and in showing Manilof and the others how a Tarasconese can manage matters.

When he stepped down the portico of the hotel, gravely, with fixed eyes, bearing in his robust hands a large tray laden with plates, napkins, assorted food, and Swiss champagne in its giltnecked bottles, Sonia clapped her hands, and congratulated him.

"How did you manage it?" she said.

"I don't know . . . somehow, *té!* . . We are all like that in Tarascon."

Oh! those happy minutes! That pleasant breakfast opposite to Sonia, almost on his knees, the village market-place, like the scene of an operetta, with clumps of green trees, beneath which sparkled the gold ornaments and the muslin sleeves of the Swiss girls, walking about, two and two, like dolls!

How good the bread tasted! what savoury sausages! The heavens themselves took part in the scene, and were soft, veiled, clement; it rained, of course, but so gently, the drops so rare, though just enough to temper the Swiss champagne, always dangerous to Southern heads.

Under the veranda of the hotel, a Tyrolian quartette, two giants and two female dwarfs in resplendent and heavy rags, looking as if they had escaped from the failure of a theatre at a fair, were mingling their throat notes: "aou . . . aou . . ." with the clinking of plates and glasses. They were ugly, stupid, motionless, straining the cords of their skinny necks. Tartarin thought them delightful, and gave them a handful of sous, to the great amazement of the villagers who surrounded the unhorsed landau.

"Vife la Vranze!" quavered a voice in the crowd, from which issued a tall old man, clothed in a singular blue coat with silver buttons, the skirts of which swept the ground; on his head was a gigantic shako, in form like a bucket of sauerkraut, and so weighted by its enormous plume that the old man was forced to balance himself with his arms as he walked, like an acrobat.

"Old soldier. . . Charles X. . ."

Tartarin, fresh from Bompard's revelations, began to laugh, and said in a low voice with a wink of his eye: —

"Up to *that*, old fellow. . ." But even so, he gave him a white sou and poured him out a bumper, which the old man accepted, laughing, and winking himself, though without knowing why. Then, dislodging from a corner of his mouth an enormous china pipe, he raised his glass and drank "to the company," which confirmed Tartarin in his opinion that here was a colleague of Bompard.

No matter! one toast deserved another. So, standing up in the carriage, his glass held high, his voice strong, Tartarin brought tears to his eyes by drinking, first: To France, my country! . . next to hospitable Switzerland, which he was happy to honour publicly and thank for the generous welcome she affords to the vanquished, to the exiled of all lands. Then, lowering his voice and inclining his glass to the companions of his journey, he wished them a quick return to their country, restoration to their family, safe friends, honourable careers, and an end to all dissensions; for, he said, it is impossible to spend one's life in eating each other up.

During the utterance of this toast Sonia's brother smiled, cold and sarcastic behind his blue spectacles; Manilof, his neck pushed forth, his swollen eyebrows emphasizing his wrinkle, seemed to be asking himself if that "big barrel" would soon be done with his gabble, while Bolibine, perched on the box, was twisting his comical yellow face, wrinkled as a Barbary ape, till he looked like one of those villanous little monkeys squatting on the shoulders of the Alpinist.

The young girl alone listened to him very seriously, striving to comprehend such a singular type of man. Did he think all that he said? Had he done all that he related? Was he a madman, a comedian, or simply a gabbler, as Manilof in his quality of man of action insisted, giving to the word a most contemptuous signification.

The answer was given at once. His toast ended, Tartarin had just sat down when a sudden shot, a second, then a third, fired close to the tavern, brought him again to his feet, ears straining and nostrils scenting powder.

"Who fired? . . where is it? . . what is happening? . ."

In his inventive noddle a whole drama was already defiling; attack on the convoy by armed bands; opportunity given him to defend the honour and life of that charming young lady. But no! the discharges only came from the Stand, where the youths of the village practise at a mark every Sunday. As the horses were not yet harnessed, Tartarin, as if carelessly, proposed to go and look at them. He had his idea, and Sonia had hers in accepting the proposal. Guided by the old soldier of Charles X. wobbling under his shako, they crossed the market-place, opening the ranks of the crowd, who followed them with curiosity.

Beneath its thatched roof and its square uprights of pine wood the Stand resembled one of our own pistol-galleries at a fair, with this difference, that the amateurs brought their own weapons, breech-loading muskets of the oldest pattern, which they managed, however, with some adroitness. Tartarin, his arms crossed, observed the shots, criticised them aloud, gave his advice, but did not fire himself. The Russians watched him, making signs to each other.

"Pan! . . pan! . ." sneered Bolibine, making the gesture of taking aim and mimicking Tartarin's accent. Tartarin turned round very red, and swelling with anger.

"*Parfaitemain*, young man. . . Pan! . . pan! . . and as often as you like."

The time to load an old double-barrelled carbine which must have served several generations of chamois hunters, and — pan! . . pan! . . 'T is done. Both balls are in the bull's-eye. Hurrahs of admiration burst forth on all sides. Sonia triumphed. Bolibine laughed no more.

"But that is nothing, that!" said Tartarin; "you shall see. . ."

The Stand did not suffice him; he looked about for another target, and the crowd recoiled alarmed from this strange Alpinist, thick-set, savage-looking and carbine in hand, when they heard him propose to the old guard of Charles X. to break his pipe between his teeth at fifty paces. The old fellow howled in terror and plunged into the crowd, his trembling plume remaining visible above their serried heads. None the less, Tartarin felt that he must put it somewhere, that ball. "*Té! pardi!* as we did at Tarascon! . ." And the former cap-hunter pitched his headgear high into the air with all the strength of his double muscles, shot it on the fly, and pierced it. "Bravo!" cried Sonia, sticking into the small hole made by the ball the bouquet of cyclamen with which she had stroked her cheek.

With that charming trophy in his cap Tartarin returned to the landau. The trumpet sounded, the convoy started, the horses went rapidly down to Brienz along that marvellous corniche road, blasted in the side of the rock, separated from an abyss of over a thousand feet by single stones a couple of yards apart. But Tartarin was no longer conscious of danger; no longer did he look at the scenery — that Meyringen valley, seen through a light veil of mist, with its river in straight lines, the lake, the villages massing themselves in the distance, and that whole horizon of mountains, of glaciers, blending at times with the clouds, displaced by the turns of the road, lost apparently, and then returning, like the shifting scenes of a stage.

Softened by tender thoughts, the hero admired the sweet child before him, reflecting that glory is only a semi-happiness, that 't is sad to grow old all alone in your greatness, like Moses, and that this fragile flower of the North transplanted into the little garden at Tarascon would brighten its monotony, and be sweeter to see and breathe than that everlasting baobab, *arbos gigantea*, diminutively confined in the mignonette pot. With her childlike eyes, and her broad brow, thoughtful and self-willed, Sonia looked at him, and she, too, dreamed — but who knows what the young girls dream of?

VII.

The nights at Tarascon. Where is he? Anxiety. The grasshoppers on the promenade call for Tartarin. Martyrdom of a great Tarasconese saint. The Club of the Alpines. What was happening at the pharmacy. "Help! help! Bézuquet!"

"A LETTER, Monsieur Bézuquet! . . Comes from Switzerland, *vé!* . . Switzerland!" cried the postman joyously, from the other end of the little square, waving something in the air, and hurrying along in the coming darkness.

The apothecary, who took the air, as they say, of an evening before his door in his shirt-sleeves, gave a jump, seized the letter with feverish hands and carried it into his lair among the varied odours of elixirs and dried herbs, but did not open it till the postman had departed, refreshed by a glass of that delicious *sirop de cadavre* in recompense for what he brought.

Fifteen days had Bézuquet expected it, this letter from Switzerland, fifteen days of agonized watching! And here it was. Merely from looking at the cramped and resolute little writing on the envelope, the postmark "Interlaken" and the broad purple stamp of the "Hôtel Jungfrau, kept by Meyer," the tears filled his eyes, and the heavy moustache of the Barbary corsair through which whispered softly the idle whistle of a kindly soul, quivered.

"*Confidential. Destroy when read.*"

Those words, written large at the head of the page, in the telegraphic style of the pharmacopœia ("external use; shake before using") troubled him to the point of making him read aloud, as one does in a bad dream:

"*Fearful things are happening to me. . .*"

In the salon beside the pharmacy where she was taking her little nap after supper, Mme. Bézuquet, *mère*, might hear him, or the pupil whose pestle was pounding its regular blows in the big marble mortar of the laboratory. Bézuquet continued his reading in a low voice, beginning it over again two or three times, very pale, his hair literally standing on end. Then, with a rapid look about him, *cra cra*. . . and the letter in a thousand scraps went into the waste-paper basket; but there it might be found, and pieced together, and as he was stooping to gather up the fragments a quavering voice called to him:

"*Vé!* Ferdinand, are you there?"

"Yes, mamma," replied the unlucky corsair, curdling with fear, the whole of his long body on its hands and knees beneath the desk.

"What are you doing, my treasure?"

"I am. . . h'm, I am making Mlle. Tournatoire's eye-salve."

Mamma went to sleep again, the pupil's pestle, suspended for a moment, began once more its slow clock movement, while Bézuquet walked up and down before his door in the deserted little square, turning pink or green according as he passed before one or other of his bottles. From time to time he threw up his arms, uttering disjointed words: "Unhappy man! .. lost. . . fatal love. . . how can we extricate him?" and, in spite of his trouble of mind, accompanying with a lively whistle the bugle "taps" of a dragoon regiment echoing among the plane-trees of the Tour de Ville.

"*Hé!* good night, Bézuquet," said a shadow hurrying along in the ash-coloured twilight.

"Where are you going, Pégoulade?"

"To the Club, *pardi!* .. Night session. . . they are going to discuss Tartarin and the presidency. . . You ought to come."

"*Té!* yes, I'll come . . ." said the apothecary vehemently, a providential idea darting through his mind. He went in, put on his frock-coat, felt in its pocket to assure himself that his latchkey was there, and also the American tomahawk, without which no Tarasconese whatsoever would risk himself in the streets after "taps." Then he called: "Pascalon! .. Pascalon! .." but not too loudly, for fear of waking the old lady.

Almost a child, though bald, wearing all his hair in his curly blond beard, Pascalon the pupil had the ardent soul of a partizan, a dome-like forehead, the eyes of crazy goat, and on his chubby cheeks the delicate tints of a shiny crusty Beaucaire roll. On all the grand Alpine excursions it was to him that the Club entrusted its banner, and his childish soul had vowed to the P. C. A. a fanatical worship, the burning, silent adoration of a taper consuming itself before an altar in the Easter season.

"Pascalon," said the apothecary in a low voice, and so close to him that the bristle of his moustache pricked his ear. "I have news of Tartarin. . . It is heart-breaking. . ."

Seeing him turn pale, he added:

"Courage, child! all can be repaired. . . *Différemment* I confide to you the pharmacy. . . If any one asks you for arsenic, don't give it; opium, don't give that either, nor rhubarb. . . don't give anything. If I am not in by ten o'clock, lock the door and go to bed."

With intrepid step, he plunged into the darkness, not once looking back, which allowed Pascalon to spring at the waste-paper basket, turn it over and over with feverish eager hands and finally tip out its contents on the leather of the desk to see if no scrap remained of the mysterious letter brought by the postman.

To those who know Tarasconese excitability, it is easy to imagine the frantic condition of the little town after Tartarin's abrupt disappearance. *Et autrement, pas moins, différemment*, they lost their heads, all the more because it was the middle of August and their brains boiled in the sun till their skulls were fit to crack. From morning till night they talked of nothing else; that one name "Tartarin" alone was heard on the pinched lips of the elderly ladies in hoods, in the rosy mouths of grisettes, their hair tied up with velvet ribbons:

"Tartarin, Tartarin. . ." Even among the plane-trees on the Promenade, heavy with white dust, distracted grasshoppers, vibrating in the sunlight, seemed to strangle with those two sonorous syllables: "Tar . . tar . . tar . . tar . . tar . . ."

As no one knew anything, naturally every one was well-informed and gave explanations of the departure of the president. Extravagant versions appeared. According to some, he had entered La Trappe; he had eloped with the Dugazon; others declared he had gone to the Isles to found a colony to be called Port-Tarascon, or else to roam Central Africa in search of Livingstone.

"Ah! *vaï!* Livingstone! . . Why he has been dead these two years."

But Tarasconese imagination defies all hints of time and space. And the curious thing is that these ideas of La Trappe, colonization, distant travel, were Tartarin's own ideas, dreams of that sleeper awake, communicated in past days to his intimate friends, who now, not knowing what to think, and vexed in their hearts at not being duly informed, affected toward the public the greatest reserve and behaved to one another with a sly air of private understanding. Excourbaniès suspected Bravida of being in the secret; Bravida, on his side, thought: "Bézuquet knows the truth; he looks about him like a dog with a bone."

True it was that the apothecary suffered a thousand deaths from this hair-shirt of a secret, which cut him, skinned him, turned him pale and red in the same minute and caused him to squint continually. Remember that he belonged to Tarascon, unfortunate man, and say if, in all martyrology, you can find so terrible a torture as this — the torture of Saint Bézuquet, who knew a secret and could not tell it.

This is why, on that particular evening, in spite of the terrifying news he had just received, his step had something, I hardly know what, freer, more buoyant, as he went to the session of the Club. *Enfin!* . . He was now to speak, to unbosom himself, to tell that which weighed so heavily upon him; and in his haste to unload his breast he cast a few half words as he went along to the loiterers on the Promenade. The day had been so hot, that in spite of the unusual hour (*a quarter to eight* on the clock of the town hall!) and the terrifying darkness, quite a crowd of reckless persons, bourgeois families getting the good of the air while that of their houses evaporated, bands of five or six sewing-women, rambling along in an undulating line of chatter and laughter, were abroad. In every group they were talking of Tartarin.

"*Et autrement*, Monsieur Bézuquet, still no letter?" they asked of the apothecary, stopping him on his way.

"Yes, yes, my friends, yes, there is . . . Read the *Forum* to-morrow morning. . ."

He hastened his steps, but they followed him, fastened on him, and along the Promenade rose a murmuring sound, the bleating of a flock, which gathered beneath the windows of the Club, left wide open in great squares of light.

The sessions were held in the *bouillotte* room, where the long table covered with green cloth served as a desk. At the centre, the presidential arm-chair, with P. C. A. embroidered on the back of it; at one end, humbly, the armless chair of the secretary. Behind, the banner of the Club, draped above a long glazed map in relief, on which the Alpines stood up with their respective names and altitudes. Alpenstocks of honour, inlaid with ivory, stacked like billiard cues, ornamented the corners, and a glass-case displayed curiosities, crystals, silex, petrifactions, two porcupines and a salamander, collected on the mountains.

In Tartarin's absence, Costecalde, rejuvenated and radiant, occupied the presidential arm-chair; the armless chair was for Excourbaniès, who fulfilled the functions of secretary; but that devil of a man, frizzled, hairy, bearded, was incessantly in need of noise, motion, activity which hindered his sedentary employments. At the smallest pretext, he threw out his arms and legs, uttered fearful howls and "Ha! ha! has!" of ferocious, exuberant joy which always ended with a war-cry in the Tarasconese patois: "*Fen dé brut* . . . let us make a noise" . . . He was called "the gong" on account of his metallic voice, which cracked the ears of his friends with its ceaseless explosions.

Here and there, on a horsehair divan that ran round the room were the members of the committee.

In the first row, sat the former captain of equipment, Bravida, whom all Tarascon called the

Commander; a very small man, clean as a new penny, who redeemed his childish figure by making himself as moustached and savage a head as Vercingétorix.

Next came the long, hollow, sickly face of Pégoulade, the collector, last survivor of the wreck of the "Medusa." Within the memory of man, Tarascon has never been without a last survivor of the wreck of the "Medusa." At one time they even numbered three, who treated one another mutually as impostors, and never consented to meet in the same room. Of these three the only true one was Pégoulade. Setting sail with his parents on the "Medusa," he met with the fatal disaster when six months old,—which did not prevent him from relating the event, *de visu*, in its smallest details, famine, boats, raft, and how he had taken the captain, who was selfishly saving himself, by the throat: "To your duty, wretch! . ." At six months old, *outre!* . . . Wearisome, to tell the truth, with that eternal tale which everybody was sick of for the last fifty years; but he took it as a pretext to assume a melancholy air, detached from life: "After what I have seen!" he would say — very unjustly, because it was to that he owed his post as collector and kept it under all administrations.

Near him sat the brothers Rognonas, twins and sexagenarians, who never parted, but always quarrelled and said the most monstrous things to each other; their two old heads, defaced, corroded, irregular, and ever looking in opposite directions out of antipathy, were so alike that they might have figured in a collection of coins with IANVS BIFRONS on the exergue.

Here and there, were Judge Bédaride, Barjavel the lawyer, the notary Cambalalette, and the terrible Doctor Tournatoire, of whom Bravida remarked that he could draw blood from a radish.

In consequence of the great heat, increased by the gas, these gentlemen held the session in their shirt-sleeves, which detracted much from the solemnity of the occasion. It is true that the meeting was a very small one; and the infamous Costecalde was anxious to profit by that circumstance to fix the earliest possible date for the elections without awaiting Tartarin's return. Confident in this manœuvre, he was enjoying his triumph in advance, and when, after the reading of the minutes by Excourbaniès, he rose to insinuate his scheme, an infernal smile curled up the corners of his thin lips.

"Distrust the man who smiles before he speaks," murmured the Commander.

Costecalde, not flinching, and winking with one eye at the faithful Tournatoire, began in a spiteful voice: —

"Gentlemen, the extraordinary conduct of our president, the uncertainty in which he leaves us. . ."

"False! . . The president has written. . ."

Bézuquet, quivering, planted himself squarely before the table; but conscious that his attitude was anti-parliamentary, he changed his tone, and, raising one hand according to usage, he asked for the floor, to make an urgent communication.

"Speak! Speak!"

Costecalde, very yellow, his throat tightened, gave him the floor by a motion of his head. Then, and not till then, Bézuquet spoke:

"Tartarin is at the foot of the Jungfrau . . . he is about to make the ascent . . . he desires to take with him our banner. . ."

Silence; broken by the heavy breathing of chests; then a loud hurrah, bravos, stamping of the feet, above which rose the gong of Excourbaniès uttering his war-cry "Ha! ha! ha! *fen dé brut!*" to which the anxious crowd without responded.

Costecalde, getting more and more yellow, tinkled the presidential bell desperately. Bézuquet at last was allowed to continue, mopping his forehead and puffing as if he had just mounted five pairs of stairs.

Différemment, the banner that their president requested in order to plant it on virgin heights, should it be wrapped up, packed up, and sent by express like an ordinary trunk? . .

"Never! . . Ah! ah! ah! . ." roared Excourbaniès.

Would it not be better to appoint a delegation — draw lots for three members of the committee? . .

He was not allowed to finish. The time to say *zou!* and Bézuquet's proposition was voted by acclamation, and the names of three delegates drawn in the following order: 1, Bravida; 2, Pégoulade; 3, the apothecary.

No. 2, protested. The long journey frightened him, so feeble and ill as he was, *péchère!* ever since that terrible event of the "Medusa."

"I'll go for you, Pégoulade," roared Excourbaniès, telegraphing with all his limbs. As for Bézuquet, he could not leave the pharmacy, the safety of the town depended on him. One imprudence of the pupil, and all Tarascon might be poisoned, decimated:

"*Outre!*" cried the whole committee, agreeing as one man.

Certainly the apothecary could not go himself, but he could send Pascalon; Pascalon could take charge of the banner. That was his business. Thereupon, fresh exclamations, further explosions of the gong, and on the Promenade such a popular tempest that Excourbaniès was forced to show himself and address the crowd above its roarings, which his matchless voice soon mastered.

"My friends, Tartarin is found. He is about to cover himself with glory."

Without adding more than "Vive Tartarin!" and his war-cry, given with all the force of his lungs, he stood for a moment enjoying the tremendous clamour of the crowd below, rolling and hustling confusedly in clouds of dust, while from the branches of the trees the grasshoppers added their queer little rattle as if it were broad day.

Hearing all this, Costecalde, who had gone to a window with the rest, returned, staggering, to his arm-chair.

"*Vé!* Costecalde," said some one. "What 's the matter with him? . . Look how yellow he is!"

They sprang to him; already the terrible Tournatoire had whipped out his lancet: but the gunsmith, writhing in distress, made a horrible grimace, and said ingenuously:

"Nothing . . . nothing . . . let me alone . . . I know what it is . . . it is envy."

Poor Costecalde, he seemed to suffer much.

While these things were happening, at the other end of the Tour de Ville, in the pharmacy, Bézuquet's pupil, seated before his master's desk, was patiently patching and gumming together the fragments of Tartarin's letter overlooked by the apothecary at the bottom of the basket. But numerous bits were lacking in the reconstruction, for here is the singular and sinister enigma spread out before him, not unlike a map of Central Africa, with voids and spaces of *terra incognita*, which the artless standard-bearer explored in a state of terrified imagination:

mad with love
reed-wick lam preserves of Chicago.
cannot tear myself Nihilist
to death condition abom in exchange
for her You know me, Ferdi
know my liberal ideas,
but from there to tzaricide
rrible consequences
Siberia hung adore her
Ah! press thy loyal hand
Tar Tar

VIII.

Memorable dialogue between the Jungfrau and Tartarin. A nihilist salon. The duel with hunting-knives. Frightful nightmare. "Is it I you are seeking, messieurs?" Strange reception given by the hotel-keeper Meyer to the Tarasconese delegation.

LIKE all the other choice hotels at Interlaken, the Hôtel Jungfrau, kept by Meyer, is situated on the Höheweg, a wide promenade between double rows of chestnut-trees that vaguely reminded Tartarin of the beloved Tour de Ville of his native town, minus the sun, the grasshoppers, and the dust; for during his week's sojourn at Interlaken the rain had never ceased to fall.

He occupied a very fine chamber with a balcony on the first floor, and trimmed his beard in the morning before a little hand-glass hanging to the window, an old habit of his when travelling. The first object that daily struck his eyes beyond the fields of grass and corn, the nursery gardens, and an amphitheatre of solemn verdure in rising stages, was the Jungfrau, lifting from the clouds her summit, like a horn, white and pure with unbroken snow, to which was daily clinging a furtive ray of the still invisible rising sun. Then between the white and rosy Alp and the Alpinist a little dialogue took place regularly, which was not without its grandeur.

"Tartarin, are you coming?" asked the Jungfrau sternly.

"Here, here. . ." replied the hero, his thumb under his nose and finishing his beard as fast as possible. Then he would hastily take down his ascensionist outfit and, swearing at himself, put it on.

"*Coquin de sort!* there's no name for it. . ."

But a soft voice rose, demure and clear among the myrtles in the border beneath his window.

"Good-morning," said Sonia, as he appeared upon the balcony, "the landau is ready. . . Come, make haste, lazy man. . ."

"I'm coming, I'm coming. . ."

In a trice he had changed his thick flannel shirt for linen of the finest quality, his mountain knickerbockers for a suit of serpent-green that turned the heads of all the women in Tarascon at the Sunday concerts.

The horses of the landau were pawing before the door; Sonia was already installed beside Boris, paler, more emaciated day by day in spite of the beneficent climate of Interlaken. But, regularly, at the moment of starting, Tartarin was fated to see two forms arise from a bench on the promenade and approach him with the heavy rolling step of mountain bears; these were Rodolphe Kaufmann and Christian Inebnit, two famous Grindelwald guides, engaged by Tartarin for the ascension of the Jungfrau, who came every morning to ascertain if their monsieur were ready to start.

The apparition of these two men, in their iron-clamped shoes and fustian jackets worn threadbare on the back and shoulder by knapsacks and ropes, their naïve and serious faces, and the four words of French which they managed to splutter as they twisted their broad-brimmed hats, were a positive torture to Tartarin. In vain he said to them: "Don't trouble yourselves to come; I'll send for you. . ."

Every day he found them in the same place and got rid of them by a large coin proportioned to the enormity of his remorse. Enchanted with this method of "doing the Jungfrau," the mountaineers pocketed their *trinkgeld* gravely, and took, with resigned step, the path to their native village, leaving Tartarin confused and despairing at his own weakness. Then the broad open air, the flowering plains reflected in the limpid pupils of Sonia's eyes, the touch of her little foot against his boot in the carriage. . . The devil take that Jungfrau! The hero thought only of his love, or rather of the mission he had given himself to bring back into the right path that poor little Sonia, so unconsciously criminal, cast by sisterly devotion outside of the law, and outside of human nature.

This was the motive that kept him at Interlaken, in the same hotel as the Wassiliefs. At his age, with his air of a good papa, he certainly could not dream of making that poor child love him, but he saw her so sweet, so brave, so generous to all the unfortunates of her party, so devoted to that brother whom the mines of Siberia had sent back to her, his body eaten with ulcers, poisoned with verdigris, and he himself condemned to death by phthisis more surely than by any court. There was enough in all that to touch a man!

Tartarin proposed to take them to Tarascon and settle them in a villa full of sun at the gates of the town, that good little town where it never rains and where life is spent in fêtes and song. And with that he grew excited, rattled a tambourine air on the crown of his hat, and trolled out the gay native chorus of the farandole dance:

Lagadigadeoù
La Tarasque, la Tarasque,
Lagadigadeoù
La Tarasque de Casteoù.

But while a satirical smile pinched still closer the lips of the sick man, Sonia shook her head. Neither fêtes nor sun for her so long as the Russians groaned beneath the yoke of the tyrant. As soon as her brother was well — her despairing eyes said another thing — nothing could prevent her from returning up there to suffer and die in the sacred cause.

"But, *coquin de bon sort!*" cried Tartarin, "if you blow up one tyrant there 'll come another. . . You will have it all to do over again. . . And the years will go by, *vé!* the days for happiness and love. ." His way of saying love — *amour* — à la Tarasconese, with three r's in it and his eyes starting out of his head, amused the young girl: then, serious once more, she declared she would never love any man but the one who delivered her country. Yes, that man, were he as ugly as Bolibine, more rustic and common than Manilof, she was ready to give herself wholly to him, to live at his side, a free gift, as long as her youth lasted and the man wished for her.

"Free gift!" the term used by Nihilists to express those illegal unions they contract among themselves by reciprocal consent. And of such primitive marriage Sonia spoke tranquilly with her virgin air before the Tarasconese, who, worthy bourgeois, peaceful elector, was now ready to spend his days beside that adorable girl in the said state of "free gift" if she had not added those murderous and abominable conditions.

While they were conversing of these extremely delicate matters, the fields, the lakes, the forests, the mountains lay spread before them, and always at each new turn, through the cool mist of that perpetual shower which accompanied our hero on all his excursions, the Jungfrau raised her white crest, as if to poison by remorse those delicious hours. They returned to breakfast at a vast *table d'hôte* where the Rices and Prunes continued their silent hostilities, to which Tartarin was wholly indifferent, seated by Sonia, watching that Boris had no open window at his back, assiduous, paternal, exhibiting all his seductions as man of the world and his domestic qualities as an excellent cabbage-rabbit.

After this, he took tea with the Russians in their little salon opening on a tiny garden at the end of the terrace. Another exquisite hour for Tartarin of intimate chat in a low voice while Boris slept on a sofa. The hot water bubbled in the samovar; a perfume of moist flowers slipped through the half-opened door with the blue reflection of the solanums that were clustering about it. A little more sun, more warmth, and here was his dream realized, his pretty Russian installed beside him, taking care of the garden of the baobab.

Suddenly Sonia gave a jump.

"Two o'clock! . . And the letters?"

"I'm going for them," said the good Tartarin, and, merely from the tones of his voice and the resolute, theatrical gesture with which he buttoned his coat and seized his cane, any one would have guessed the gravity of the action, apparently so simple, of going to the post-office to fetch the Wassilief letters.

Closely watched by the local authorities and the Russian police, all Nihilists, but especially their leaders, are compelled to take certain precautions, such as having their letters and papers addressed *poste restante* to simple initials.

Since their installation at Interlaken, Boris being scarcely able to drag himself about, Tartarin, to spare Sonia the annoyance of waiting in line before the post-office wicket exposed to inquisitive eyes, had taken upon himself the risks and perils of this daily nuisance. The post-office is not more than ten minutes' walk from the hotel, in a wide and noisy street at the end of a promenade lined with cafés, breweries, shops for the tourists displaying alpenstocks, gaiters, straps, opera-glasses, smoked glasses, flasks, travelling-bags, all of which articles seemed placed there expressly to shame the renegade Alpinist. Tourists were defiling in caravans, with horses, guides, mules, veils green and blue, and a tintinnabulation of canteens as the animals ambled, the ice-picks marking each step on the cobble-stones. But this festive scene, hourly renewed, left Tartarin indifferent. He never even felt the fresh north wind with a touch of snow coming in gusts from the mountains, so intent was he on baffling the spies whom he supposed to be upon his traces.

The foremost soldier of a vanguard, the sharpshooter skirting the walls of an enemy's town, never advanced with more mistrust than the Tarasconese hero while crossing the short distance between the hotel and the post-office. At the slightest heel-tap sounding behind his own, he stopped, looked attentively at the photographs in the windows, or fingered an English or German book lying on a stall, to oblige the police spy to pass him. Or else he turned suddenly round, to stare with ferocious eyes at a stout servant-girl going to market, or some harmless tourist, a *table d'hôte* Prune, who, taking him for a madman, turned off, alarmed, from the sidewalk to avoid him.

When he reached the office, where the wickets open, rather oddly, into the street itself, Tartarin passed and repassed, to observe the surrounding physiognomies before he himself approached: then, suddenly darting forward, he inserted his whole head and shoulders into the opening, muttered a few indistinct syllables (which they always made him repeat, to his great despair), and, possessor at last of the mysterious trust, he returned to the hotel by a great détour on the kitchen side, his hand in his pocket clutching the package of letters and papers, prepared to tear up and swallow everything at the first alarm.

Manilof and Bolibine were usually awaiting his return with the Wassiliefs. They did not lodge in the hotel, out of prudence and economy. Bolibine had found work in a printing-office, and Manilof, a very clever cabinetmaker, was employed by a builder. Tartarin did not like them: one annoyed him by his grimaces and his jeering airs; the other kept looking at him savagely. Besides, they took too much space in Sonia's heart.

"He is a hero!" she said of Bolibine; and she told how for three years he had printed all alone, in the very heart of St. Petersburg, a revolutionary paper. Three years without ever leaving his upper room, or showing himself at a window, sleeping at night in a great cupboard built in the wall, where the woman who lodged him locked him up till morning with his clandestine press.

And then, that life of Manilof, spent for six months in the subterranean passages beneath the

Winter Palace, watching his opportunity, sleeping at night on his provision of dynamite, which resulted in giving him frightful headaches, and nervous troubles; all this, aggravated by perpetual anxiety, sudden irruptions of the police, vaguely informed that something was plotting, and coming, suddenly and unexpectedly, to surprise the workmen employed at the Palace. On one of the rare occasions when Manilof came out of the mine, he met on the Place de l'Amirauté a delegate of the Revolutionary Committee, who asked him in a low voice, as he walked along:

"Is it finished?"

"No, not yet . . ." said the other, scarcely moving his lips. At last, on an evening in February, to the same question in the same words he answered, with the greatest calmness:

"It is finished. . ."

And almost immediately a horrible uproar confirmed his words, all the lights of the palace went out suddenly, the place was plunged into complete obscurity, rent by cries of agony and terror, the blowing of bugles, the galloping of soldiers, and firemen tearing along with their trucks.

Here Sonia interrupted her tale:

"Is it not horrible, so many human lives sacrificed, such efforts, such courage, such wasted intelligence? . . No, no, it is a bad means, these butcheries in the mass. . . He who should be killed always escapes. . . The true way, the most humane, would be to seek the czar himself as you seek the lion, fully determined, fully armed, post yourself at a window or the door of a carriage . . . and, when he passes. . . . ."

"*Bé! yes, certainemain* . . ." responded Tartarin embarrassed, and pretending not to seize her meaning; then, suddenly, he would launch into a philosophical, humanitarian discussion with one of the numerous assistants. For Bolibine and Manilof were not the only visitors to the Wassiliefs Every day new faces appeared of young people, men or women, with the cut of poor students; elated teachers, blond and rosy, with the self-willed forehead and the childlike ferocity of Sonia; outlawed exiles, some of them already condemned to death, which lessened in no way their youthful expansiveness.

They laughed, they talked openly, and as most of them spoke French, Tartarin was soon at his ease. They called him "uncle," conscious of something childlike and artless about him that they liked. Perhaps he was over-ready with his hunting tales; turning up his sleeve to his biceps in order to show the scar of a blow from a panther's claws, or making his hearers feel beneath his beard the holes left there by the fangs of a lion; perhaps also he became too rapidly familiar with these persons, catching them round the waist, leaning on their shoulders, calling them by their Christian names after five minutes' intercourse:

"Listen, Dmitri. . ." "You know me, Fédor Ivanovich. . ." They knew him only since yesterday, in any case; but they liked him all the same for his jovial frankness, his amiable, trustful air, and his readiness to please. They read their letters before him, planned their plots, and told their passwords to foil the police: a whole atmosphere of conspiracy which amused the imagination of the Tarasconese hero immensely: so that, however opposed by nature to acts of violence, he could not help, at times, discussing their homicidal plans, approving, criticising, and giving advice dictated by the experience of a great leader who has trod the path of war, trained to the handling of all weapons, and to hand-to-hand conflicts with wild beasts.

One day, when they told in his presence of the murder of a policeman, stabbed by a Nihilist at the theatre, Tartarin showed them how badly the blow had been struck, and gave them a lesson in knifing.

"Like this, *vé!* from the top down. Then there 's no risk of wounding yourself. . ."

And, excited by his own imitation:

"Let 's suppose, *té!* that I hold your despot between four eyes in a boar-hunt. He is over there, where you are, Fédor, and I'm here, near this round table, each of us with our hunting-knife. . . Come on, monseigneur, we 'll have it out now. . ."

Planting himself in the middle of the salon, gathering his sturdy legs under him for a spring, and snorting like a woodchopper, he mimicked a real fight, ending by his cry of triumph as he plunged the weapon to the hilt, from the top down, *coquin de sort!* into the bowels of his adversary.

"That's how it ought to be done, my little fellows!"

But what subsequent remorse! what anguish when, escaping from the magnetism of Sonia's blue eyes, he found himself alone, in his nightcap, alone with his reflections and his nightly glass of *eau sucrée!*

Différemment, what was he meddling with? The czar was not his czar, decidedly, and all these matters didn't concern him in the least. . . And don't you see that some of these days he would be captured, extradited and delivered over to Muscovite justice. . . *Boufre!* they don't joke, those Cossacks. . . And in the obscurity of his hotel chamber, with that horrible imaginative faculty which the horizontal position increases, there developed before him — like one of those unfolding pictures given to him in childhood — the various and terrible punishments to which he should be subjected: Tartarin in the verdigris mines, like Boris, working in water to his belly, his body ulcerated, poisoned. He escapes, he hides amid forests laden with snow, pursued by Tartars and bloodhounds trained to hunt men. Exhausted with cold and hunger, he is retaken and finally hung between two thieves, embraced by a pope with greasy hair smelling of brandy and seal-oil; while away down there, at Tarascon in the sunshine, the band playing of a fine Sunday, the crowd, the ungrateful crowd, are installing a radiant Costecalde in the chair of the P. C A.

It was during the agony of one of these dreadful dreams that he uttered his cry of distress, "Help, help, Bézuquet!" and sent to the apothecary that confidential letter, all moist with the sweat of his nightmare. But Sonia's pretty "Good morning" beneath his window sufficed to cast him back into the weaknesses of indecision.

One evening, returning from the Kursaal to the hotel with the Wassiliefs and Bolibine, after two hours of intoxicating music, the unfortunate man forgot all prudence, and the "Sonia, I love you," which he had so long restrained, was uttered as he pressed the arm that rested on his own. She was not agitated. Perfectly pale, she gazed at him under the gas of the portico on which they had paused: "Then deserve me..." she said, with a pretty enigmatical smile, a smile that gleamed upon her delicate white teeth. Tartarin was about to reply, to bind himself by an oath to some criminal madness when the porter of the hotel came up to him:

"There are persons waiting for you, upstairs... some gentlemen... They want you."

"Want me!.. *Outre!*.. What for?" And No. 1 of his folding series appeared before him: Tartarin captured, extradited... Of course he was frightened, but his attitude was heroic. Quickly detaching himself from Sonia: "Fly, save yourself!" he said to her in a smothered voice. Then he mounted the stairs as if to the scaffold, his head high, his eyes proud, but so disturbed in mind that he was forced to cling to the baluster.

As he entered the corridor, he saw persons grouped at the farther end of it before his door, looking through the keyhole, rapping, and calling out: "Hey! Tartarin. . ."

He made two steps forward, and said, with parched lips: "Is it I whom you are seeking, messieurs?"

"*Te! pardi*, yes, my president! . ."

And a little old man, alert and wiry, dressed in gray, and apparently bringing on his coat, his hat, his gaiters and his long and pendent moustache all the dust of his native town, fell upon the neck of the hero and rubbed against his smooth fat cheeks the withered leathery skin of the retired captain of equipment.

"Bravida! . . not possible! . . Excourbaniès too! . . and who is that over there? . ."

A bleating answered: "Dear ma-a-aster! . ." and the pupil advanced, banging against the wall a sort of long fishing-rod with a packet at one end wrapped in gray paper, and oilcloth tied round it with string.

"Hey! *vé!* why it's Pascalon. . . Embrace me, little one. . . What's that you are carrying? . . Put it down. . ."

"The paper. . . take off the paper! . ." whispered Bravida. The youth undid the roll with a rapid hand and the Tarasconese banner was displayed to the eyes of the amazed Tartarin.

The delegates took off their hats.

"President" — the voice of Bravida trembled solemnly — "you asked for the banner and we have brought it, *té!*"

The president opened a pair of eyes as round as apples: "I! I asked for it?"

"What! you did not ask for it? Bézuquet said so."

"Yes, yes, *certainemain. . .*" said Tartarin, suddenly enlightened by the mention of Bézuquet. He understood all and guessed the rest, and, tenderly moved by the ingenious lie of the apothecary to recall him to a sense of duty and honour, he choked, and stammered in his short beard: "Ah! my children, how kind you are! What good you have done me!"

"*Vive le présidain!*" yelped Pascalon, brandishing the oriflamme. Excourbaniès' gong responded, rolling its war-cry ("Ha! ha! ha! *fen dé brut. . .*") to the very cellars of the hotel. Doors opened, inquisitive heads protruded on every floor and then disappeared, alarmed, before that standard and the dark and hairy men who were roaring singular words and tossing their arms in the air. Never had the peaceable Hôtel Jungfrau been subjected to such a racket.

"Come into my room," said Tartarin, rather disconcerted. He was feeling about in the darkness to find matches when an authoritative rap on the door made it open of itself to admit the consequential, yellow, and puffy face of the innkeeper Meyer. He was about to enter, but stopped short before the darkness of the room, and said with closed teeth:

"Try to keep quiet . . . or I'll have you taken up by the police. . ."

A grunt as of wild bulls issued from the shadow at that brutal term "taken up." The hotel-keeper recoiled one step, but added: "It is known who you are; they have their eye upon you; for my part, I don't want any more such persons in my house! . ."

"Monsieur Meyer," said Tartarin, gently, politely, but very firmly. . . "Send me my bill. . . These gentlemen and myself start to-morrow morning for the Jungfrau."

O native soil! O little country within a great one! by only hearing the Tarasconese accent, quivering still with the air of that beloved land beneath the azure folds of its banner, behold Tartarin, delivered from love and its snares and restored to his friends, his mission, his glory.

And now, *zou!*

IX.

At the "Faithful Chamois."

THE next day it was charming, that trip on foot from Interlaken to Grindelwald, where they were, in passing, to take guides for the Little Scheideck; charming, that triumphal march of the P. C. A., restored to his trappings and mountain habiliments, leaning on one side on the lean little shoulder of Commander Bravida, and on the other, the robust arm of Excourbaniès, proud, both of them, to be nearest to him, to support their dear president, to carry his ice-axe, his knapsack, his alpenstock, while sometimes before, sometimes behind or on their flanks the fanatical Pascalon gambolled like a puppy, his banner duly rolled up into a package to avoid the tumultuous scenes of the night before.

The gayety of his companions, the sense of duty accomplished, the Jungfrau all white upon the sky, over there, like a vapour — nothing short of all this could have made the hero forget what he left behind him, for ever and ever it may be, and without farewell. However, at the last houses of Interlaken his eyelids swelled and, still walking on, he poured out his feelings in turn into the bosom of Excourbaniès: "Listen, Spiridion," or that of Bravida: "You know me, Placide. . ." For, by an irony on nature, that indomitable warrior was called Placide, and that rough buffalo, with all his instincts material, Spiridion.

Unhappily, the Tarasconese race, more gallant than sentimental, never takes its love-affairs very seriously. "Whoso loses a woman and ten sous, is to be pitied about the money. . ." replied the sententious Placide to Tartarin's tale, and Spiridion thought exactly like him. As for the innocent Pascalon, he was horribly afraid of women, and reddened to the ears when the name of the Little Scheideck was uttered before him, thinking some lady of flimsy morals was referred to. The poor lover was therefore reduced to keep his confidences to himself, and console himself alone — which, after all, is the surest way.

But what grief could have resisted the attractions of the way through that narrow, deep and sombre valley, where they walked on the banks of a winding river all white with foam, rumbling with an echo like thunder among the pine-woods which skirted both its shores.

The Tarasconese delegation, their heads in the air, advanced with a sort of religious awe and admiration, like the comrades of Sinbad the Sailor when they stood before the mangoes, the cotton-trees, and all the giant flora of the Indian coasts. Knowing nothing but their own little bald and stony mountains they had never imagined there could be so many trees together or such tall ones.

"That is nothing, as yet. . . wait till you see the Jungfrau," said the P. C. A., who enjoyed their amazement and felt himself magnified in their eyes.

At the same time, as if to brighten the scene and humanize its solemn note, cavalcades went by them, great landaus going at full speed, with veils floating from the doorways where curious heads leaned out to look at the delegation pressing round its president. From point to point along the roadside were booths spread with knick-knacks of carved wood, while young girls, stiff in their laced bodices, their striped skirts and broad-brimmed straw hats, were offering bunches of strawberries and edelweiss. Occasionally, an Alpine horn sent among the mountains its melancholy ritornello, swelling, echoing from gorge to gorge, and slowly diminishing, like a cloud that dissolves into vapour.

"'T is fine, 't is like an organ," murmured Pascalon, his eyes moist, in ecstasy, like the stained-glass saint of a church window. Excourbaniès roared, undiscouraged, and the echoes repeated, till sight and sound were lost, his Tarasconese intonations: "Ha! ha! ha! *fen dé brut!*"

But people grow weary after marching for two hours through the same sort of decorative scene, however well it may be organized, green on blue, glaciers in the distance, and all things sonorous as a musical clock. The dash of the torrents, the singers in triplets, the sellers of carved objects, the little flower-girls, soon became intolerable to our friends, — above all, the dampness, the steam rising in this species of tunnel, the soaked soil full of water-plants, where never had the sun penetrated.

"It is enough to give one a pleurisy," said Bravida, turning up the collar of his coat. Then weariness set in, hunger, ill-humour. They could find no inn; and presently Excourbaniès and Bravida, having stuffed themselves with strawberries, began to suffer cruelly. Pascalon himself, that angel, bearing not only the banner, but the ice-axe, the knapsack, the alpenstock, of which the others had rid themselves basely upon him, even Pascalon had lost his gayety and ceased his lively gambolling.

At a turn of the road, after they had just crossed the Lutschine by one of those covered bridges that are found in regions of deep snow, a loud blast on a horn greeted them.

"Ah! *vaï*, enough! . . enough!" howled the exasperated delegation.

The man, a giant, ensconced by the roadside, let go an enormous trumpet of pine wood reaching to the ground and ending there in a percussion-box, which gave to this prehistoric instrument the sonorousness of a piece of artillery.

"Ask him if he knows of an inn," said the president to Excourbaniès, who, with enormous cheek and a small pocket dictionary undertook, now that they were in German Switzerland, to serve the delegation as interpreter. But before he could pull out his dictionary the man replied in very good French:

"An inn, messieurs? Why certainly. . . The

'Faithful Chamois' is close by; allow me to show you the place."

On the way, he told them he had lived in Paris for several years, as commissionnaire at the corner of the rue Vivienne.

"Another employé of the Company, *parbleu!*" thought Tartarin, leaving his friends to be surprised. However, Bompard's comrade was very useful, for, in spite of its French sign, *Le Chamois Fidèle*, the people of the "Faithful Chamois" could speak nothing but a horrible German patois.

Presently, the Tarasconese delegation, seated around an enormous potato omelet, recovered both the health and the good-humour as essential to Southerners as the sun of their skies. They drank deep, they ate solidly. After many toasts to the president and his coming ascension, Tartarin, who had puzzled over the tavern-sign ever since his arrival, inquired of the horn-player, who was breaking a crust in a corner of the room:

"So you have chamois here, it seems? . . I thought there were none left in Switzerland."

The man winked:

"There are not many, but enough to let you see them now and then."

"Shoot them, is what he wants, *vé!*" said Pascalon, full of enthusiasm; "never did the president miss a shot."

Tartarin regretted that he had not brought his carbine.

"Wait a minute, and I'll speak to the landlord."

It so happened that the landlord was an old chamois hunter; he offered his gun, his powder, his buck-shot, and even himself as guide to a haunt he knew.

"Forward, *zou!*" cried Tartarin, granting to his happy Alpinists the opportunity to show off the prowess of their chief. It was only a slight delay, after all; the Jungfrau lost nothing by waiting.

Leaving the inn at the back, they had only to walk through an orchard, no bigger than the garden of a station-master, before they found themselves on a mountain, gashed with great crevasses, among the fir-trees and underbrush.

The innkeeper took the advance, and the Tarasconese presently saw him far up the height, waving his arms and throwing stones, no doubt to rouse the chamois. They rejoined him with much pain and difficulty over that rocky slope, hard especially to persons who had just been eating and were as little used to climbing as these good Alpinists of Tarascon. The air was heavy, moreover, with a tempest breath that was slowly rolling the clouds along the summits above their heads.

"*Boufre!*" groaned Bravida.

Excourbaniès growled: "*Outre!*"

"What shall I be made to say!" added the gentle, bleating Pascalon.

But the guide having, by a violent gesture, ordered them to hold their tongues, and not to stir, Tartarin remarked, "Never speak under arms," with a sternness that rebuked every one, although the president alone had a weapon. They stood stock still, holding their breaths. Suddenly, Pascalon cried out:

"*Vé!* the chamois, *vé!* . ."

About three hundred feet above them, the upright horns, the light buff coat and the four feet gathered together of the pretty creature stood defined like a carved image at the edge of the rock, looking at them fearlessly. Tartarin brought his piece to his shoulder methodically, as his habit was, and was just about to fire when the chamois disappeared.

"It is your fault," said the Commander to Pascalon . . . "you whistled . . . and that frightened him."

"I whistled! . . I?"

"Then it was Spiridion. . ."

"Ah, *vaï!* never in my life."

Nevertheless, they had all heard a whistle, strident, prolonged. The president settled the question by relating how the chamois, at the approach of enemies, gives a sharp danger signal through the nostrils. That devil of a Tartarin knew everything about this kind of hunt, as about all others!

At the call of their guide they started again; but the acclivity became steeper and steeper, the rocks more ragged, with bogs between them to right and left. Tartarin kept the lead, turning constantly to help the delegates, holding out his hand or his carbine: "Your hand, your hand, if you don't mind," cried honest Bravida, who was very much afraid of loaded weapons.

Another sign of the guide, another stop of the delegation, their noses in the air.

"I felt a drop!" murmured the Commander, very uneasy. At the same instant the thunder growled, but louder than the thunder roared the voice of Excourbaniès: "Fire, Tartarin!" and the chamois bounded past them, crossing the ravine like a golden flash, too quickly for Tartarin to take aim, but not so fast that they did not hear that whistle of his nostrils

"I 'll have him yet, *coquin de sort!*" cried the president, but the delegates protested. Excourbaniès, becoming suddenly very sour, demanded if he had sworn to exterminate them.

"Dear ma-a-aster," bleated Pascalon, timidly, "I have heard say that chamois if you corner them in abysses turn at bay against the hunter and are very dangerous."

"Then don't let us corner him!" said Bravida hastily.

Tartarin called them milksops. But while they were arguing, suddenly, abruptly, they all disappeared from one another's gaze in a warm thick vapour that smelt of sulphur, through which they sought each other, calling:

"Hey! Tartarin."

"Are you there, Placide?"

"Ma-a-as-ter!"

"Keep cool! Keep cool!"

A regular panic. Then a gust of wind broke through the mist and whirled it away like a torn veil clinging to the briers, through which a zigzag flash of lightning fell at their feet with a frightful clap of thunder. "My cap!" cried Spiridion, as the tempest bared his head, its hairs erect and crackling with electric sparks. They were in the very heart of the storm, the forge itself of Vulcan. Bravida was the first to fly, at full speed, the rest of the delegation flew behind him, when a cry from the president, who thought of everything, stopped them:

"Thunder! . . beware of the thunder! . . "

At any rate, outside of the very real danger of which he warned them, there was no possibility of running on those steep and gullied slopes, now transformed into torrents, into cascades, by the pouring rain. The return was awful, by slow steps under that crazy cliff, amid the sharp, short flashes of lightning followed by explosions, slipping, falling, and forced at times to halt. Pascalon crossed himself and invoked aloud, as at Tarascon: "Sainte Marthe and Sainte Hélène, Sainte Marie-Madeleine," while Excourbaniès swore: "*Coquin de sort!*" and Bravida, the rearguard, looked back in trepidation:

"What the devil is that behind us? . . It is galloping . . . it is whistling . . . there, it has stopped . . ."

The idea of a furious chamois flinging itself upon its hunters was in the mind of the old warrior. In a low voice, in order not to alarm the others, he communicated his fears to Tartarin, who bravely took his place as the rearguard and marched along, soaked to the skin, his head high, with that mute determination which is given by the imminence of danger. But when he reached the inn and saw his dear Alpinists under shelter, drying their wet things, which smoked around a huge porcelain stove in a first floor chamber, to which rose an odour of grog already ordered, the president shivered and said, looking very pale: "I believe I have taken cold."

"Taken cold!" No question now of starting again; the delegation asked only for rest. Quick, a bed was warmed, they hurried the hot wine grog, and after his second glass the president felt throughout his comfort-loving body a warmth, a tingling that augured well. Two pillows at his back, a "plumeau" on his feet, his muffler round his head, he experienced a delightful sense of well-being in listening to the roaring of the storm, inhaling that good pine odour of the rustic little room with its wooden walls and leaden panes, and in looking at his dear Alpinists, gathered, glass in hand, around his bed in the anomalous character given to their Gallic, Roman or Saracenic types by the counterpanes, curtains, and carpets in which they were bundled while their own clothes steamed before the stove. Forgetful of himself, he questioned each of them in a sympathetic voice:

"Are you well, Placide? . . Spiridion, you seemed to be suffering just now? . ."

No, Spiridion suffered no longer, all that had passed away on seeing the president so ill. Bravida, who adapted moral truths to the proverbs of his nation, added cynically: "Neighbour's ill comforts, and even cures." Then they talked of their hunt, exciting one another with the recollection of certain dangerous episodes, such as the moment when the animal turned upon them furiously; and without complicity of lying, in fact, most ingenuously, they fabricated the fable they afterwards related on their return to Tarascon.

Suddenly, Pascalon, who had been sent in search of another supply of grog, reappeared in terror, one arm out of the blue-flowered curtain that he gathered about him with the chaste gesture of a Polyeucte. He was more than a second before he could articulate, in a whisper, breathlessly: "The chamois! . ."

"Well, what of the chamois? . ."

"He's down there, in the kitchen . . . warming himself. . ."

"Ah! *vaï*. . ."

"You are joking. . ."

"Suppose you go and see, Placide."

Bravida hesitated. Excourbaniès descended on the tips of his toes, but returned almost immediately, his face convulsed. . . More and more astounding! . . the chamois was drinking grog.

They certainly owed it to him, poor beast, after the wild run he had been made to take on the mountain, dispatched and recalled by his master, who, as a usual thing, put him through his evolutions in the house, to show to tourists how easily a chamois could be trained.

"It is overwhelming!" said Bravida, making no further effort at comprehension; as for Tartarin, he dragged the muffler over his eyes like a nightcap to hide from the delegates the soft hilarity that overcame him at encountering wherever he went the dodges and the performers of Bompard's Switzerland.

X.

The ascension of the Jungfrau. Vé! the oxen. The Kennedy crampons will not work. Nor the reed-lamp either. Apparition of masked men at the chalet of the Alpine Club. The president in a crevasse. On the summit. Tartarin becomes a god.

GREAT influx, that morning, to the Hôtel Bellevue on the Little Scheideck. In spite of the rain and the squalls, tables had been laid outside in the shelter of the veranda, amid a great display of alpenstocks, flasks, telescopes, cuckoo clocks in carved wood, so that tourists could, while breakfasting, contemplate at a depth of six thousand feet before them the wonderful valley of Grindelwald on the left, that of Lauterbrunnen on the right, and opposite, within gunshot as it seemed, the immaculate, grandiose slopes of the Jungfrau, its *névés*, glaciers, all that reverberating whiteness which illumines the air about it, making glasses more transparent, and linen whiter.

But now, for a time, general attention was attracted to a noisy, bearded caravan, which had just arrived on horse, mule, and donkey-back, also in a *chaise à porteurs*, who had prepared themselves to climb the mountain by a copious breakfast, and were now in a state of hilarity, the racket of which contrasted with the bored and solemn airs of the very distinguished Rices and Prunes collected on the Scheideck, such as: Lord Chipendale, the Belgian senator and his family, the Austro-Hungarian diplomat, and several others. It would certainly have been supposed that the whole party of these bearded men sitting together at table were about to attempt the ascension, for one and all were busy with preparations for departure, rising, rushing about to give directions to the guides, inspecting the provisions, and calling to each other from end to end of the terrace in stentorian tones.

"Hey! Placide, *vé!* the cooking-pan, see if it is in the knapsack! . . Don't forget the reed-lamp, *au mouain*."

Not until the actual departure took place was it seen that, of all the caravan, only one was to make the ascension: but which one?

"Children, are we ready?" said the good Tartarin in a joyous, triumphant voice, in which not a shade of anxiety trembled at the possible dangers of the trip — his last doubt as to the Company's manipulation of Switzerland being dissipated that very morning before the two glaciers of Grindelwald each protected by a wicket and a turnstile, with this inscription "Entrance to the glacier: one franc fifty."

He could, therefore, enjoy without anxiety this departure in apotheosis, the joy of feeling himself looked at, envied, admired by those bold little misses in boys' caps who laughed at him so prettily on the Rigi-Kulm, and were now enthusiastically comparing his short person with the enormous mountain he was about to climb. One drew his portrait in her album, another sought the honour of touching his alpenstock. "Tchemppegne! . . Tchemppegne! . ." called out of a sudden a tall, funereal Englishman with a brick-coloured skin, coming up to him, bottle and glass in hand. Then, after obliging the hero to drink with him:

"Lord Chipendale, sir . . . And you?"

"Tartarin of Tarascon."

"Oh! yes . . . Tartarine . . . Capital name for a horse," said the lord, who must have been one of those great turfmen across the Channel.

The Austro-Hungarian diplomat also came to press the Alpinist's hand between his mittens, remembering vaguely to have seen him somewhere. "Enchanted! . . enchanted! . ." he enunciated several times, and then, not knowing how to get out of it, he added: "My compliments to madame . . ." his social formula for cutting short presentations.

But the guides were impatient; they must reach before nightfall the hut of the Alpine Club, where they were to sleep for the first stage, and there was not a minute to lose. Tartarin felt it, saluted all with a circular gesture, smiled at the malicious misses, and then, in a voice of thunder, commanded:

"Pascalon, the banner!"

It waved to the breeze; the Southerners took off their hats, for they love theatricals at Tarascon; and at the cry, a score of times repeated: "Long live the president! . . Long live Tartarin! . . Ah! ah! . . *fen dé brut!* . . " the column moved off, the two guides in front carrying the knapsack, the provisions, and a supply of wood; then came Pascalon bearing the oriflamme, and lastly the P. C. A. with the delegates who proposed to accompany him as far as the glacier of the Guggi.

Thus deployed in procession, bearing its flapping flag along the sodden way beneath those barren or snowy crests, the cortège vaguely recalled the funeral marches of an All Souls' day in the country.

Suddenly the Commander cried out, alarmed:

" *Vé!* those oxen!"

Some cattle were now seen browsing the short grass in the hollows of the ground. The former captain of equipment had a nervous and quite insurmountable terror of those animals, and as he could not be left alone the delegation was forced to stop. Pascalon transmitted the standard to the guides. Then, with a last embrace, hasty injunctions, and one eye on the cows:

" Adieu, adieu, *qué!*"

" No imprudence, *au mouain* . . . " they parted. As for proposing to the president to go up with him, no one even thought of it; 't was so high, *boufre!* And the nearer they came to it the higher it grew, the abysses were more abysmal, the peaks bristled up in a white chaos, which looked to be insurmountable. It was better to look at the ascension from the Scheideck.

In all his life, naturally, the president of the Club of the Alpines had never set foot on a glacier. There is nothing of that sort on the mountainettes of Tarascon, little hills as balmy and dry as a packet of lavender; and yet the approaches to the Guggi gave him the impression of having already seen them, and wakened recollections of hunts in Provence at the end of the Camargue, near to the sea. The same turf always getting shorter and parched, as if scared by fire. Here and there were puddles of water, infiltrations of the ground betrayed by puny reeds, then came the moraine, like a sandy dune full of broken shells and cinders, and, far at the end, the glacier, with its blue-green waves crested with white and rounded in form, a silent, congealed ground-swell. The wind which came athwart it, whistling and strong, had the same biting, salubrious freshness as his own sea-breeze.

" No, thank you. . . I have my crampons . . ." said Tartarin to the guide, who offered him woollen socks to draw on over his boots; " Kennedy crampons . . . perfected . . . very convenient . . ." He shouted, as if to a deaf person, in order to make himself understood by Christian Inebnit, who knew no more French than his comrade Kaufmann; and then the P. C. A. sat down upon the moraine and strapped on a species of sandal with three enormous and very strong iron spikes. He had practised them a hundred times, these Kennedy crampons, manœuvring them in the garden of the baobab; nevertheless, the present effect was unexpected. Beneath the weight of the hero the spikes were driven into the ice with such force that all efforts to withdraw them were vain. Behold him, therefore, nailed to the glacier, sweating, swearing, making with arms and alpenstock most desperate gymnastics and reduced finally to shouting for his guides, who had gone forward, convinced that they had to do with an experienced Alpinist.

Under the impossibility of uprooting him, they undid the straps, and, the crampons, abandoned in the ice, being replaced by a pair of knitted socks, the president continued his way, not without much difficulty and fatigue. Unskilful in holding his stick, his legs stumbled over it, then its iron point skated and dragged him along if he leaned upon it too heavily. He tried the ice-axe — still harder to manœuvre, the swell of the glacier increasing by degrees, and pressing up, one above another, its motionless waves with all the appearance of a furious and petrified tempest.

Apparent immobility only, for hollow crackings, subterranean gurgles, enormous masses of ice displacing themselves slowly, as if moved by the machinery of a stage, indicated the inward life of this frozen mass and its treacherous elements. To the eyes of our Alpinist, wherever he cast his axe crevasses were opening, bottomless pits, where masses of ice in fragments rolled indefinitely. The hero fell repeatedly; once to his middle in one of those greenish gullies, where his broad shoulders alone kept him from going to the bottom.

On seeing him so clumsy, and yet so tranquil, so sure of himself, laughing, singing, gesticulating, as he did while breakfasting, the guides imagined that Swiss champagne had made an impression upon him. What else could they suppose of the president of an Alpine Club, a renowned ascensionist, of whom his friends spoke only with "Ahs!" and exultant gestures. After taking him each by the arm with the respectful firmness of policemen putting into a carriage an overcome heir to a title, they endeavoured, by the help of monosyllables and gestures, to rouse his mind to a sense of the dangers of the route, the necessity of reaching the hut before nightfall, with threats of crevasses, cold, avalanches. Finally, with the point of their ice-picks they showed him the enormous accumulation of ice, of *névé* not yet transformed into glacier rising before them to the zenith in blinding repetition.

But the worthy Tartarin laughed at all that: "Ha! *vaï!* crevasses! . . Ha! *vaï!* those avalanches! . ." and he burst out laughing, winked his eye, and prodded their sides with his elbows to let them know they could not fool him, for *he* was in the secret of the comedy.

The guides at last ended by making merry with the Tarasconese songs, and when they rested a moment on a solid block to let their monsieur get his breath, they yodelled in the Swiss way, though not too loudly, for fear of avalanches, nor very long, for time was getting on. They knew the coming of night by the sharper cold, but especially by the singular change in hue of these snows and ice-packs, heaped-up, overhanging, which always keep, even under misty skies, a rainbow tinge of colour until the daylight fades, rising higher and higher to the vanishing summits, where the snows take on the livid, spectral tints of the lunar universe. Pallor, petrifaction, silence, death itself. And the good Tartarin, so warm, so living, was beginning to lose his liveliness when the distant cry of a bird, the note of a "snow partridge" brought back before his eyes a baked landscape, a copper-coloured setting sun, and a band of Tarasconese sportsmen, mopping their faces, seated on their empty game-bags, in the slender shade of an olive-tree. The recollection was a comfort to him.

At the same moment Kaufmann pointed to something that looked like a faggot of wood on the snow. 'T was the hut. It seemed as if they could get to it in a few strides, but, in point of fact, it took a good half-hour's walking. One of the guides went on ahead to light the fire. Darkness had now come on; the north wind rattled on the cadaverous way, and Tartarin, no longer paying attention to anything, supported by the stout arm of the mountaineer, stumbled and bounded along without a dry thread on him in spite of the falling temperature. All of a sudden a flame shot up before him, together with an appetizing smell of onion soup.

They were there.

Nothing can be more rudimentary than these halting-places established on the mountains by the Alpine Club of Switzerland. A single room, in which an inclined plane of hard wood serves as a bed and takes up nearly all the space, leaving but little for the stove and the long table, screwed to the floor like the benches that are round it. The table was already laid; three bowls, pewter spoons, the reed-lamp to heat the coffee, two cans of Chicago preserved meats already opened. Tartarin thought the dinner delicious although the fumes of the onion soup infected the atmosphere, and the famous spirit-lamp, which ought to have made its pint of coffee in three minutes, refused to perform its functions.

At the dessert he sang; that was his only means of conversing with his guides. He sang them the airs of his native land: *La Tarasque*, and *Les Filles d'Avignon.* To which the guides responded with local songs in German patois: *Mi Vater isch en Appenzeller . . . aou . . . aou. . .* Worthy fellows with hard, weather-beaten features as if cut from the rock, beards in the hollows that looked like moss and those clear eyes, used to great spaces, like the eyes of sailors. The same sensation of the sea and the open, which he had felt just now on approaching Guggi, Tartarin again felt here, in presence of these mariners of the glacier in this close cabin, low and smoky, the regular forecastle of a ship; in the dripping of the snow from the roof as it melted with the warmth; in the great gusts of wind, shaking everything, cracking the boards, fluttering the flame of the lamp, and falling abruptly into vast, unnatural silence, like the end of the world.

They had just finished dinner when heavy steps upon the ringing path and voices were heard approaching. Violent blows with the butt end of some weapon shook the door. Tartarin, greatly excited, looked at his guides . . . A nocturnal attack on these heights! . . The blows redoubled. "Who goes there?" cried the hero, jumping for his ice-axe; but already the hut was invaded by two gigantic Yankees, in white linen masks, their clothing soaked with snow and sweat, and behind them guides, porters, a whole caravan, on its return from ascending the Jungfrau.

"You are welcome, milords," said Tartarin, with a liberal, dispensing gesture, of which the milords showed not the slightest need in making themselves free of everything. In a trice the table was surrounded, the dishes removed, the bowls and spoons rinsed in hot water for the use of the new arrivals (according to established custom in Alpine huts); the boots of the milords smoked before the stove, while they themselves, bare-footed, their feet wrapped in straw, were sprawling at their ease before a fresh onion soup.

Father and son, these two Americans; two red-haired giants, with heads of pioneers, hard and self-reliant. One of them, the elder, had two dilated eyes, almost white, in a bloated, sun-burned, fissured face, and presently, by the hesitating way in which he groped for his bowl and spoon, and the care with which his son looked after him, Tartarin became aware that this was the famous blind Alpinist of whom he had been told, not believing the tale, at the Hôtel Bellevue; a celebrated climber in his youth, who now, in spite of his sixty years and his infirmity, was going over with his son the scenes of his former exploits. He had already done the Wetterhorn and the Jungfrau, and was intending to attack the Matterhorn and the Mont Blanc, declaring that the air upon summits, that glacial breath with its taste of snow, caused him inexpressible joy, and a perfect recall of his lost vigour.

"*Différemment*," asked Tartarin of one of the porters, for the Yankees were not communicative, and answered only by a "yes" or a "no" to all his advances "*différemment*, inasmuch as he can't see, how does he manage at the dangerous places?"

"Oh! he has got the mountaineer's foot; besides, his son watches over him, and places his heels. . . And it is a fact that he has never had an accident."

"All the more because accidents in Switzerland are never very terrible, *qué?*" With a comprehending smile to the puzzled porter, Tartarin, more and more convinced that the "whole thing was *blague*," stretched himself out on the plank rolled in his blanket, the muffler up to his eyes, and went to sleep, in spite of the light, the noise, the smoke of the pipes and the smell of the onion soup. . .

"Mossié! . . Mossié! . ."

One of his guides was shaking him for departure, while the other poured boiling coffee into the bowls. A few oaths and the groans of sleepers whom Tartarin crushed on his way to the table, and then to the door. Abruptly he found himself outside, stung by the cold, dazzled by the fairy-like reflections of the moon upon that white expanse, those motionless congealed cascades, where the shadow of the peaks, the *aiguilles*, the *séracs*, were sharply defined in the densest black. No longer the sparkling chaos of the afternoon, nor the livid rising upward of the gray tints of evening, but a strange irregular city of darksome alleys, mysterious passages, doubtful corners between marble monuments and crumbling ruins — a dead city, with broad desert spaces.

Two o'clock! By walking well they could be at the top by mid-day. "*Zou!*" said the P. C. A., very lively, and dashing forward, as if to the assault. But his guides stopped him. They must be roped for the dangerous passages.

"Ah! *vaï*, roped! . . Very good, if that amuses you."

Christian Inebnit took the lead, leaving twelve feet of rope between himself and Tartarin, who was separated by the same length from the second guide who carried the provisions and the banner. The hero kept his footing better than he did the day before; and confidence in the Company must indeed have been strong, for he did not take seriously the difficulties of the path — if we can call a path the terrible ridge of ice along which they now advanced with precaution, a ridge but a few feet wide and so slippery that Christian was forced to cut steps with his ice-axe.

The line of the ridge sparkled between two depths of abysses on either side. But if you think that Tartarin was frightened, not at all! Scarcely did he feel the little quiver of the cuticle of a freemason novice when subjected to his opening test. He placed his feet most precisely in the holes which the first guide cut for them, doing all that he saw the guide do, as tranquil as he was in the garden of the baobab when he practised around the margin of the pond, to the terror of the goldfish. At one place the ridge became so narrow that he was forced to sit astride of it, and while they went slowly forward, helping themselves with their hands, a loud detonation echoed up, on their right, from beneath them. "Avalanche!" said Inebnit, keeping motionless till the repercussion of the echoes, numerous, grandiose, filling the sky, died away at last in a long roll of thunder in the far distance, where the final detonation was lost. After which, silence once more covered all as with a winding-sheet.

The ridge passed, they went up a *névé* the slope of which was rather gentle but its length interminable. They had been climbing nearly an hour when a slender pink line began to define the summits far, far above their heads. It was the dawn, thus announcing itself. Like a true Southerner, enemy to shade, Tartarin trolled out his liveliest song:

Grand souleu de la Provenço
Gai compaire dou mistrau —

A violent shake of the rope from before and behind stopped him short in the middle of his couplet. "Hush . . . Hush . . ." said Inebnit, pointing with his ice-axe to the threatening line of gigantic *séracs* on their tottering foundations which the slightest jar might send thundering down the steep. But Tartarin knew what *that* meant; he was not the man to ply with any such tales, and he went on singing in a resounding voice:

Tu qu'escoulès la Duranço
Commo un flot dé vin de Crau.

The guides, seeing that they could not silence their crazy singer, made a great détour to get away from the *séracs*, and presently were stopped by an enormous crevasse, the glaucous green sides of which were lighted, far down their depths, by the first furtive rays of the dawn. What is called in Switzerland "a snow bridge" spanned it; but so slight was it, so fragile, that they had scarcely advanced a step before it crumbled away in a cloud of white dust, dragging down the leading guide and Tartarin, hanging to the rope which Rodolphe Kaufmann, the rear guide, was alone left to hold, clinging with all the strength of his mountain vigour to his pick-axe, driven deeply into the ice. But although he was able to hold the two men suspended in the gulf he had not enough force to draw them up and he remained, crouching on the snow, his teeth clenched, his muscles straining, and too far from the crevasse to see what was happening.

Stunned at first by the fall, and blinded by snow, Tartarin waved his arms and legs at random, like a puppet out of order; then, drawing himself up by means of the rope, he hung suspended over the abyss, his nose against its icy side, which his breath polished, in the attitude of a plumber in the act of soldering a waste-pipe. He saw the sky above him growing paler and the stars disappearing; below he could fathom the gulf and its opaque shadows, from which rose a chilling breath.

Nevertheless, his first bewilderment over, he recovered his self-possession and his fine good-humour.

"Hey! up there! *père* Kaufmann, don't leave us to mildew here, *qué!* there's a draught all round, and besides, this cursèd rope is cutting our loins."

Kaufmann was unable to answer; to have unclenched his teeth would have lessened his strength. But Inebnit shouted from below:

"Mossié . . . Mossié . . . ice-axe . . ." for his own had been lost in the fall; and, the heavy implement being now passed from the hands of Tartarin to those of the guide (with difficulty, owing to the space that separated the two hanged ones), the mountaineer used it to make notches in the ice-wall before him, into which he could fasten both hands and feet.

The weight of the rope being thus lessened by at least one-half, Rodolphe Kaufmann, with carefully calculated vigour and infinite precautions, began to draw up the president, whose Tarasconese cap appeared at last at the edge of the crevasse. Inebnit followed him in turn and the two mountaineers met again with that effusion of brief words which, in persons of limited elocution, follows great dangers. Both were trembling with their effort, and Tartarin passed them his flask of kirsch to steady their legs. He himself was nimble and calm, and while he shook himself free of snow he hummed his song under the nose of his wondering guides, beating time with his foot to the measure:

"*Brav* . . . *brav* . . . *Franzose* . . ." said Kaufmann, tapping him on the shoulder; to which Tartarin answered with his fine laugh:

"You rogue! I knew very well there was no danger . . ."

Never within the memory of guides was there seen such an Alpinist.

They started again, climbing perpendicularly a sort of gigantic wall of ice some thousand feet high, in which they were forced to cut steps as they went along, which took much time. The man of Tarascon began to feel his strength give way under the brilliant sun which flooded the whiteness of the landscape and was all the more fatiguing to his eyes because he had dropped his green spectacles into the crevasse. Presently, a dreadful sense of weakness seized him, that mountain sickness which produces the same effects as sea-sickness. Exhausted, his head empty, his legs flaccid, he stumbled and lost his feet, so that the guides were forced to grasp him, one on each side, supporting and hoisting him to the top of that wall of ice. Scarcely three hundred feet now separated them from the summit of the Jungfrau; but although the snow was hard and bore them, and the path much easier, this last stage took an almost interminable time, the fatigue and the suffocation of the P. C. A. increasing all the while.

Suddenly the mountaineers loosed their hold upon him, and waving their caps began to yodel in a transport of joy. They were there! This spot in immaculate space, this white crest, somewhat rounded, was the goal, and for that good Tartarin the end of the somnambulic torpor in which he had wandered for an hour or more.

"Scheideck! Scheideck!" shouted the guides, showing him far, far below, on a verdant plateau emerging from the mists of the valley, the Hôtel Bellevue about the size of a thimble.

Thence to where they stood lay a wondrous panorama, an ascent of fields of gilded snow, oranged by the sun, or else of a deep, cold blue, a piling up of mounds of ice, fantastically structured into towers, *flèches*, *aiguilles*, *arêtes*, and gigantic heaps, under which one could well believe that the lost megatherium or mastodon lay sleeping. All the tints of the rainbow played there and met in the bed of vast glaciers rolling down their immovable cascades, crossed by other little frozen torrents, the surfaces of which the sun's warmth liquefied, making them smoother and more glittering. But, at the great height at which they stood, all this sparkling brilliance calmed itself; a light floated, cold, ecliptic, which made Tartarin shudder even more than the sense of silence and solitude in that white desert with its mysterious recesses.

A little smoke, with hollow detonations, rose from the hotel. They were seen, a cannon was fired in their honour, and the thought that they were being looked at, that his Alpinists were there, and the misses, the illustrious Prunes and Rices, all with their opera-glasses levelled up to him, recalled Tartarin to a sense of the grandeur of his mission. He tore thee, O Tarasconese banner! from the hands of the guide, waved thee twice or thrice, and then, plunging the handle of his ice-axe deep into the snow, he seated himself upon the iron of the pick, banner in hand, superb, facing the public. And there — unknown to himself — by one of those spectral reflections frequent upon summits, taken between the sun and the mists that rose behind him, a gigantic Tartarin was outlined on the sky, broader, dumpier, his beard bristling beyond the muffler, like one of those Scandinavian gods enthroned, as the legend has it, among the clouds.

XI.

En route for Tarascon. The Lake of Geneva. Tartarin proposes a visit to the dungeon of Bonnivard. Short dialogue amid the roses. The whole band under lock and key. The unfortunate Bonnivard. Where the rope made at Avignon was found.

As a result of the ascension, Tartarin's nose peeled, pimpled, and his cheeks cracked. He kept to his room in the Hôtel Bellevue for five days — five days of salves and compresses, the sticky unsavouriness and ennui of which he endeavoured to elude by playing cards with the delegates or dictating to them a long, circumstantial account of his expedition, to be read in session, before the Club of the Alpines and published in the *Forum*. Then, as the general lumbago had disappeared and nothing remained upon the noble countenance of the P. C. A. but a few blisters, sloughs and chilblains on a fine complexion of Etruscan pottery, the delegation and its president set out for Tarascon, via Geneva.

Let me omit the episodes of that journey, the alarm cast by the Southern band into narrow railway carriages, steamers, *tables d'hôte*, by its songs, its shouts, its overflowing hilarity, its banner, and its alpenstocks; for since the ascension of the

P. C. A. they had all supplied themselves with those mountain sticks, on which the names of celebrated climbs were inscribed, burnt in, together with popular verses.

Montreux!

Here the delegates, at the suggestion of their master, decided to halt for two or three days in order to visit the famous shores of Lake Leman, Chillon especially, and its legendary dungeon, where the great patriot Bonnivard languished, and which Byron and Delacroix have immortalized.

At heart, Tartarin cared little for Bonnivard, his adventure with William Tell having enlightened him about Swiss legends; but in passing through Interlaken he had heard that Sonia had gone to Montreux with her brother, whose health was much worse, and this invention of an historical pilgrimage was only a pretext to meet the young girl again, and, who knows? persuade her perhaps to follow him to Tarascon.

Let it be fully understood, however, that his companions believed, with the best faith in the world, that they were on their way to render homage to a great Genevese citizen whose history the P. C. A. had related to them; in fact, with their native taste for theatrical manifestations they were desirous, as soon as they landed at Montreux, of forming in line, banner displayed and marching at once to Chillon with repeated cries of "Vive Bonnivard!" The president was forced to calm them: "Breakfast first," he said, "and after that we 'll see about it." So they filled the omnibus of some

Pension Müller or other, situated, with many of its kind, close to the landing.

"*Vé!* that gendarme, how he looks at us," said Pascalon, the last to get in, with the banner, always very troublesome to install. "True," said Bravida, uneasily; "what does he want of us, that gendarme? Why does he examine us like that?"

"He recognizes me, *pardi!*" said the worthy Tartarin modestly; and he smiled upon the soldier of the Vaudois police, whose long blue hooded coat followed perseveringly behind the omnibus as it threaded its way among the poplars on the shore.

It was market-day at Montreux. Rows of little booths were open to the winds of the lake, displaying fruit, vegetables, laces very cheap, and that white jewellery, looking like manufactured snow or pearls of ice, with which the Swiss women ornament their costumes. With all this were mingled the bustle of the little port, the jostling of a whole flotilla of gayly painted pleasure-boats, the transshipment of casks and sacks from large brigantines with lateen sails, the hoarse cries, the bells of the steamers, the stir among the cafés, the breweries, the traffic of the florists and the second-hand dealers who lined the quay. If a ray of sun had fallen upon the scene, one might have thought one's self on the marina of a Mediterranean resort between Mentone and Bordighera. But sun was lacking, and the Tarasconese gazed at the pretty landscape through a watery vapour that rose from the azure lake, climbed the steep path and the pebbly little streets, and joined, above the houses, other clouds, black and gray that were clinging about the sombre verdure of the mountain, big with rain.

"*Coquin de sort!* I'm not a lacustrian," said Spiridion Excourbaniès, wiping the glass of the window to look at the perspective of glaciers and white vapours that closed the horizon in front of him. . .

"Nor I, either," sighed Pascalon, "this fog, this stagnant water . . . makes me want to cry."

Bravida complained also, in dread of his sciatic gout.

Tartarin reproved them sternly. Was it nothing to be able to relate, on their return, that they had seen the dungeon of Bonnivard, inscribed their names on its historic walls beside the signatures of Rousseau, Byron, Victor Hugo, George Sand, Eugène Sue? Suddenly, in the middle of his tirade, the president interrupted himself and changed colour. . . He had just caught sight of a little round hat on a coil of blond hair. Without stopping the omnibus, the pace of which had slackened in going up hill, he sprang out, calling back to the stupefied Alpinists: "Go on to the hotel. . ."

"Sonia! . . Sonia! . ."

He feared that he might not be able to catch her, she walked so rapidly, the delicate silhouette of her shadow falling on the macadam of the road. She turned at his call and waited for him. "Ah! is it you?" she said; and as soon as they had shaken hands she walked on. He fell into step beside her, much out of breath, and began to excuse himself for having left her so abruptly . . . arrival of friends . . . necessity of making the ascension (of which his face was still bearing traces) . . . She listened without a word, hastening her pace, her eyes strained and fixed. Looking at her profile, she seemed to him paler, her features no longer soft with childlike innocence, but hard, a something resolute on them which till now had existed only in her voice and her imperious will; and yet her youthful grace was there, and the gold of her waving hair.

"And Boris, how is he?" asked Tartarin, rather discomfited by her silence and coldness, which began to affect him.

"Boris? . ." she quivered: "Ah! true, you do not know. . . Well then! come, come. . ."

They followed a country lane leading past vineyards sloping to the lake, and villas with gardens, and elegant terraces laden with clematis, blooming with roses, petunias, and myrtles in pots. Now and then they met some foreigner with haggard cheeks and melancholy glance, walking slowly and feebly, like the many whom one meets at Mentone and Monaco; only, away down yonder the sunshine laps round all, absorbs all, while beneath this lowering cloudy sky suffering is more apparent, though the flowers seem fresher.

"Enter," said Sonia, pushing open the railed iron door of a white marble façade on which were Russian words in gilded letters.

At first Tartarin did not understand where he was. A little garden was before him with gravelled paths very carefully kept, and quantities of climbing roses hanging among the green of the trees, and bearing great clusters of white and yellow blooms, which filled the narrow space with their fragrance and glow. Among these garlands, this lovely efflorescence, a few stones were standing or lying with dates and names; the newest of which bore the words, carved on its surface:

"BORIS WASSILIEF. 22 years."

He had been there a few days, dying almost as soon as they arrived at Montreux; and in this cemetery of foreigners the exile had found a sort of country among other Russians and Poles and Swedes, buried beneath the roses, consumptives of cold climates sent to this Northern Nice, because the Southern sun would be for them too violent, the transition too abrupt.

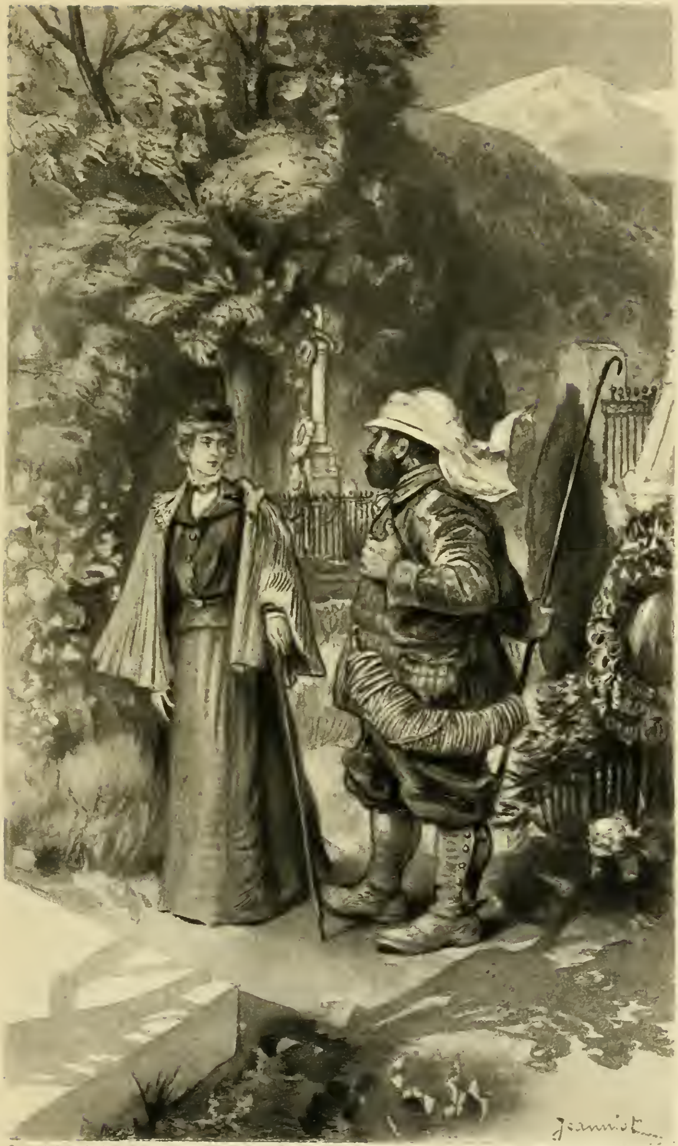
They stood for a moment motionless and mute before the whiteness of that new stone lying on the blackness of the fresh-turned earth; the young girl, with her head bent down, inhaling the breath of the roses, and calming, as she stood, her reddened eyes.

"Poor little girl!" said Tartarin with emotion, taking in his strong rough hands the tips of Sonia's fingers. "And you? what will you do now?"

She looked him full in the face with dry and shining eyes in which the tears no longer trembled.

"I? I leave within an hour."

Tartarin and Sonia



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Goupil & Cie Paris

"You are going? . ."

"Bolibine is already in St. Petersburg. . . Manilof is waiting for me to cross the frontier. . . I return to the work. We shall be heard from." Then, in a low voice, she added with a half-smile, planting her blue glance full into that of Tartarin, which avoided it: "He who loves me follows me."

Ah! *vaï*, follow her! The little fanatic frightened him. Besides, this funereal scene had cooled his love. Still, he ought not to appear to back down like a scoundrel. So, with his hand on his heart and the gesture of an Abencerrage, the hero began: "You know me, Sonia. . ."

She did not need to hear more.

"Gabbler!" she said, shrugging her shoulders. And she walked away, erect and proud, beneath the roses, without once turning round. . . Gabbler! . . not one word more, but the intonation was so contemptuous that the worthy Tartarin blushed beneath his beard, and looked about to see if they had been quite alone in the garden so that no one had overheard her.

Among our Tarasconese, fortunately, impressions do not last long. Five minutes later Tartarin was going up the terraces of Montreux with a lively step in quest of the Pension Müller and his Alpinists, who must certainly be waiting breakfast for him; and his whole person breathed a relief, a joy at getting rid finally of that dangerous acquaintance. As he walked along he emphasized with many energetic nods the eloquent explanations which Sonia would not wait to hear, but which he gave to himself mentally: *Bé!* . . yes, despotism certainly. . . He did n't deny that . . . but from that to action, *boufre!* . . And then, to make it his profession to shoot despots! . . Why, if all oppressed peoples applied to him — just as the Arabs did to Bombonnel whenever a panther roamed round their village — he could n't suffice for them all, never!

At this moment a hired carriage coming down the hill at full speed cut short his monologue. He had scarcely time to jump upon the sidewalk with a "Take care, you brute!" when his cry of anger was changed to one of stupefaction: "*Quès aco!* . . *Boudiou!* . . Not possible! . ."

I give you a thousand guesses to say what he saw in that old landau. . .

The delegation! the full delegation, Bravida, Pascalon, Excourbaniès, piled upon the back seat, pale, horror-stricken, ghastly, and two gendarmes in front of them, muskets in hand! The sight of all those profiles, motionless and mute, visible through the narrow frame of the carriage window, was like a nightmare. Nailed to the ground, as formerly on the ice by his Kennedy crampons, Tartarin was gazing at that fantastic vehicle flying along at a gallop, followed at full speed by a flock of schoolboys, their atlases swinging on their backs, when a voice shouted in his ears: "And here 's the fourth! . ." At the same time clutched, garotted, bound, he, too, was hoisted into a *locati* with gendarmes, among them an officer armed with a gigantic cavalry sabre, which he held straight up from between his knees, the point of it touching the roof of the vehicle.

Tartarin wanted to speak, to explain. Evidently there must be some mistake. . . He told his name, his nation, demanded his consul, and named a seller of Swiss honey, Ichener, whom he had met at the fair at Beaucaire. Then, on the persistent silence of his captors, he bethought him that this might be another bit of machinery in Bompard's fairyland; so, addressing the officer, he said with sly air: "For fun, *qué!* . . ha! *vaï*, you rogue, I know very well it is all a joke."

"Not another word, or I'll gag you," said the officer, rolling terrible eyes as if he meant to spit him on his sabre.

The other kept quiet, and stirred no more, but gazed through the door at the lake, the tall mountains of a humid green, the hotels and pensions with variegated roofs and gilded signs visible for miles, and on the slopes, as at the Rigi, a coming and going of market and provision baskets, and (like the Rigi again) a comical little railway, a dangerous mechanical plaything crawling up the height to Glion, and — to complete the resemblance to *Regina Montium* — a pouring, beating rain, an exchange of water and mist from the sky to Leman and Leman to the sky, the clouds descending till they touched the waves.

The vehicle crossed a drawbridge between a cluster of little shops of "chamoiseries," penknives, corkscrews, pocket-combs, etc., and stopped in the courtyard of an old castle overgrown with weeds, flanked by two round pepper-pot towers with black balconies guarded by parapets and supported by beams. Where was he? Tartarin learned where when he heard the officer of gendarmerie discussing the matter with the concierge of the castle, a fat man in a Greek cap who was jangling a bunch of rusty keys.

"Solitary confinement . . . but I have n't a place for him. The others have taken all . . . unless we put him in Bonnivard's dungeon."

"Yes, put him in Bonnivard's dungeon; that 's good enough for him," ordered the captain; and it was done as he said.

This Castle of Chillon, about which the P. C. A. had never for two days ceased to discourse to his dear Alpinists, and in which, by the irony of fate, he found himself suddenly incarcerated without knowing why, is one of the most frequented historical monuments in Switzerland. After having served as a summer residence to the Dukes of Savoie, then as a state-prison, afterwards as an arsenal for arms and munitions, it is to-day the mere pretext for an excursion, like the Rigi and the Tellsplatte. It still contains, however, a post of gendarmerie and a "violon," that is, a cell for drunkards and the naughty boys of the neighbourhood; but they are so rare in the peaceable Canton of Vaud that the "violon" is always empty and the concierge uses it as a receptacle to store his wood for winter. Therefore the arrival of all these prisoners had put him out of temper, especially at the thought that he could no longer take visitors to see the famous dungeon, which at this season of the year is the chief profit of the place.

Furious, he showed the way to Tartarin, who followed him without the courage to make the slightest resistance. A few crumbling steps, a damp corridor smelling like a cellar, a door thick as a wall with enormous hinges, and there they were, in a vast subterranean vault, with earthen floor and heavy Roman pillars in which were still the iron rings to which prisoners of state had been chained. A dim light fell, tremulous with the shimmer of the lake, through narrow slits in the wall, which scarcely showed more than a scrap of the sky.

"Here you are at home," said the jailer. "Be careful you don't go to the farther end: the pit is there. . ."

Tartarin recoiled, horrified: —

"The pit! *Boudiou!*"

"What do you expect, my lad? I am ordered to put you in Bonnivard's dungeon. . . I have put you in Bonnivard's dungeon. . . Now, if you have the means, you can be furnished with certain comforts, for instance, a mattress and coverlet for the night."

"Something to eat, in the first place," said Tartarin, from whom, very luckily, they had not taken his purse.

The concierge returned with a fresh roll, beer, and a sausage, greedily devoured by the new prisoner of Chillon, fasting since the night before and hollow with fatigue and emotion. While he ate on his stone bench in the gleam of his vent-hole window, the jailer examined him with a good-natured eye.

"Faith," said he, "I don't know what you have done, nor why they should treat you so severely. . ."

"Nor I either, *coquin de sort!* I know nothing about it," said Tartarin, with his mouth full.

"Well, it is very certain that you don't look like a bad man, and, surely, you would n't hinder a poor father of a family from earning his living, would you? . . Now, see here! . . I have got, up above there, a whole party of people who have come to see Bonnivard's dungeon. . . If you would promise me to keep quiet, and not try to run away . . ."

The worthy Tartarin bound himself by an oath; and five minutes later he beheld his dungeon invaded by his old acquaintances on the Rigi-Kulm and the Tellsplatte, that jackass Schwanthaler, the ineptissimus Astier-Réhu, the member of the Jockey-Club with his niece (h'm! h'm! . .) and all the travellers on Cook's Circular. Ashamed, dreading to be recognized, the unfortunate man concealed himself behind pillars, getting farther and farther away as the troop of tourists advanced, preceded by the concierge and his homily, delivered in a doleful voice: "Here is where the unfortunate Bonnivard, etc. . ."

They advanced slowly, retarded by discussions between the two *savants*, quarrelling as usual and ready to jump at each other's throats; the one waving his campstool, the other his travelling-bag in fantastic attitudes, which the twilight from the window-slits lengthened upon the vaulted roof.

By dint of retreating, Tartarin presently found himself close to the hole of the pit, a black pit open to the level of the soil, emitting the breath of ages, malarious and glacial. Frightened, he stopped short, and curled himself into a corner, his cap over his eyes. But the damp saltpetre of the walls affected him, and suddenly a stentorian sneeze, which made the tourists recoil, gave notice of his presence.

"*Tiens*, there 's Bonnivard! . ." cried the bold little Parisian woman in a Directory hat whom the gentleman from the Jockey-Club called his niece.

The Tarasconese hero did not allow himself to be disconcerted.

"They are really very curious, these pits," he said, in the most natural tone in the world, as if he was visiting the dungeon, like them, for pleasure; and so saying, he mingled with the other travellers, who smiled at recognizing the Alpinist of the Rigi-Kulm, the merry instigator of the famous ball.

"*Hé!* mossié . . . ballir . . . dantsir! . ."

The comical silhouette of the little fairy Schwanthaler rose up before him ready to seize him for a country dance. A fine mood he was in now for dancing! But not knowing how to rid himself of that determined little scrap of a woman, he offered his arm and gallantly showed her his dungeon, the ring to which the captive was chained, the trace of his steps on the stone round that pillar; and never, hearing him converse with such ease, did the good lady even dream that he too was a prisoner of state, a victim of the injustice and the wickedness of men. Terrible, however, was the departure, when the unfortunate Bonnivard, having conducted his partner to the door, took leave of her with the smile of a man of the world: "No, thank you, *vé!* . . I stay a few moments longer." Thereupon he bowed, and the jailer, who had his eye upon him, locked and bolted the door, to the stupefaction of everybody.

What a degradation! He perspired with anguish, unhappy man, while listening to the exclamations of the tourists as they walked away. Fortunately, the anguish was not renewed. No more tourists arrived that day on account of the bad weather. A terrible wind blew through the rotten boards, moans came up from the pit as from victims ill-buried, and the wash of the lake, swollen with rain, beat against the walls to the level of the window-slits and spattered its water upon the captive. At intervals the bell of a passing steamer, the clack of its paddle-wheels cut short the reflections of poor Tartarin, as evening, gray and gloomy, fell into the dungeon and seemed to enlarge it.

How explain this arrest, this imprisonment in the ill-omened place? Costecalde, perhaps . . . electioneering manœuvre at the last hour? . . Or, could it be that the Russian police, warned of his very imprudent language, his liaison with Sonia, had asked for his extradition? But if so, why arrest the delegates? . . What blame could attach to those poor unfortunates, whose terror and despair he imagined, although they were not, like him, in Bonnivard's dungeon, beneath those granite arches, where, since night had fallen, roamed monstrous rats, cockroaches, silent spiders with hairy, crooked legs.

But see what it is to possess a good conscience! In spite of rats, cold, spiders, and beetles, the great Tartarin found in the horror of that state-prison, haunted by the shades of martyrs, the same solid and sonorous sleep, mouth open, fists closed, which came to him, between the abysses and heaven, in the hut of the Alpine Club. He fancied he was dreaming when he heard his jailer say in the morning: —

"Get up; the prefect of the district is here. . . He has come to examine you. . ." Adding, with a certain respect, "To bring the prefect out in this way . . . why, you must be a famous scoundrel."

Scoundrel! no — but you may look like one, after spending the night in a damp and dusty dungeon without having a chance to make a toilet, however limited. And when, in the former stable of the castle transformed into a guardroom with muskets in racks along the walls, — when, I say, Tartarin, after a reassuring glance at his Alpinists seated between two gendarmes, appeared before the prefect of the district, he felt his disreputable appearance in presence of that correct and solemn magistrate with the carefully trimmed beard, who said to him sternly: —

"You call yourself Manilof, do you not? .. Russian subject . . . incendiary at St. Petersburg, refugee and murderer in Switzerland."

"Never in my life. . . It is all a mistake, an error. . ."

"Silence, or I'll gag you . . ." interrupted the captain.

The immaculate prefect continued: "To put an end to your denials. . . Do you know this rope?"

His rope! *coquin de sort!* His rope, woven with iron, made at Avignon. He lowered his head, to the stupefaction of the delegates, and said: "I know it."

"With this rope a man has been hung in the Canton of Unterwald. . ."

Tartarin, with a shudder, swore that he had nothing to do with it.

"We shall see!"

The Italian tenor was now introduced, — in other words, the police spy whom the Nihilists had hung to the branch of an oak-tree on the Brünig, but whose life was miraculously saved by woodchoppers.

The spy looked at Tartarin. "That is not the man," he said; then at the delegates, "Nor they, either. . . A mistake has been made."

The prefect, furious, turned to Tartarin. "Then, what are you doing here?" he asked.

"That is what I ask myself, *vé!* . ." replied the president, with the aplomb of innocence.

After a short explanation the Alpinists of Tarascon, restored to liberty, departed from the Castle of

Chillon, where none have ever felt its oppressive and romantic melancholy more than they. They stopped at the Pension Müller to get their luggage and banner, and to pay for the breakfast of the day before which they had not had time to eat; then they started for Geneva by the train. It rained. Through the streaming windows they read the names of stations of aristocratic villeggiatura: Clarens, Vevey, Lausanne; red chalets, little gardens of rare shrubs passed them under a misty veil, the branches of the trees, the turrets on the roofs, the galleries of the hotels all dripping.

Installed in one corner of a long railway carriage, on two seats facing each other, the Alpinists had a downcast and discomfited appearance. Bravida, very sour, complained of aches, and repeatedly asked Tartarin with savage irony: "Eh *bé!* you 've seen it now, that dungeon of Bonnivard's that you were so set on seeing . . . I think you have seen it, *qué?*" Excourbaniès, voiceless for the first time in his life, gazed piteously at the lake which escorted them the whole way: "Water! more water, *Boudiou!* . . after this, I 'll never in my life take another bath."

Stupefied by a terror which still lasts, Pascalon, the banner between his legs, sat back in his seat, looking to right and left like a hare fearful of being caught again. . . And Tartarin? . . Oh! he, ever dignified and calm, he was diverting himself by reading the Southern newspapers, a package of which had been sent to the Pension Müller, all of them having reproduced from the *Forum* the account of his ascension, the same he had himself dictated, but enlarged, magnified, and embellished with ineffable laudations. Suddenly the hero gave a cry, a formidable cry, which resounded to the end of the carriage. All the travellers sat up excitedly, expecting an accident. It was simply an item in the *Forum*, which Tartarin now read to his Alpinists: —

"Listen to this: 'Rumour has it that V. P. C. A. Costecalde, though scarcely recovered from the jaundice which kept him in bed for some days, is about to start for the ascension of Mont Blanc; to climb higher than Tartarin! . .' Oh! the villain. . . He wants to ruin the effect of my Jungfrau. . . Well, well! wait a bit; I'll blow you out of water, you and your mountain. . . Chamounix is only a few hours from Geneva; I'll do Mont Blanc before him! Will you come, my children?"

Bravida protested. *Outre!* he had had enough of adventures.

"Enough and more than enough . . ." howled Excourbaniès, in his almost extinct voice.

"And you, Pascalon?" asked Tartarin, gently.

The pupil dared not raise his eyes: —

"Ma-a-aster. . ." He, too, abandoned him!

"Very good," said the hero, solemnly and angrily. "I will go alone; all the honour will be mine. . . *Zou!* give me back the banner. . ."

XII.

Hôtel Baltet at Chamonix. "I smell garlic!" The use of rope in Alpine climbing. "Shake hands." A pupil of Schopenhauer. At the hut on the Grands-Mulets. "Tartarin, I must speak to you."

NINE o'clock was ringing from the belfry at Chamonix of a cold night shivering with the north wind and rain; the black streets, the darkened houses (except, here and there, the façades and courtyards of hotels where the gas was still burning) made the surroundings still more gloomy under the vague reflection of the snow of the mountains, white as a planet on the night of the sky.

At the Hôtel Baltet, one of the best and most frequented inns of this Alpine village, the numerous travellers and boarders had disappeared one by one, weary with the excursions of the day, until no one was left in the grand salon but one English traveller playing silently at backgammon with his wife, his innumerable daughters, in brown-holland aprons with bibs, engaged in copying notices of an approaching evangelical service, and a young Swede sitting before the fireplace, in which was a good fire of blazing logs. The latter was pale, hollow-cheeked, and gazed at the flame with a gloomy air as he drank his grog of kirsch and seltzer From time to time some belated traveller crossed the salon, with soaked gaiters and streaming mackintosh, looked at the great barometer hanging to the wall, tapped it, consulted the mercury as to the weather of the following day, and went off to bed in consternation. Not a word; no other manifestations of life than the crackling of the fire, the pattering on the panes, and the angry roll of the Arve under the arches of its wooden bridge, a few yards distant from the hotel.

Suddenly the door of the salon opened, a porter in a silver-laced coat came in, carrying valises and rugs, with four shivering Alpinists behind him, dazzled by the sudden change from icy darkness into warmth and light.

"*Boudiou!* what weather! . ."

"Something to eat, *zou!*"

"Warm the beds, *qué!*"

They all talked at once from the depths of their mufflers and ear-pads, and it was hard to know which to obey, when a short stout man, whom the others called "*présidain*," enforced silence by shouting more loudly than they.

"In the first place, give me the visitors' book," he ordered. Turning it over with a numbed hand, he read aloud the names of all who had been at the hotel for the last week: "'Doctor Schwanthaler and madame.' Again! . . 'Astier-Réhu of the French Academy. . .'" He deciphered thus two or three pages, turning pale when he thought he saw the name he was in search of. Then, at the end, flinging the book on the table with a laugh of triumph, the squat man made a boyish gambol quite extraordinary in one of his bulky shape: "He is not here, *vé!* he has n't come. . . And yet he must have stopped here if he had. . . Done for! Costecalde. . . lagadigadeou! . . quick! to our suppers, children! . ." And the worthy Tartarin, having bowed to the ladies, marched to the dining-room, followed by the famished and tumultuous delegation.

Ah, yes! the delegation, all of them, even Bravida himself. . . Is it possible? come now! . . But — just think what would be said of them down there in Tarascon, if they returned without Tartarin? They each felt this. And, at the moment of separation in the station at Geneva, the buffet witnessed a pathetic scene of tears, embraces, heart-rending adieus to the banner; as the result of which adieus the whole company piled itself into the landau which Tartarin had chartered to take him to Chamonix. A glorious route, which they did with their eyes shut, wrapped in their rugs and filling the carriage with sonorous snores, unmindful of the wonderful landscape, which, from Sallanches, was unrolling before them in a mist of blue rain: ravines, forests, foaming waterfalls, with the crest of Mont Blanc above the clouds, visible or vanishing, according to the lay of the land in the valley they were crossing. Tired of that sort of natural beauty, our Tarasconese friends thought only of making up for the wretched night they had spent behind the bolts of Chillon. And even now, at the farther end of the long, deserted dining-room of the Hôtel Baltet, when served with the warmed-over soup and *entrées* of the *table d'hôte*, they ate voraciously, without saying a word, eager only to get to bed. All of a sudden, Excourbaniès, who was swallowing his food like a somnambulist, came out of his plate, and sniffing the air about him, remarked: "I smell garlic! . ."

"True, I smell it," said Bravida. And the whole party, revived by this reminder of home, these fumes of the national dishes, which Tartarin, at least, had not inhaled for so long, turned round in their chairs with gluttonous anxiety. The odour came from the other end of the dining-room, from a little room where some one was supping apart, a personage of importance, no doubt, for the white cap of the head cook was constantly appearing at the wicket that opened into the kitchen as he passed to the girl in waiting certain little covered dishes which she conveyed to the inner apartment.

"Some one from the South, that 's certain," murmured the gentle Pascalon; and the president, becoming ghastly at the idea of Costecalde, said commandingly: —

"Go and see, Spiridion . . . and bring us word who it is. . ."

A loud roar of laughter came from that little apartment as soon as the brave "gong" entered it, at the order of his chief; and he presently returned, leading by the hand a tall devil with a big nose, a mischievous eye, and a napkin under his chin, like the gastronomic horse.

"*Vé!* Bompard. . ."

"*Té!* the Impostor. . ."

"*Hé!* Gonzague. . . How are you?"

"*Différemment*, messieurs: your most obedient . . ." said the courier, shaking hands with all, and sitting down at the table of the Tarasconese to share with them a dish of mushrooms with garlic prepared by *mère* Baltet, who, together with her husband had a horror of the cooking for the *table d'hôte.*

Was it the national concoction, or the joy of meeting a compatriot, that delightful Bompard with his inexhaustible imagination? Certain it is that weariness and the desire to sleep took wings, champagne was uncorked, and, with moustachios all messy with froth, they laughed and shouted and gesticulated, clasping one another round the body effusively happy.

"I'll not leave you now, *vé!*" said Bompard. "My Peruvians have gone. . . I am free. . ."

"Free! . . Then to-morrow you and I will ascend Mont Blanc."

"Ah! you do Mont Blanc to-morrow?" said Bompard, without enthusiasm.

"Yes, I knock out Costecalde. . . When he gets here, *uit!* . . No Mont Blanc for him. . . You'll go, *qué*, Gonzague?"

"I'll go . . . I'll go . . . that is, if the weather permits. . . The fact is, that the mountain is not always suitable at this season."

"Ah! *vaï!* not suitable indeed! . ." exclaimed Tartarin, crinkling up his eyes by a meaning laugh which Bompard seemed not to understand.

"Let us go into the salon for our coffee. . . We 'll consult *père* Baltet. He knows all about it, he 's an old guide who has made the ascension twenty-seven times."

All the delegates cried out: "Twenty-seven times! *Boufre!*"

"Bompard always exaggerates," said the P. C. A. severely, but not without a touch of envy.

In the salon they found the daughters of the minister still bending over their notices, while the father and mother were asleep at their backgammon, and the tall Swede was stirring his seltzer grog with the same disheartened gesture. But the invasion of the Tarasconese Alpinists, warmed by champagne, caused, as may well be supposed, some distraction of mind to the young conventiclers. Never had those charming young persons seen coffee taken with such rollings of the eyes and pantomimic action.

"Sugar, Tartarin?"

"Of course not, commander. . . You know very well. . . Since Africa! . ."

"True; excuse me. . . *Té!* here comes M. Baltet."

"Sit down there, *qué*, Monsieur Baltet."

"Vive Monsieur Baltet! . . Ha! ha! *fen dé brut.*"

Surrounded, captured by all these men whom he had never seen before in his life, *père* Baltet smiled with a tranquil air. A robust Savoyard, tall and broad, with a round back and slow walk, a heavy face, close-shaven, enlivened by two shrewd eyes, that were still young, contrasting oddly with his baldness, caused by chills at dawn upon the mountain.

"These gentlemen wish to ascend Mont Blanc?" he said, gauging the Tarasconese Alpinists with a glance both humble and sarcastic. Tartarin was about to reply, but Bompard forestalled him: —

"Is n't the season too far advanced?"

"Why, no," replied the former guide. "Here 's a Swedish gentleman who goes up to-morrow, and I am expecting at the end of this week two American gentlemen to make the ascent; and one of them is blind."

"I know. I met them on the Guggi."

"Ah! monsieur has been upon the Guggi?"

"Yes, a week ago, in doing the Jungfrau."

Here a quiver among the evangelical conventiclers; all pens stopped, and heads were raised in the direction of Tartarin, who, to the eyes of these English maidens, resolute climbers, expert in all sports, acquired considerable authority. He had gone up the Jungfrau!

"A fine thing!" said *père* Baltet, considering the P. C. A. with some astonishment; while Pascalon, intimidated by the ladies and blushing and stuttering, murmured softly: —

"Ma-a-aster, tell them the . . . the . . . thing . . . crevasse."

The president smiled. "Child! . ." he said: but, all the same, he began the tale of his fall; first with a careless, indifferent air, and then with startled motions, jigglings at the end of the rope over the abyss, hands outstretched and appealing. The young ladies quivered, and devoured him with those cold English eyes, those eyes that open round.

In the silence that followed, rose the voice of Bompard: —

"On Chimborazo we never roped one another to cross crevasses."

The delegates looked at one another. As a tarasconade that remark surpassed them all.

"Oh, *that* Bompard, *pas mouain* . . ." murmured Pascalon, with ingenuous admiration.

But père Baltet, taking Chimborazo seriously, protested against the practice of not roping. According to him, no ascension over ice was possible without a rope, a good rope of Manila hemp; then, if one slipped, the others could hold him.

"Unless the rope breaks, Monsieur Baltet," said Tartarin, remembering the catastrophe on the Matterhorn.

But the landlord, weighing his words, replied:

"The rope did not break on the Matterhorn . . . the rear guide cut it with a blow of his axe. . ."

As Tartarin expressed indignation, —

"Beg pardon, monsieur, but the guide had a right to do it. . . He saw the impossibility of holding back those who had fallen, and he detached himself from them to save his life, that of his son, and of the traveller they were accompanying. . . Without his action seven persons would have lost their lives instead of four."

Then a discussion began. Tartarin thought that in letting yourself be roped in file you were bound in honour to live and die together; and growing excited, especially in presence of ladies, he backed his opinion by facts and by persons present: "To-morrow, *té!* to-morrow, in roping myself to Bompard, it is not a simple precaution that I shall take, it is an oath before God and man to be one with my companion and to die sooner than return without him, *coquin de sort!*"

"I accept the oath for myself, as for you, Tartarin. . ." cried Bompard from the other side of the round table.

Exciting moment!

The minister, electrified, rose, came to the hero and inflicted upon him a pump-handle exercise of the hand that was truly English. His wife did likewise, then all the young ladies continued the *shake hands* with enough vigour to have brought water to the fifth floor of the house. The delegates, I ought to mention, were less enthusiastic.

"Eh, *bé!* as for me," said Bravida, "I am of M. Baltet's opinion. In matters of this kind, each man should look to his own skin, *pardi!* and *I* understand that cut of the axe perfectly."

"You amaze me, Placide," said Tartarin, severely; adding in a low voice: "Behave yourself! England is watching us."

The old captain, who certainly had kept a root of bitterness in his heart ever since the excursion to Chillon, made a gesture that signified: "I don't care *that* for England. . ." and might perhaps have drawn upon himself a sharp rebuke from the president, irritated at so much cynicism, but at this moment the young man with the heart-broken look, filled to the full with grog and melancholy, brought his extremely bad French into the conversation. He thought, he said, that the guide was right to cut the rope: to deliver from existence those four unfortunate men, still young, condemned to live for many years longer; to send them, by a mere gesture, to peace, to nothingness, — what a noble and generous action!

Tartarin exclaimed against it: —

"Pooh! young man, at your age, to talk of life with such aversion, such anger. . . What has life done to you?"

"Nothing; it bores me." He had studied philosophy at Christiania, and since then, won to the ideas of Schopenhauer and Hartmann, he had found existence dreary, inept, chaotic. On the verge of suicide he shut his books, at the entreaty of his parents, and started to travel, striking everywhere against the same distress, the gloomy wretchedness of this life. Tartarin and his friends, he said, seemed to him the only beings content to live that he had ever met with.

The worthy P. C. A. began to laugh. "It is all race, young man. Everybody feels like that in Tarascon. That 's the land of the good God. From morning till night we laugh and sing, and the rest of the time we dance the farandole . . . like this . . . *té!*" So saying, he cut a double shuffle with the grace and lightness of a big cockchafer trying its wings.

But the delegates had not the steel nerves nor the indefatigable spirit of their chief. Excourbaniès growled out: " He 'll keep us here till midnight." But Bravida jumped up, furious. " Let us go to bed, *vé!* I can't stand my sciatica. . ." Tartarin consented, remembering the ascension on the morrow; and the Tarasconese, candlesticks in hand, went up the broad staircase of granite that led to the chambers, while Baltet went to see about provisions and hire the mules and guides.

" *Té!* it is snowing. . ."

Those were the first words of the worthy Tartarin when he woke in the morning and saw his windows covered with frost and his bedroom inundated with white reflections. But when he hooked his little mirror as usual to the window-fastening, he understood his mistake, and saw that Mont Blanc, sparkling before him in the splendid sunshine, was the cause of that light. He opened his window to the breeze of the glacier, keen and refreshing, bringing with it the sound of the cattle-bells as the herds followed the long, lowing sound of the shepherd's horn. Something fortifying, pastoral, filled the atmosphere such as he had never before breathed in Switzerland.

Below, an assemblage of guides and porters awaited him. The Swede was already mounted upon his mule, and among the spectators, who formed a circle, was the minister's family, all those active young ladies, their hair in early morning style, who had come for another " shake hands" with the hero who had haunted their dreams.

"Splendid weather! make haste! . ." cried the landlord, whose skull was gleaming in the sunshine like a pebble. But though Tartarin himself might hasten, it was not so easy a matter to rouse from sleep his dear Alpinists, who intended to accompany him as far as the Pierre-Pointue, where the mule-path ends. Neither prayers nor arguments could persuade the Commander to get out of bed. With his cotton nightcap over his ears and his face to the wall, he contented himself with replying to Tartarin's objurgations by a cynical Tarasconese proverb: "Whoso has the credit of getting up early may sleep until midday. . ." As for Bompard, he kept repeating, the whole time, "Ah, *vaï*, Mont Blanc . . . what a humbug. . ." Nor did they rise until the P. C. A. had issued a formal order.

At last, however, the caravan started, and passed through the little streets in very imposing array: Pascalon on the leading mule, banner unfurled; and last in file, grave as a mandarin amid the guides and porters on either side his mule, came the worthy Tartarin, more stupendously Alpinist than ever, wearing a pair of new spectacles with smoked and convex glasses, and his famous rope made at Avignon, recovered — we know at what cost.

Very much looked at, almost as much as the banner, he was jubilant under his dignified mask, enjoyed the picturesqueness of these Savoyard village streets, so different from the too neat, too varnished Swiss village, looking like a new toy; he enjoyed the contrast of these hovels scarcely rising above the ground, where the stable fills the largest space, with the grand and sumptuous hotels five storeys high, the glittering signs of which were as much out of keeping with the hovels as the gold-laced cap of the porter and the pumps and black coats of the waiters with the Savoyard head-gear, the fustian jackets, the felt hats of the charcoal-burners with their broad wings.

On the square were landaus with the horses taken out, manure-carts side by side with travelling-carriages, and a troop of pigs idling in the sun before the post-office, from which issued an Englishman in a white linen cap, with a package of letters and a copy of *The Times*, which he read as he walked along, before he opened his correspondence. The cavalcade of the Tarasconese passed all this, accompanied by the scuffling of mules, the war-cry of Excourbaniès (to whom the sun had restored the use of his gong), the pastoral chimes on the neighbouring slopes, and the dash of the river, gushing from the glacier in a torrent all white and sparkling, as if it bore upon its breast both sun and snow.

On leaving the village Bompard rode his mule beside that of the president, and said to the latter, rolling his eyes in a most extraordinary manner: "Tartarin, I *must* speak to you. . ."

"Presently. . ." said the P. C. A., then engaged in a philosophical discussion with the young Swede, whose black pessimism he was endeavouring to correct by the marvellous spectacle around them, those pastures with great zones of light and shade, those forests of sombre green crested with the whiteness of the dazzling *névés*.

After two attempts to speak to the president, Bompard was forced to give it up. The Arve having been crossed by a little bridge, the caravan now entered one of those narrow, zigzag roads among the firs where the mules, one by one, follow with their fantastic sabots all the sinuosities of the ravines, and our tourists had their attention fully occupied in keeping their equilibrium by the help of many an "*Outre!* . . *Boufre!* . . gently, gently! . ." with which they guided their beasts.

At the chalet of the Pierre-Pointue, where Pascalon and Excourbaniès were to wait the return of the excursionists, Tartarin, much occupied in ordering breakfast and in looking after porters and guides, still paid no attention to Bompard's whisperings. But — singular fact, which was not remarked until later — in spite of the fine weather, the good wine, and that purified atmosphere of ten thousand feet above sea-level, the breakfast was melancholy. While they heard the guides laughing and making merry apart, the table of the Tarasconese was silent except for the rattle of glasses and the clatter of the heavy plates and covers on the white wood. Was it the presence of that morose Swede, or the visible uneasiness of Bompard, or some presentiment? At any rate, the party set forth, sad as a battalion without its band, towards the glacier of the Bossons, where the true ascent begins.

On setting foot upon the ice, Tartarin could not help smiling at the recollection of the Guggi and his perfected crampons. What a difference between the neophyte he then was and the first-class Alpinist he felt he had become! Steady on his heavy boots, which the porter of the hotel had ironed that very morning with four stout nails, expert in wielding his ice-axe, he scarcely needed the hand of a guide, and then less to support him than to show him the way. The smoked glasses moderated the reflections of the glacier, which a recent avalanche had powdered with fresh snow, and through which little spaces of a glaucous green showed themselves here and there, slippery and treacherous. Very calm, confident through experience that there was not the slightest danger, Tartarin walked along the verge of the crevasses with their smooth, iridescent sides stretching downward indefinitely, and made his way among the *séracs*, solely intent on keeping up with the Swedish student, an intrepid walker, whose long gaiters with their silver buckles marched, thin and lank, beside his alpenstock, which looked like a third leg. Their philosophical discussion continuing, in spite of the difficulties of the way, a good stout voice, familiar and panting, could be heard in the frozen space, sonorous as the swell of a river: "You know me, Otto. . ."

Bompard all this time was undergoing misadventures. Firmly convinced, up to that very morning, that Tartarin would never go to the length of his vaunting, and would no more ascend Mont Blanc than he had the Jungfrau, the luckless courier had dressed himself as usual, without nailing his boots, or even utilizing his famous invention for shoeing the feet of soldiers, and without so much as his alpenstock, the mountaineers of the Chimborazo never using them. Armed only with a little switch, quite in keeping with the blue ribbon of his hat and his ulster, this approach to the glacier terrified him, for, in spite of his tales, it is, of course, well understood that the Impostor had never in his life made an ascension. He was somewhat reassured, however, on seeing from the top of the moraine with what facility Tartarin made his way on the ice; and he resolved to follow him as far as the hut on the Grands-Mulets, where it was intended to pass the night. He did not get there without difficulty. His first step laid him flat on his back; at the second he fell forward on his hands and knees: "No, thank you, I did it on purpose," he said to the guides who endeavoured to pick him up. "American fashion, *vé!* . . as they do on the Chimborazo." That position seeming to be convenient, he kept it, creeping on four paws, his hat pushed back, and his ulster sweeping the ice like the pelt of a gray bear; very calm, withal, and relating to those about him that in the Cordilleras of the Andes he had scaled a mountain thirty thousand feet high. He did not say how much time it took him, but it must have been long, judging by this stage to the Grands-Mulets, where he arrived an hour after Tartarin, a disgusting mass of muddy snow, with frozen hands in his knitted gloves.

In comparison with the hut on the Guggi, that which the commune of Chamonix has built on the Grands-Mulets is really comfortable. When Bompard entered the kitchen, where a grand wood-fire was blazing, he found Tartarin and the Swedish student drying their boots, while the hut-keeper, a shrivelled old fellow with long white hair that fell in meshes, exhibited the treasures of his little museum.

Of evil augury, this museum is a reminder of all the catastrophes known to have taken place on the Mont Blanc for the forty years that the old man had kept the inn, and as he took them from their show-case, he related the lamentable origin of each of them. . . This piece of cloth and those waistcoat buttons were the memorial of a Russian *savant*, hurled by a hurricane upon the Brenva glacier. . . These jaw teeth were all that remained of one of the guides of a famous caravan of eleven travellers and porters who disappeared forever in a *tourmente* of snow. . . In the fading light and the pale reflection of the *névés* against the window, the production of these mortuary relics, these monotonous recitals, had something very poignant about them, and all the more because the old man softened his quavering voice at pathetic items, and even shed tears on displaying a scrap of green veil worn by an English lady rolled down by an avalanche in 1827.

In vain Tartarin reassured himself by dates, convinced that in those early days the Company had not yet organized the ascensions without danger; this Savoyard *vocero* oppressed his heart, and he went to the doorway for a moment to breathe.

Night had fallen, engulfing the depths. The Bossons stood out, livid, and very close; while the Mont Blanc reared its summit, still rosy, still caressed by the departed sun. The Southerner was recovering his serenity from this smile of nature when the shadow of Bompard rose behind him.

"Is that you, Gonzague. . . As you see, I am getting the good of the air. . . He annoyed me, that old fellow, with his stories."

"Tartarin," said Bompard, squeezing the arm of the P. C. A. till he nearly ground it, "I hope that this is enough, and that you are going to put an end to this ridiculous expedition."

The great man opened wide a pair of astonished eyes.

"What stuff are you talking to me now?"

Whereupon Bompard made a terrible picture of the thousand deaths that awaited him; crevasses, avalanches, hurricanes, whirlwinds . . .

Tartarin interrupted him: —

"Ah! *vaï*, you rogue; and the Company? Is n't Mont Blanc managed like the rest?"

"Managed? . . the Company? . ." said Bompard, bewildered, remembering nothing whatever of his tarasconade, which Tartarin now repeated to him word for word — Switzerland a vast Association, lease of the mountains, machinery of the crevasses; on which the former courier burst out laughing.

"What! you really believed me? . . Why, that was a *galéjade*, a fib. . . Among us Tarasconese you ought surely to know what talking means. . ."

"Then," asked Tartarin, with much emotion, "the Jungfrau was not *prepared?*"

"Of course not."

"And if the rope had broken? . ."

"Ah! my poor friend. . ."

The hero closed his eyes, pale with retrospective terror, and for one moment he hesitated. . . This landscape of polar cataclysm, cold, gloomy, yawning with gulfs . . . those laments of the old hut-man still weeping in his ears. . . *Outre!* what will they make me do? . . Then, suddenly, he thought of the *folk* at Tarascon, of the banner to be unfurled "up there," and he said to himself that with good guides and a trusty companion like Bompard . . . He had done the Jungfrau . . . why should n't he do Mont Blanc?

Laying his large hand on the shoulder of his friend, he began in a virile voice: —

"Listen to me, Gonzague. . ."

XIII.

The catastrophe.

On a dark, dark night, moonless, starless, skyless, on the trembling whiteness of a vast ledge of snow, slowly a long rope unrolled itself, to which were attached in file certain timorous and very small shades, preceded, at the distance of a hundred feet, by a lantern casting a red light along the way. Blows of an ice-axe ringing on the hard snow, the roll of the ice blocks thus detached, alone broke the silence of the *névé*, on which the steps of the caravan made no sound. From minute to minute, a cry, a smothered groan, the fall of a body on the ice, and then immediately a strong voice sounding from the end of the rope: "Go gently, Gonzague, and don't fall." For poor Bompard had made up his mind to follow his friend Tartarin to the summit of Mont Blanc. Since two in the morning — it was now four by the president's repeater — the hapless courier had groped along, a galley slave on the chain, dragged, pushed, vacillating, balking, compelled to restrain the varied exclamations extorted from him by his mishaps, for an avalanche was on the watch, and the slightest concussion, a mere vibration of the crystalline air, might send down its masses of snow and ice. To suffer in silence! what torture to a native of Tarascon!

But the caravan halted. Tartarin asked why. A discussion in low voice was heard; animated whisperings: "It is your companion who won't come on," said the Swedish student. The order of march was broken; the human chaplet returned upon itself, and they found themselves all at the edge of a vast crevasse, called by the mountaineers a *roture*. Preceding ones they had crossed by means of a ladder, over which they crawled on their hands and knees; here the crevasse was much wider and the ice-cliff rose on the other side to a height of eighty or a hundred feet. It was necessary to descend to the bottom of the gully, which grew smaller as it went down, by means of steps cut in the ice, and to reascend in the same way on the other side. But Bompard obstinately refused to do so.

Leaning over the abyss, which the shadows represented as bottomless, he watched through the damp vapour the movements of the little lantern by which the guides below were preparing the way. Tartarin, none too easy himself, warmed his own courage by exhorting his friend: "Come now, Gonzague, *zou!*" and then in a lower voice coaxed him to honour, invoked the banner, Tarascon, the Club. . .

"Ah! *vaï*, the Club indeed! . . I don't belong to it," replied the other, cynically.

Then Tartarin explained to him where to set his feet, and assured him that nothing was easier.

"For you, perhaps, but not for me. . ."

"But you said you had a habit of it. . ."

"*Bé!* yes! habit, of course . . . which habit? I have so many . . . habit of smoking, sleeping . . ."

"And lying, especially," interrupted the president.

"Exaggerating — come now!" said Bompard, not the least in the world annoyed.

However, after much hesitation, the threat of leaving him there all alone decided him to go slowly, deliberately, down that terrible miller's ladder. . . The going up was more difficult, for the other face was nearly perpendicular, smooth as marble, and higher than King Réné's tower at Tarascon. From below, the winking light of the guides going up, looked like a glow-worm on the march. He was forced to follow, however, for the snow beneath his feet was not solid, and gurgling sounds of circulating water heard round a fissure told of more than could be seen at the foot of that wall of ice, of depths that were sending upward the chilling breath of subterranean abysses.

"Go gently, Gonzague, for fear of falling. . ."

That phrase, which Tartarin uttered with tender intonations, almost supplicating, borrowed a solemn signification from the respective positions of the ascensionists, clinging with feet and hands one above the other to the wall, bound by the rope and the similarity of their movements, so that the fall or the awkwardness of one put all in danger. And what danger! *coquin de sort!* It sufficed to hear fragments of the ice-wall bounding and dashing downward with the echo of their fall to imagine the open jaws of the monster watching there below to snap you up at the least false step.

But what is this? . . Lo, the tall Swede, next above Tartarin, has stopped and touches with his iron heels the cap of the P. C. A. In vain the guides called: "Forward! . ." And the president: "Go on, young man! . ." He did not stir. Stretched at full length, clinging to the ice with careless hand, the Swede leaned down, the glimmering dawn touching his scanty beard and giving light to the singular expression of his dilated eyes, while he made a sign to Tartarin: —

"What a fall, hey? if one let go. . ."

"*Outre!* I should say so . . . you would drag us all down. . . Go on!"

The other remained motionless.

"A fine chance to be done with life, to return into chaos through the bowels of the earth, and roll from fissure to fissure like that bit of ice which I kick with my foot. . ." And he leaned over frightfully to watch the fragment bounding downward and echoing endlessly in the blackness.

"Take care! . ." cried Tartarin, livid with terror. Then, desperately clinging to the oozing wall, he resumed, with hot ardour, his argument of the night before in favour of existence. "There 's *good* in it. . . What the deuce! . . At your age, a fine young fellow like you. . . Don't you believe in love, *qué!*"

No, the Swede did not believe in it. Ideal love is a poet's lie; the other, only a need he had never felt. . .

"*Bé!* yes! *bé!* yes! . . It is true poets lie, they always say more than there is; but for all that, she is nice, the *femellan* — that's what they call women in our parts. Besides, there's children, pretty little darlings that look like us."

"Children! a source of grief. Ever since she had them my mother has done nothing but weep."

"Listen, Otto, you know me, my good friend. . ."

And with all the valorous ardour of his soul Tartarin exhausted himself to revive and rub to life at that distance this victim of Schopenhauer and of Hartmann, two rascals he'd like to catch at the corner of a wood, *coquin de sort!* and make them pay for all the harm they had done to youth. . .

Represent to yourselves during this discussion the high wall of freezing, glaucous, streaming ice touched by a pallid ray of light, and that string of human beings glued to it in echelon, with ill-omened rumblings rising from the yawning depth, together with the curses of the guides and their threats to detach and abandon the travellers. Tartarin, seeing that no argument could convince the madman or clear off his vertigo of death, suggested to him the idea of throwing himself from the highest peak of the Mont Blanc. . . That indeed! *that* would be worth doing, up there! A fine end among the elements. . . But here, at the bottom of a cave. . . Ah! *vaï*, what a blunder! . . And he put such tone into his words, brusque and yet persuasive, such conviction, that the Swede allowed himself to be conquered, and there they were, at last, one by one, at the top of that terrible *roture*.

They were now unroped, and a halt was called for a bite and sup. It was daylight; a cold wan light among a circle of peaks and shafts, overtopped by the Mont Blanc, still thousands of feet above them. The guides were apart, gesticulating and consulting, with many shakings of the head. Seated on the white ground, heavy and huddled up, their round backs in their brown jackets, they looked like marmots getting ready to hibernate. Bompard and Tartarin, uneasy, shocked, left the young Swede to eat alone, and came up to the guides just as their leader was saying with a grave air: —

"He is smoking his pipe; there 's no denying it."

"Who is smoking his pipe?" asked Tartarin.

"Mont Blanc, monsieur; look there. . ."

And the guide pointed to the extreme top of the highest peak, where, like a plume, a white vapour floated toward Italy.

"*Et autremain*, my good friend, when the Mont Blanc smokes his pipe, what does that mean?"

"It means, monsieur, that there is a terrible wind on the summit, and a snow-storm which will be down upon us before long. And I tell you, that 's dangerous."

"Let us go back," said Bompard, turning green; and Tartarin added: —

"Yes, yes, certainly; no false vanity, of course."

But here the Swedish student interfered. He had paid his money to be taken to the top of

Mont Blanc, and nothing should prevent his getting there. He would go alone, if no one would accompany him. "Cowards! cowards!" he added, turning to the guides; and he uttered the insult in the same ghostly voice with which he had roused himself just before to suicide.

"You shall see if we are cowards. . . Fasten to the rope and forward!" cried the head guide. This time, it was Bompard who protested energetically. He had had enough, and he wanted to be taken back. Tartarin supported him vigorously.

"You see very well that that young man is insane. . ." he said, pointing to the Swede, who had already started with great strides through the heavy snow-flakes which the wind was beginning to whirl on all sides. But nothing could stop the men who had just been called cowards. The marmots were now wide-awake and heroic. Tartarin could not even obtain a conductor to take him back with Bompard to the Grands-Mulets. Besides, the way was very easy; three hours' march, counting a detour of twenty minutes to get round that *roture*, if they were afraid to go through it alone.

"*Outre!* yes, we are afraid of it . . ." said Bompard, without the slightest shame; and the two parties separated.

Bompard and the P. C. A. were now alone. They advanced with caution on the snowy desert, fastened to a rope: Tartarin first, feeling his way gravely with his ice-axe; filled with a sense of responsibility and finding relief in it.

"Courage! keep cool! . . We shall get out of it all right," he called to Bompard repeatedly. It is thus that an officer in battle, seeking to drive away his own fear, brandishes his sword and shouts to his men: "Forward! *s. n. de D.!* . . all balls don't kill."

At last, here they were at the end of that horrible crevasse. From there to the hut there were no great obstacles; but the wind blew, and blinded them with snowy whirlwinds. Further advance was impossible for fear of losing their way.

"Let us stop here for a moment," said Tartarin. A gigantic *sérac* of ice offered them a hollow at its base. Into it they crept, spreading down the india-rubber rug of the president and opening a flask of rum, the sole article of provision left them by the guides. A little warmth and comfort followed thereon, while the blows of the ice-axes, getting fainter and fainter up the height, told them of the progress of the expedition. They echoed in the heart of the P. C. A. like a pang of regret for not having done the Mont Blanc to the summit.

"Who 'll know it?" returned Bompard, cynically. "The porters kept the banner, and Chamonix will believe it is you."

"You are right," cried Tartarin, in a tone of conviction; "the honour of Tarascon is safe. . ."

But the elements grew furious, the north-wind a hurricane, the snow flew in volumes. Both were silent, haunted by sinister ideas; they remembered those ill-omened relics in the glass case of the old inn-keeper, his laments, the legend of that American tourist found petrified with cold and hunger, holding in his stiffened hand a note-book, in which his agonies were written down even to the last convulsion, which made the pencil slip and the signature uneven.

"Have you a note-book, Gonzague?"

And the other, comprehending without further explanation: —

"Ha! *vaï*, a note-book! . . If you think I am going to let myself die like that American! . . Quick, let's get on! come out of this."

"Impossible. . . At the first step we should be blown like straws and pitched into some abyss."

"Well then, we had better shout; the Grands-Mulets is not far off. . ." And Bompard, on his knees, in the attitude of a cow at pasture, lowing, roared out, "Help! help! help! . ."

"To arms!" shouted Tartarin, in his most sonorous chest voice, which the grotto repercussioned in thunder.

Bompard seized his arm: "Horrors! the *sérac!* . ." Positively the whole block was trembling; another shout and that mass of accumulated icicles would be down upon their heads. They stopped, rigid, motionless, wrapped in a horrid silence, presently broken by a distant rolling sound, coming nearer, increasing, spreading to the horizon, and dying at last far down, from gulf to gulf.

"Poor souls!" murmured Tartarin, thinking of the Swede and his guides caught, no doubt, and swept away by the avalanche.

Bompard shook his head: "We are scarcely better off than they," he said.

And truly, their situation was alarming; but they did not dare to stir from their icy grotto, nor to risk even their heads outside in the squall.

To complete the oppression of their hearts, from the depths of the valley rose the howling of a dog, baying at death. Suddenly Tartarin, with swollen eyes, his lips quivering, grasped the hands of his companion, and looking at him gently, said: —

"Forgive me, Gonzague, yes, yes, forgive me. I was rough to you just now; I treated you as a liar. . ."

"Ah! *vaï*. What harm did that do me?"

"I had less right than any man to do so, for I have lied a great deal myself, and at this supreme moment I feel the need to open my heart, to free my bosom, to publicly confess my imposture. . ."

"Imposture, you?"

"Listen to me, my friend. . . In the first place, I never killed a lion."

"I am not surprised at that," said Bompard, composedly. "But why do you worry yourself for such a trifle? . . It is our sun that does it . . . we are born to lies. . . *Vé!* look at me. . . Did I ever tell the truth since I came into the world? As soon as I open my mouth my South gets up into my head like a fit. The people I talk about I never knew; the countries, I've never set foot in them; and all that makes such a tissue of inventions that I can't unravel it myself any longer."

"That's imagination, *péchère!*" sighed Tartarin; "we are liars of imagination."

"And such lies never do any harm to any one; whereas a malicious, envious man, like Costecalde . . ."

"Don't ever speak to me of that wretch," interrupted the P. C. A.; then, seized with a sudden attack of wrath, he shouted: "*Coquin de bon sort!* it is, all the same, rather vexing. . ." He stopped, at a terrified gesture from Bompard, "Ah! yes, true . . . the *sérac;*" and, forced to lower his tone and mutter his rage, poor Tartarin continued his imprecations in a whisper, with a comical and amazing dislocation of the mouth, — "yes, vexing to die in the flower of one's age through the fault of a scoundrel who at this very moment is taking his coffee on the Promenade! . ."

But while he thus fulminated, a clear spot began to show itself, little by little, in the sky. It snowed no more, it blew no more; and blue dashes tore away the gray of the sky. Quick, quick, *en route;* and once more fastened to the same rope, Tartarin, who took the lead as before, turned round, put a finger on his lips, and said: —

"You know, Gonzague, that all we have just been saying is between ourselves."

"*Té! pardi. .*"

Full of ardour, they started, plunging to their knees in the fresh snow, which had buried in its immaculate cotton-wool all the traces of the caravan; consequently Tartarin was forced to consult his compass every five minutes. But that Tarasconese compass, accustomed to warm climates, had been numb with cold ever since its arrival in

Switzerland. The needle whirled to all four quarters, agitated, hesitating; therefore they determined to march straight before them, expecting to see the black rocks of the Grands-Mulets rise suddenly from the uniform silent whiteness of the slope, the peaks, the turrets, and *aiguilles* that surrounded, dazzled, and also terrified them, for who knew what dangerous crevasses it concealed beneath their feet?

"Keep cool, Gonzague, keep cool!"

"That's just what I can't do," responded Bompard, in a lamentable voice. And he moaned: "*Aïe*, my foot! . . *aïe*, my leg! . . we are lost; never shall we get there. . ."

They had walked for over two hours when, about the middle of a field of snow very difficult to climb, Bompard called out, quite terrified: —

"Tartarin, we are going *up!*"

"Eh! *parbleu!* I know that well enough," returned the P. C. A., almost losing his serenity.

"But according to my ideas, we ought to be going down."

"*Bé!* yes! but how can I help it? Let's go on to the top, at any rate; it may go down on the other side."

It went down certainly — and terribly, by a succession of *névés* and glaciers, and quite at the end of this dazzling scene of dangerous whiteness a little hut was seen upon a rock at a depth which seemed to them unattainable. It was a haven that they must reach before nightfall, inasmuch as they had evidently lost the way to the Grands-Mulets, but at what cost! what efforts! what dangers, perhaps!

"Above all, don't let go of me, Gonzague, *qué!* . ."

"Nor you either, Tartarin."

They exchanged these requests without seeing each other, being separated by a ridge behind which Tartarin disappeared, being in advance and beginning to descend, while the other was going up, slowly and in terror. They spoke no more, concentrating all their forces, fearful of a false step, a slip. Suddenly, when Bompard was within three feet of the crest, he heard a dreadful cry from his companion, and at the same instant, the rope tightened with a violent, irregular jerk. . . He tried to resist, to hold fast himself and save his friend from the abyss. But the rope was old, no doubt, for it parted, suddenly, under his efforts.

"*Outre!*"

"*Boufre!*"

The two cries crossed each other, awful, heart-rending, echoing through the silence and solitude, then a frightful stillness, the stillness of death that nothing more could trouble in that waste of eternal snows.

Towards evening a man who vaguely resembled Bompard, a spectre with its hair on end, muddy, soaked, arrived at the inn of the Grands-Mulets, where they rubbed him, warmed him, and put him to bed, before he could utter other words than these — choked with tears, and his hands raised to heaven: " Tartarin . . . lost! . . broken rope. . ." At last, however, they were able to make out the great misfortune which had happened.

While the old hut-man was lamenting and adding another chapter to the horrors of the mountain, hoping for fresh ossuary relics for his charnel glass-case, the Swedish youth and his guides, who had returned from their expedition, set off in search of the hapless Tartarin with ropes, ladders, in short a whole life-saving outfit, alas! unavailing. . . Bompard, rendered half idiotic, could give no precise indications as to the drama, nor as to the spot where it happened. They found nothing except, on the Dôme du Goûter, one piece of rope which was caught in a cleft of the ice. But that piece of rope, very singular thing! was cut at both ends, as with some sharp instrument; the Chambéry newspapers gave a facsimile of it, which proved the fact.

Finally, after eight days of the most conscientious search, and when the conviction became irresistible that the poor president would never be found, that he was lost beyond recall, the despairing delegates started for Tarascon, taking with them the unhappy Bompard, whose shaken brain was a visible result of the terrible shock.

" Do not talk to me about it," he replied when questioned as to the accident, " never speak to me about it again! "

Undoubtedly the White Mountain could reckon one victim the more — and what a victim!

XIV.

Epilogue.

A REGION more impressionable than Tarascon was never seen under the sun of any land. At times, of a fine festal Sunday, all the town out, tambourines a-going, the Promenade swarming, tumultuous, enamelled with red and green petticoats, Arlesian neckerchiefs, and, on big multi-coloured posters, the announcement of wrestling-matches for men and lads, races of Camargue bulls, etc., it is all-sufficient for some wag to call out: "Mad dog!" or "Cattle loose!" and everybody runs, jostles, men and women fright themselves out of their wits, doors are locked and bolted, shutters clang as with a storm, and behold Tarascon, deserted, mute, not a cat, not a sound, even the grasshoppers themselves lying low and attentive.

This was its aspect on a certain morning, which, however, was neither a fête-day nor a Sunday; the shops closed, houses dead, squares and alleys seemingly enlarged by silence and solitude. *Vasta silentio*, says Tacitus, describing Rome at the funeral of Germanicus; and that citation of his mourning Rome applies all the better to Tarascon, because a funeral service for the soul of Tartarin was being said at this moment in the cathedral, where the population *en masse* wept for its hero, its god, its invincible leader with double muscles, left lying among the glaciers of Mont Blanc.

Now, while the death-knell dropped its heavy notes along the silent streets, Mlle. Tournatoire, the doctor's sister, whose ailments kept her always at home, was sitting in her big armchair close to the window, looking out into the street and listening to the bells. The house of the Tournatoires was on the road to Avignon, very nearly opposite to that of Tartarin; and the sight of that illustrious home to which its master would return no more, that garden gate forever closed, all, even the boxes of the little shoe-blacks drawn up in line near the entrance, swelled the heart of the poor spinster, consumed for more than thirty years with a secret passion for the Tarasconese hero. Oh, mystery of the heart of an old maid! It was her joy to watch him pass at his regular hours and to ask herself: "Where is he going? . ." to observe the permutations of his toilet, whether he was clothed as an Alpinist or dressed in his suit of serpent-green. And now! she would see him no more! even the consolation of praying for his soul with all the other ladies of the town was denied her.

Suddenly the long white horse head of Mlle. Tournatoire coloured faintly; her faded eyes with a pink rim dilated in a remarkable manner, while her thin hand with its prominent veins made the sign of the cross . . He! it *was* he, slipping along by the wall on the other side of the paved road. . . At first she thought it an hallucinating apparition. . . No, Tartarin himself, in flesh and blood, only paler, pitiable, ragged, was creeping along that wall like a beggar or a thief. But in order to explain his furtive presence in Tarascon, it is necessary to return to the Mont Blanc and the Dôme du Goûter at the precise instant when, the two friends being each on either side of the ridge, Bompard felt the rope that bound them violently jerked as if by the fall of a body.

In reality, the rope was only caught in a cleft of the ice; but Tartarin, feeling the same jerk, believed, he too, that his companion was rolling down and dragging him with him. Then, at that supreme moment — good heavens! how shall I tell it? — in that agony of fear, both, at the same instant, forgetting their solemn vow at the Hôtel Baltet, with the same impulse, the same instinctive action, cut the rope, — Bompard with his knife, Tartarin with his axe; then, horrified at their crime, convinced, each of them, that he had sacrificed his friend, they fled in opposite directions.

When the spectre of Bompard appeared at the Grands-Mulets, that of Tartarin was arriving at the tavern of the Avesailles. How, by what miracle? after what slips, what falls? Mont Blanc alone could tell. The poor P. C. A. remained for two days in a state of complete apathy, unable to utter a single sound. As soon as he was fit to move they took him down to Courmayeur, the Italian Chamonix. At the hotel where he stopped to recover his strength, there was talk of nothing but the frightful catastrophe on Mont Blanc, a perfect pendant to that on the Matterhorn: another Alpinist engulfed by the breaking of the rope.

In his conviction that this meant Bompard, Tartarin, torn by remorse, dared not rejoin the delegation, or return to his own town. He saw, in advance, on every lip, in every eye, the question: "Cain, what hast thou done with thy brother? . ." Nevertheless, the lack of money, deficiency of linen, the frosts of September which were beginning to thin the hostelries, obliged him to set out for home. After all, no one had seen him commit the crime. . . Nothing hindered him from inventing some tale, no matter what . . . and so (the amusements of the journey lending their aid), he began to feel better. But when, on approaching Tarascon, he saw, iridescent beneath the azure heavens, the fine sky-line of the Alpines, all, all grasped him once more; shame, remorse, the fear of justice, and, to avoid the notoriety of arriving at the station, he left the train at the preceding stopping-place.

Ah! that beautiful Tarasconese highroad, all white and creaking with dust, without other shade than the telegraph poles and their wires, erected along the triumphal way he had so often trod at the head of his Alpinists and the sportsmen of caps. Would they now have known him, he, the valiant, the jauntily attired, in his ragged and filthy clothes, with that furtive eye of a tramp looking out for gendarmes? The atmosphere was burning, though the season was late, and the watermelon which he bought of a marketman seemed to him delicious as he ate it in the scanty shade of the barrow, while the peasant exhaled his wrath against the housekeepers of Tarascon, all of them absent from market that morning " on account of a black mass being sung for a man of the town who was lost in a hole, over there in the Swiss mountains . . . *Té!* how the bells rang. . . You can hear 'em from here. . ."

No longer any doubt. For Bompard were those lugubrious chimes of death, which a warm breeze wafted through the country solitudes.

What an accompaniment of the return of the great Tartarin to his native town!

For one moment, one, when the gate of the little garden hurriedly opened and closed behind him and Tartarin found himself at home, when he saw the little paths with their borders so neatly raked, the basin, the fountain, the gold fish (squirming as the gravel creaked beneath his feet), and the baobab giant in its mignonette pot, the comfort of that cabbage-rabbit burrow wrapped him like a security after all his dangers and adversities. . . But the bells, those cursèd bells, tolled louder than ever; their black heavy notes fell plumb upon his heart and crushed it again. In funereal fashion they were saying to him: " Cain, what hast thou done with thy brother? Tartarin, where is Bompard? " Then, without courage to take one step, he sat down upon the hot coping of the little basin and stayed there, broken down, annihilated, to the great agitation of the gold fish.

The bells no longer toll. The porch of the cathedral, lately so resounding, is restored to the mutterings of the beggarwoman sitting by the door, and to the cold immovability of its stone saints. The religious ceremony is over; all Tarascon has gone to the Club of the Alpines, where, in solemn session, Bompard is to tell the tale of the catastrophe and relate the last moments of the P. C. A. Besides the members of the Club, many privileged persons of the army, clergy, nobility, and higher commerce have taken seats in the hall of conference, the windows of which, wide open, allow the city band, installed below on the portico, to mingle a few heroic or plaintive notes with the remarks of the gentlemen. An enormous crowd, pressing around the musicians, is standing on the tips of its toes and stretching its necks in hopes to catch a fragment of what is said in session. But the windows are too high, and no one would have any idea of what was going on without the help of two or three urchins perched in the branches of a tall linden who fling down scraps of information as they are wont to fling cherries from a tree:

" *Vé*, there 's Costecalde, trying to cry. Ha! the beggar! he 's got the armchair now. . . And that poor Bézuquet, how he blows his nose! and his eyes are all red! . . *Té!* they 've put crape on the banner. . . There 's Bompard, coming to the table with the three delegates. . . He has laid something down on the desk. . . He 's speaking now. . . It must be fine! They are all crying. . . "

In truth, the grief became general as Bompard advanced in his narrative. Ah! memory had come back to him — imagination also. After picturing himself and his illustrious companion alone on the summit of Mont Blanc, without guides (who had all refused to follow them on account of the bad weather), alone with the banner, unfurled for five minutes on the highest peak of Europe, he recounted, and with what emotion! the perilous descent and fall; Tartarin rolling to the bottom of a crevasse, and he, Bompard, fastening himself to a rope two hundred feet long in order to explore that gulf to its very depths.

"More than twenty times, gentlemen — what am I saying? more than ninety times I sounded that icy abyss without being able to reach our unfortunate *présidain*, whose fall, however, I was able to prove by certain fragments left clinging in the crevices of the ice. . ."

So saying, he spread upon the table-cloth a fragment of a tooth, some hairs from a beard, a morsel of waistcoat, and one suspender buckle; almost the whole ossuary of the Grands-Mulets.

In presence of such an exhibition the sorrowful emotions of the assembly could not be restrained; even the hardest hearts, the partisans of Costecalde, and the gravest personages — Cambalalette, the notary, the doctor, Tournatoire — shed tears as big as the stopper of a water-bottle. The invited ladies uttered heart-rending cries, smothered, however, by the sobbing howls of Excourbaniès and the bleatings of Pascalon, while the funeral march of the drums and trumpets played a slow and lugubrious bass.

Then, when he saw the emotion, the nervous excitement at its height, Bompard ended his tale with a grand gesture of pity toward the scraps and the buckles, as he said: —

"And there, gentlemen and dear fellow-citizens, there is all that I recovered of our illustrious and beloved president. . . The remainder the glacier will restore to us in forty years. . ."

He was about to explain, for ignorant persons, the recent discoveries as to the slow but regular movement of glaciers, when the squeaking of a door opening at the other end of the room interrupted him; some one entered, paler than one of Home's apparitions, directly in front of the orator.

"*Vé!* Tartarin! . ."

"*Té!* Gonzague! . ."

And this race is so singular, so ready to believe all improbable tales, all audacious and easily refuted lies, that the arrival of the great man whose remains were still lying on the table caused only a very moderate amazement in the assembly.

"It is a misunderstanding, that 's all," said Tartarin, comforted, beaming, his hand on the shoulder of the man whom he thought he had killed. "I did Mont Blanc on both sides. Went up one way and came down the other; and that is why I was thought to have disappeared."

He did not mention that he had come down on his back.

"That damned Bompard!" said Bézuquet; "all the same, he harrowed us up with his tale. . ." And they laughed and clasped hands, while the drums and trumpets, which they vainly tried to silence, went madly on with Tartarin's funeral march.

" *Vé!* Costecalde, just see how yellow he is! . . " murmured Pascalon to Bravida, pointing to the gunsmith as he rose to yield the chair to the rightful president, whose good face beamed. Bravida, always sententious, said in a low voice as he looked at the fallen Costecalde returning to his subaltern rank: " 'The fate of the Abbé Mandaire, from being the rector he now is *vicaire*.' "

And the session went on.

ARTISTS' WIVES.

ARTISTS' WIVES.

PROLOGUE.

TWO friends, a poet and a painter, stretched out upon a broad studio divan, cigar in mouth, were talking together one evening after dinner.

It was the hour of expansiveness, of confidences. The lamp shone softly beneath its shade, its circle of light guarding the privacy of the conversation and making it difficult to distinguish the fanciful magnificence of the high walls, crowded with pictures, stands of arms, hangings, and ending at the top in a skylight through which the dark blue sky could be plainly seen.

A portrait of a lady, bending forward slightly as if to listen, alone stood partly forth from the shadow, —a young lady, with intelligent eyes, a serious, kindly mouth and a bright smile which seemed to defend her husband's easel against fools and discouraging friends. A low chair moved back from the fire and two tiny blue shoes lying on the carpet indicated the presence of a child in the house; and, in fact, from the adjoining room, where the mother and her baby had just disappeared, came bursts of rippling laughter, soft murmurings, and all the charming tumult of a nest preparing for sleep. All these things combined to permeate that artistic fireside with a perfume of family happiness which the poet inhaled with delight.

"There is no doubt about it, my dear fellow," he said to his friend, "you have done the right thing. There is only one way to be happy. This is happiness, this and nothing else. You must find me a wife."

THE PAINTER.

Faith! no, not if I know myself! Find a wife for yourself if you 're bent on it. For my part I 'll have nothing to do with it.

THE POET.

Why not, pray?

THE PAINTER.

Because — because artists ought not to marry.

THE POET.

This is a little too much. You dare to say that in this room, and the lamp does n't suddenly go out, the walls do not fall on your head! Why, just think, you wretch, that you have been for two hours exhibiting to me and making me long for this happiness which you forbid me to seek. In God's name, are you like one of those wicked rich men whose pleasure is increased tenfold by the sufferings of other people, and who enjoy their own chimney corner the more when they think that it rains out-of-doors and that there are some poor devils without a roof to shelter them?

THE PAINTER.

Think what you choose of me. I am too fond of you to help you to make a fool of yourself, irreparably.

THE POET.

Come, come! What does this mean? Are n't you satisfied? Why, it seems to me that one inhales happiness here as freely as one inhales the free air of heaven at an open window in the country.

THE PAINTER.

You are right. I am happy, perfectly happy. I love my wife with all my heart. When I think of my child, I laugh with pure delight. Marriage has been to me a harbor where the water is calm and safe, not of the sort in which one makes fast to a ring on the shore at the risk of lying there and rusting forever, but one of those little blue coves in which one repairs sails and spars for new voyages to unknown lands. I have never worked so well as since my marriage, and my best pictures have all been painted since then.

THE POET.

Well, then, what in the devil —

THE PAINTER.

My dear fellow, at the risk of making myself appear a conceited idiot, I will tell you that I consider my good fortune a sort of miracle, something abnormal and exceptional. Yes, the more clearly I see what marriage is, the more appalled I am at my own luck. I am like the man who has passed through a great peril without discovering or suspecting it, and who trembles when it is all over, stupefied by his own audacity.

THE POET.

But what are these terrible perils?

THE PAINTER.

The first and greatest of all is the danger of losing one's talent, of going backward. That is a matter of some importance to an artist, I presume. For observe that I am not now speaking of the ordinary conditions of life. I agree that in general marriage is an excellent thing, and that most men do not begin to amount to anything until the family puts the finishing touches to them or increases their stature. Often, indeed, it is a professional necessity. A bachelor notary is inconceivable. He would not have the sedate, portly bearing. But for all of us — poets, painters, sculptors, musicians — who live outside of life, engaged solely in studying it, in reproducing it, and keeping always a short distance away from it, as one steps back from a picture in order to see it better, — for us, I say, marriage is advisable only in exceptional cases. The nervous, exacting, impressionable creature, the man-child whom people call an artist, requires a special type of woman, almost impossible to find, and the surest way is not to seek it. Ah! how well Delacroix, the great Delacroix whom you admire so much, understood that! What a beautiful life he led, bounded by the walls of his studio, devoted exclusively to art! I was looking at his cottage at Champrosay the other day, and that little garden, like some country curé's, filled with roses, where he walked all alone for twenty years! The place has the tranquillity and narrow limits of celibacy. But just imagine Delacroix married, a paterfamilias, worrying about children to bring up, money and sickness; do you think his work would have been what it was?

THE POET.

You cite Delacroix, I reply with Victor Hugo. Do you think that marriage was any obstacle to him in writing so many admirable books?

THE PAINTER.

I think that marriage was not an obstacle to him in any respect. But all husbands have not the genius to obtain forgiveness, nor a great sun of glory to dry the tears they cause to flow. Moreover it must be amusing to be the wife of a man of genius. There are roadmenders' wives who are happier.

THE POET.

It 's a curious thing, upon my word, to hear this argument against marriage from a married man who is happy in his marriage.

THE PAINTER.

I tell you again that what I say is not based on my own experience. My opinion is formed from all the sad sights I have seen elsewhere, from all the misunderstandings which are so frequent in artists' households, caused by our abnormal lives and nothing else. Look at that sculptor, who, in the prime of life, and just when his talent has reached its fullest maturity, has expatriated himself, left his wife and children to shift for themselves. Public opinion has condemned him, and I certainly shall not make excuses for him. And yet how well I can understand how he was driven to that step! There was a fellow who adored his art, who had a perfect horror of society and of social relations. His wife, albeit a good-hearted and intelligent woman, instead of removing him from surroundings which were uncongenial to him, condemned him for ten years to comply with social obligations of all sorts. In like manner she forced him to make a lot of official busts, stupid worthies in velvet caps, overdressed women utterly devoid of charm; she interrupted him ten times a day to receive unwelcome callers, and every evening laid out his dress suit and light gloves and dragged him from salon to salon. You will say that he should have rebelled, should have answered squarely, "No!" But don't you know that the very fact that our lives are so sedentary makes us more dependent than other men on our fireside? The air of the house envelops us, and unless a suggestion of the ideal is mingled with it, it dulls our faculties and soon fatigues us. Moreover the artist, as a general rule, puts all the force and energy he possesses into his work, and after his solitary, patient struggles finds himself without strength of will to contend with the trivial annoyances of life. With him feminine tyranny has an easy time. No other class of men is so easily subdued, conquered. But beware! He must not be made to feel the yoke too heavily. If it happens some day that the invisible bonds by which he is cunningly held captive are drawn a little too tight, if they impede his artistic efforts, he will break them all at a single blow, distrusting his own weakness, and fly, like our sculptor, beyond the mountains.

His wife was utterly astounded by his desertion. The poor soul is still asking herself, "What did I do to him?" Nothing. She did n't understand him. For to be a real helpmeet to an artist it is not enough to be good-hearted and intelligent. A woman must have unlimited tact, must be able to sacrifice herself with a smiling face; and it is a miraculous thing to find those qualities in a young woman, who is ignorant of life and curious about it. She is pretty, she has married a man who is well-known and received everywhere. Damnation! of course she likes to be seen hanging on his arm. Is n't that natural enough? The husband, on the other hand, who has become more of a savage since he has been working more successfully, and finds the days too short and the task unpleasant, refuses to exhibit himself. They are both unhappy, and whether the man yields or resists, his life is thenceforth deranged, diverted from its tranquil current. Ah! how many of those ill-assorted couples I have known, where the wife was sometimes executioner, sometimes victim, oftener executioner than victim, and almost always without suspecting it! Why, the other evening, I was at Dargenty, the composer's. We begged him to play us something. He had hardly begun one of those pretty mazurkas with variations, which entitle him to be called Chopin's heir, when his wife began to talk, at first in an undertone, then a little louder. The conversation spread from one to another. In a moment nobody but myself was listening. Thereupon he closed the piano and said to me with a smile, but with a distressed air: "It 's always like that here — my wife does n't care for music." Can you imagine anything more terrible? Think of marrying a woman who does n't care for your art! Nay, take my advice, my dear fellow, and don't marry. You are alone, you are free. Cling jealously to your solitude and your freedom.

THE POET.

Parbleu! you talk very airily about solitude. A few moments hence, when I have gone, if an artistic idea comes into your mind, you will calmly work it out beside your dying fire, without feeling all about you that atmosphere of isolation, so vast, so empty that inspiration evaporates and vanishes therein. But assuming for a moment that it is well to be alone in one's hours for work — there are moments of weariness, of discouragement, when one is doubtful of one's self, of one's art. At such moments it must be a blessed thing to have beside you, always faithful and ready, a loving heart into which you can pour out your chagrin, with no fear of disturbing a confidence, an enthusiastic admiration that are unalterable. And the child — is not that baby smile, appearing constantly and without cause, the best moral rejuvenation a man can have? Ah! I have often thought of that. To us artists, vain like all those who live on success, on that superficial, capricious, fickle esteem which is called *vogue* — to us above all men children are indispensable. They alone can console us for growing old. All that we lose the child gains. If we have failed to achieve success, we say to ourselves, "He will succeed;" and, as our own hair vanishes, we have the joy of watching it grow again, curly, and golden, and vigorous, on a fair little head by our side.

THE PAINTER.

Ah! poet, poet — have you thought too of all the mouthfuls one must stick on the end of a pen or a brush, to feed a brood?

THE POET.

Nay, say what you will, the artist is made for domestic life; and that is so true that those of us who do not marry put up with second-hand households, like those travellers who, tired of being always without a fixed abode, install themselves finally in a lodging-house chamber and pass their lives under the spell of the vulgar sign: "Rooms by the day or month."

THE PAINTER.

They make a great mistake. They subject themselves to all the annoyances of married life and never know its joys.

THE POET.

You admit, then, that it has some joys?

At this point the painter, instead of replying, rose, turned over a mass of drawings and sketches until he found a crumpled parcel of manuscript, then returned to his companion.

"We might discuss this subject a long while," he said, "without convincing each other. But since you are determined to make a trial of marriage, in spite of my observations, I urge you to read this little work. It was written — mark what I say — by a married man, very much in love with his wife, very happy in his home, — a man of an inquisitive turn of mind, who, as he passes his life among artists, has amused himself by sketching some of the households of which I was speaking just now. From the first line to the last this book is true, so true that the author has never cared to print it. Read it, and come and see me when you have read it. I fancy you will have changed your ideas."

The poet took the package and carried it home; but he did not take proper care of it, for I have been able to detach a few leaves from the little book, and I now boldly offer them to the public.

I.

MADAME HEURTEBISE.

SHE certainly was not made to marry an artist, especially that terrible, passionate, tumultuous, exuberant fellow, who went about in the world with his nose in the air and bristling moustache, bearing with a swagger, as a challenge to all absurd conventions, to all bourgeois prejudices, his strange and mettlesome name of Heurtebise. How, by what miracle, did that little woman, reared in a jeweller's shop, behind rows of watch-chains and rings hung on a cord, succeed in fascinating that poet?

Imagine the charms of a shop-girl, — characterless features, cold eyes always smiling, a placid, good-natured countenance, no genuine refinement, but a certain fondness for tinsel and glitter, which she had acquired doubtless in her father's shop, and which caused her to affect bows of multi-colored satin, belts and buckles; and, with all the rest, hair dressed by a hair-dresser and well saturated with cosmetics over-hanging a narrow, self-willed forehead, where the absence of wrinkles was not so much an indication of youth as of utter lack of ideas. Heurtebise fell in love with her, such as she was, asked for her hand, and, as he had some means, had little difficulty in obtaining it.

The attraction that she found in this marriage was the idea of marrying an author, a well-known man who would give her as many tickets to the play as she wanted. As for him, I fancy that that false shop-girl refinement, those pretentious manners, pursed lips, little finger in the air, had dazzled him as the acme of Parisian distinction, for he was born a peasant, and always remained one at bottom, despite his intellect.

Tempted by the idea of placid happiness, of that domestic life of which he had so long been deprived, Heurtebise passed two years away from his friends, burying himself in the country, in out-of-the-way corners of the suburbs, always within range of the great city, which disturbed his serenity and whose atmosphere he sought to breathe in a weakened form, like those invalids for whom sea air is prescribed, but who, being too delicate to endure it, breathe it at a distance of a few miles. From time to time his name appeared in a newspaper, in a review, at the end of an article; but we already missed that vigorous style, those outbursts of eloquence, which had been characteristic of his work. We thought: "He is too happy — his happiness is spoiling him."

But one day he reappeared among us, and we saw plainly enough that he was not happy. His pale face, his contracted features, distorted by a constant nervous twitching, his former violence of manner reduced to nervous irritability, his hearty, ringing laugh already cracked, made him an entirely different man. Too proud to admit that he had made a mistake, he did not complain; but his old friends, to whom he reopened his house, soon became convinced that he had made the most foolish of marriages, and that he was off the rails for the rest of his life. On the other hand, Madame Heurtebise, after two years of wedlock, appeared to us just as we had seen her in the sacristy on the wedding-day, — the same placid, simpering smile, the same air of a shop-girl dressed in her Sunday best; but she had acquired self-assurance. She talked now. In the artistic discussions upon which Heurtebise embarked with intense earnestness, with peremptory judgments, brutal contempt, or blind enthusiasm, he would suddenly be interrupted by his wife's bland, false voice, forcing him to listen to some idle argument, some absurd reflection, always outside of the subject. He, annoyed and embarrassed, would look at us with an apologetic glance and try to resume the interrupted conversation. At last, in face of the downright, persistent contradiction, the inanity of that little brain, as empty as an unfledged bird's, he would hold his peace, resigning himself to let her go on to the end. But his silence always exasperated madame, seemed to her more insulting, more disdainful than all the rest. Her bitter-sweet voice would become shrill and piercing, would sting and buzz with the irritating persistency of a fly, until the husband, driven to frenzy, would break out in his turn, brutal and terrifying.

From these incessant quarrels, which ended in tears, she would come forth refreshed, more blooming than ever, like a lawn after being watered; but he was always nervous, feverish, incapable of any sort of work. Gradually his very violence became exhausted. One evening when I had been present at one of these painful scenes, as Madame Heurtebise left the table in triumph I saw on her husband's face, which had been downcast during the quarrel but which he then raised, an expression indicating a depth of contempt, of anger that words could not express. With flushed cheeks and eyes swimming in tears, his mouth distorted by an ironical, heart-breaking smile, when the little woman left the room, closing the door sharply behind her, he looked after her with a horrible grimace of frenzy and pain, like an urchin making a wry face at his master's back. After a moment I heard him mutter in a voice choked by emotion: "Ah! if it were n't for the child, how quickly I would cut loose!"

For they had a child, a handsome, dirty little creature, who crawled about in all the corners, played with dogs bigger than himself, or in the dirt, or with the spiders in the garden. The mother did not look at him except to remark that he was "disgusting" and to regret that she had not put him out to nurse. She had in truth clung to her traditions as a petty shop-keeper's child, and the disorder of their apartments, where she appeared early in the morning in elaborate gowns and remarkable headgear, recalled the backshops so dear to her heart, the rooms dark with dirt and lack of air, whither the tradesman hurries in the entr'actes of commercial life to eat an ill-cooked meal in hot haste, on a clothless table, with one ear listening all the time for the bell of the shop-door. In that circle nothing is of importance save the street, the street where purchasers and idlers pass, and that throng of people making holiday who fill the sidewalks and roadway on Sundays. Imagine therefore how bored she must have been in the country, poor creature! how she regretted her Paris! Heurtebise, on the other hand, needed the air of the fields for the health of his mind. Paris made him as giddy as a provincial on his first visit. The wife could not understand it, and complained bitterly of her exile. To divert her thoughts she invited some of her old friends to visit her. Then, if her husband was not at home, they amused themselves fumbling among his papers, his memoranda, the works he had in hand.

"Just see, my dear, what a strange creature he is. He shuts himself up to write this stuff. He paces the floor, he talks to himself. For my part, I don't in the least understand what he 's doing."

And there were endless regrets, sighs for what might have been.

"Ah! if I had known. When I think that I might have married Aubertot and Fajon, the linen-drapers!"

She always mentioned the two partners together, as if she might have married the firm. In her husband's presence she was equally unceremonious. She interfered with his plans, prevented him from working, selecting the very room where he was writing for the senseless chattering of a parcel of idle women who talked very loud, being full of contempt for that trade of literary man, which brings in so little, while its most laborious hours always resemble capricious idleness.

From time to time Heurtebise tried to escape from that life, which was, he felt, becoming more ominous of disaster every day. He would run away to Paris, hire a room at a hotel, and try to fancy that he was a bachelor; but suddenly he would think of his son, and, impelled by a wild longing to embrace him, would return home the same evening. On such occasions, to avoid a scene on his return, he would take a friend with him and keep him as long as he could. When he was not alone with his wife, his fine intellect awoke once more and his interrupted plans of work would gradually come back to him one after another. But what a wrench when his visitor took his leave! He would do his utmost to detain him, would cling to him with all the force of his ennui. With what a dejected mien he would accompany us to the office of the little surburban omnibus which took us back to Paris, and, when we had gone, how slowly he would return along the dusty road, with bent back and arms hanging inertly at his side, listening to the rumble of the receding wheels!

For existence with his wife alone had become unendurable to him. To avoid it he adopted the course of having the house always full. With the concurrence of his kind heart, his ennui, his heedlessness, he surrounded himself with all the starvelings of literature. A pack of literary valets, lazy, crack-brained, visionary, were more at home in his house than he himself was; and as his wife was very foolish, incapable of judging men, she thought them delightful, superior to her husband, because they made more noise. Days passed in idle discussions. There was a constant hurly-burly of unmeaning words, powder wasted on sparrows, and poor Heurtebise, sitting motionless and silent amid all that pother, contented himself by smiling and shrugging his shoulders. Sometimes, however, when, at the end of an interminable repast, all his guests, with their elbows on the cloth around the decanter of brandy, began one of those long, vagrant conversations as stifling as pipe-smoke, a terrible feeling of disgust would assail him, and, lacking the strength to turn the wretches out of his house, he would go away himself and remain away for a week at a time.

"My house is full of idiots," he said to me one day. "I don't dare go back there." Leading such a life as that, he ceased altogether to write. His name was rarely seen, and his fortune, squandered to satisfy this constant craving to have people in his house, found its way into the hands that were stretched out to him.

We had not met for a long while when one morning, I received a line in his dear little handwriting, formerly so firm, now hesitating and trembling: "We are in Paris. Come and see me. I am bored to death." I found him with his wife, his child, and his dogs, in a dreary little apartment at Batignolles. The disorder, having no space to spread itself out, seemed even more horrible than in the country. While the child and the dogs rolled on the floor in rooms about the size of checker-boards, Heurtebise lay in bed, ill, with his face to the wall, in a state of utter prostration. The wife, still pretentiously dressed, still perfectly placid, hardly looked at him. "I don't know what 's the matter with him," she said to me with a careless wave of the hand. When he saw me he recovered his gayety, his hearty laugh for a moment, but they were stifled at once. As they had continued in Paris the habits adopted in the suburbs, a parasite appeared at the breakfast hour in that poverty-stricken household turned topsy-turvy by disease, — a bald, threadbare, repellent little man who was called in the house "the man who has read Proudhon." That was the title by which Heurtebise, who probably had never known his name, presented him to everybody. When he was asked, "Who is that?" he would reply with conviction, "Oh! he 's a very bright fellow, who has read Proudhon a great deal." It was hardly apparent, by the way, for that profound mind never manifested itself at table except to complain of a badly cooked roast or an unsuccessful sauce. On that morning the man who had read Proudhon declared that the breakfast was detestable, a fact which did not prevent him from devouring half of it all by himself.

How long and dreary that meal by the sick man's bedside seemed to me! The woman chattered away as always, with an occasional slap for the child, a bone for the dogs, or a smile for the philosopher. Not once did Heurtebise turn in our direction; and yet he was not asleep. I do not know whether he was thinking. Dear, brave-hearted fellow! The springs of his energetic nature were broken in these constant, paltry quarrels, and he was already beginning to die. This silent agony, which was rather a renunciation of life, lasted several months; then Madame Heurtebise found herself a widow. Thereupon as her tears had not dimmed her bright eyes, as she was still as careful as ever of her glossy tresses, and as Aubertot and Fajon were still eligible, she married Aubertot and Fajon. Perhaps Aubertot, perhaps Fajon, perhaps both. In any event she was able to resume the life for which she was adapted, the ready chatter and everlasting smile of the shop-girl.

II.

THE CREDO OF LOVE.

SHE had always dreamed of that, to be the wife of a poet! But implacable destiny arranged for her, instead of the romantic and feverish existence to which she aspired, wedded bliss of a very tranquil sort, by marrying her to a rich annuitant of Auteuil, a mild and amiable person, albeit a little too old for her, and with but one passion, at once inoffensive and restful, — horticulture. The excellent man passed his time, pruning-knife in hand, nursing and trimming a magnificent collection of rose-bushes, heating the hot-house, watering the flower-beds; and on my word! you will surely agree that for a poor little heart starving for the ideal, there was insufficient pasturage there. For ten years, however, her life went on, as straight and uniform as the paths, strewn with fine gravel, of her husband's garden; and she followed it, counting her steps, listening with an air of resigned weariness to the sharp, irritating snap of the ever-active scissors, or the monotonous, endless shower falling from the nozzles of the watering-pots upon the plants and shrubbery. The fanatical horticulturist took the same minute care of his wife as of his flowers. He watched the temperature of her salon, which was always filled with bouquets, took precautions in her behalf against frost in April and the hot sun in March; and with his eyes fixed on the barometer and the variations of the moon, forced her to live by fixed rules, like the plants in tubs which are put out-of-doors and taken in at stated times.

She lived in this way for a long while, imprisoned within the four walls of the conjugal garden, as innocent as a clematis, but with aspirations toward other less regular, less bourgeois gardens, where the rose-bushes would put forth all their branches, where the wild plants would grow taller than trees and be laden with fantastic, unfamiliar flowers, at liberty beneath a warmer sun. Such gardens are found nowhere save in books written by poets, so she read many verses, unknown to the nursery-man, who, for his part, knew nothing of poetry beyond the almanac couplets: —

> "Quand il pleut à la Saint-Médard,
> Il pleut quarante jours plus tard."

Gluttonously, with no idea of selection, the poor creature devoured the most wretched poems, provided only that she found therein rhymes for *amour* and *passion;* and when she had closed the book she would pass hours dreaming and sighing, "That's the husband I should have had!"

All this would never probably have passed the stage of vague aspirations, had not the irresistible Amaury happened to cross her path at the fateful age of thirty, which is the decisive age for the virtue of women, as noon is the decisive hour for the beauty of the day. Amaury is a salon poet, one of those ethereal creatures in black coat and pearl-gray gloves, who go about between ten o'clock and midnight, reciting in fashionable salons their love-rhapsodies, their despairs, their frenzies, leaning with a melancholy air on mantel-pieces, in the bright light of the chandeliers, while women in ball costume, arranged in a circle, listen behind their fans.

He may be considered an ideal specimen of the genus. With the face of a fatalistic cobbler, hollow eye and sallow complexion, he dresses his hair *à la* Russe, and anoints himself plentifully with Hungarian pomade. He is one of those despair-ridden mortals of the sort that women love; always dressed in the latest style, a congealed lyric poet about whom there is nothing to suggest any derangement of the inspiration except his carelessly and loosely tied cravat. And you should hear the applause when he recites in his strident voice a passage from his poem, the *Credo of Love*, especially the passage which concludes with this astounding line: —

"But I believe in love as I believe in God."

Please observe that I strongly suspect this joker of troubling his head as little about God as about anything else; but women do not look so close. They are easily caught in the birdlime of words; and whenever Amaury recites his *Credo of Love*, you are sure to see all around the salon rows of little pink beaks reaching out for that enticing bait of sentiment. Just think of it! — a poet with such lovely moustaches, who believes in love as he believes in God!

The nursery-man's wife did not resist. In three sittings she was vanquished. But, as there was a substratum of virtue and pride in that elegiac nature, she did not propose to commit any paltry, commonplace sin. Moreover, in his *Credo*, the poet himself declared that he understood only one sort of adultery, the sort which goes about with head erect, as a challenge to the law and to society. Taking the *Credo of Love* for her guide, therefore, the young woman abruptly fled from the garden at Auteuil and threw herself into her poet's arms. "I cannot live with that man any longer! Take me." Under such circumstances the husband is always called *that man*, even when he is a nursery-man.

Amaury was stupefied for a moment. How the devil could he imagine that a little matron of thirty years would take a love-poem seriously and follow it to the letter? However, he met his too good fortune with a brave heart, and as the lady had retained her beauty and bloom in her well-sheltered little garden at Auteuil, he took her without a murmur. At first it was delightful. They were afraid the husband would follow them. They must conceal themselves under assumed names, change their lodgings, live in unlikely quarters, in the suburbs, on the roads surrounding the fortifications. Oh, mighty power of the romantic! The more frightened she was, the more precautions they must take, — lowered blinds and curtains, — and the greater her poet seemed to her. At night they would open the little window in their chamber, and as they gazed at the stars twinkling above the signals of the neighboring railway, she would make him repeat again and again his —

> " But I believe in love as I believe in God."

And it was lovely!

Unfortunately it did not last. The husband left them too undisturbed. What would you have? *That man* was a philosopher. When his wife went away he closed the green gate of his oasis and returned calmly to the care of his roses, thinking with satisfaction that they, at least, having long roots in the ground, could not leave his premises. Our lovers, relieved from apprehension, returned to Paris, and suddenly it seemed to the young woman as if somebody else had been substituted for her poet. The flight, the fear of being surprised, the constant alarms, all those things which served to feed her passion having ceased to exist, she began to understand, to see what she had done. Moreover, in the arrangement of their little household, and in the thousand commonplace details of daily life, the man with whom she was living made himself better known to her every moment.

The small store of generous, heroic, or refined sentiments which he possessed, he used in a diluted form in his verses, keeping none at all for his personal consumption. He was small-minded, selfish, and above all else very niggardly, — a quality which love never pardons. Then he had shaved his moustaches, and the change was very unbecoming. How different he was from that gloomy, handsome youth with moustaches curled with tongs, who had appeared to her one evening reciting his *Credo* between two candelabra! Now, in the forced retirement he was undergoing because of her, he gave free rein to all his whimsies, the most prominent of which was to think that he was always ill. *Dame!* by dint of posing as consumptive, one ends by imagining that one really is. The poet Amaury was forever taking medicines, he swathed himself in Fayard paper, covered his mantelpiece with phials and powders. For some time the little woman took her rôle of nun seriously. Devotion to an invalid afforded at least some excuse for her fault, gave her an object in life. But she soon wearied of it. In spite of herself, as she sat in the stuffy room with the flannel-enveloped poet, she thought of her fragrant little garden; and the excellent nursery-man, viewed from afar amid his shrubbery and his flower-beds, seemed to her as simple and touching and unselfish as the other was exacting and selfish.

At the end of a month she loved her husband, really loved him, not with an affection born of habit, but with genuine love. One day she wrote him a long, passionate, and repentant letter. He did not reply. Perhaps he did not think she was sufficiently punished as yet. Thereupon she sent letter after letter, humbled herself to the dust, begged to be taken back, saying that she would rather die than live longer with that man. It was the lover's turn to be called "that man." The most amusing circumstance is that she wrote without his knowledge, for she believed that he was still in love with her, and, while seeking forgiveness from her husband, she dreaded her lover's passion.

"He will never let me go," she said to herself.

And so, when by dint of begging she had obtained her pardon, and the nursery-man — did I not tell you that he was a philosopher? — had consented to take her back, her return to the conjugal dwelling had all the mysterious, dramatic features of a flight. She positively forced her husband to kidnap her. One evening when the poet, weary of life *à deux* and very proud of his newly grown moustaches, had gone into society to recite his *Credo of Love*, she jumped into a cab in which her old husband was waiting for her at the end of the street; and thus did she return to her little garden at Auteuil, forever cured of her ambition to be a poet's wife. To be sure, the poet was not much of a poet!

III.

LA TRASTEVERINA.

THE play had just come to an end. While the audience, variously impressed, rushed out-of-doors, undulating in the light on the broad staircase of the theatre, some friends, of whom I was one, awaited the poet at the stage door, to congratulate him. His work had not, however, met with tremendous success. It was too powerful for the timid, commonplace imagination of the present-day audience, and it was too large for the frame of the stage, the accepted limit of conventions and legitimate liberties. The pedantic critic had said, "It is not adapted to the stage!" and the sneerers of the boulevard avenged themselves for the emotion the magnificent lines had afforded them by repeating, "That play won't make any money!" But we were proud of our friend, who had dared to send forth those beautiful golden rhymes, the whole swarm from his hive, to hum and flutter about the artificial, deadly sun of the chandeliers, and to present characters in their natural size, without troubling himself about the optical qualities of the modern theatre, dim opera-glasses, or poor eyes.

The poet approached us, among the scene-shifters, firemen, and dancers, wrapped in mufflers, his tall figure bent double, his coat-collar shiveringly turned up around his scanty beard, and his long hair already turning gray. He had an air of dejection. The applause of the *claque* and of the men of intelligence, being confined to a small portion of the hall, seemed to him to foreshadow a very small number of performances, small and select audiences, and a speedy removal of his name from the advertisements, before it had had time to make an impression on the public. When you have worked hard for twenty years, when you are in the prime of life and your talents have attained their full maturity, this unwillingness of the public to understand you is wearisome and discouraging. You reach the point of saying to yourself, "Perhaps they are right." You are afraid, you are no longer certain of yourself. Our congratulations, our enthusiastic hand-clasps encouraged him a little. "Really, do you think so? Is it as good as that? To be sure, I did all that I could do." And his hands, burning with fever, clung anxiously to ours; his tearful eyes craved a sincere, reassuring glance. It was the agonizing supplication of the sick man asking the physician, "Is there any hope for me?" Yes, poet, there is hope for you. When the operettas and fairy extravaganzas which have hundreds of performances and tens of thousands of spectators, have been long forgotten, have taken flight with their last poster, your work will still be young and full of life.

While we were standing there on the deserted sidewalk, exhorting him and cheering him up, a loud contralto voice, enervated by an Italian accent, exploded in our midst.

"Hé! artist, enough poetry! Let's go home and eat the *estoufato!*"

At the same moment a stout lady enveloped in a hood and a plaid cape with red squares, passed her arm through our friend's with such a brutal, despotic gesture that his face and his bearing at once showed its effects.

"My wife," he said to us; then, turning toward her with a hesitating smile, —

"Suppose we take them along to show them how you make the *estoufato?*"

Impelled by her unlimited self-esteem, the Italian graciously consented to receive us, and away went five or six of us to eat beef *à l'étouffée* on the heights of Montmartre, where they lived.

I confess that I was anxious to see that artist's establishment. Our friend had led a very retired life since his marriage, almost entirely in the country; but what I knew of his wife aroused my curiosity. Fifteen years earlier, when his romantic imagination was at the period of its greatest fervor, he had met, in the outskirts of Rome, a magnificent creature with whom he had fallen deeply in love. Maria Assunta lived with her father and a whole brood of brothers and sisters, in one of those tiny houses in the Trastevere which have their feet in the Tiber and an old fishing-boat at the foot of their walls. One day he spied this fair Italian girl, bare-footed in the sand, in her red petticoat with clinging folds, her cotton sleeves turned up to the shoulder, taking eels from a great dripping net. The scales gleaming in the water amid the meshes, the golden river, the scarlet petticoat, the lovely black eyes, fathomless and pensive, made darker in their reverie by the glare of sunlight all about, impressed the artist, a little vulgarly perhaps, like an engraving on the cover of a ballad in a music-dealer's shop-window. By chance the girl's heart was free, for she had thus far loved nobody but a mischievous red cat, a huge creature and an expert eel-fisherman as well, whose hair stood on end when any one approached his mistress.

Our lover succeeded in taming the whole family, man and beast, was married at Santa Maria in Trastevere, and brought the fair Assunta to Paris with her *cato*.

Ah! *povero*, he ought also to have brought with him a ray of sunlight from the Trastevere, a patch of blue sky, the eccentric costume, the reeds of the Tiber, and the great twisted cables of the Ponte Rotto,—the whole frame with the picture. Then he would not have had the cruel disillusionment which befell him when, the little family being established in a small fourth-floor apartment in the highest part of Montmartre, he saw his lovely Trasteverina decked out in a hoop-skirt, a dress with flounces and ruffles, and a Parisian hat which, being always insecurely placed upon the edifice of her luxuriant tresses, assumed entirely independent attitudes. In the cold and uncompromising light of the Parisian sky the poor devil soon discovered that his wife was stupid, irremediably stupid. Those fine black eyes, lost in infinite contemplation, did not toss one single thought about upon their velvet waves. They shone animal-like, with the tranquillity of a good digestion, with a pleasant reflection of the light, nothing more. And moreover the lady was vulgar and countrified, accustomed to govern the whole little world of her father's cabin with a wave of her hand, and the slightest resistance aroused terrible fits of anger.

Who would have dreamed that that mouth which, when she was silent, was of the purest antique outline, would suddenly open to emit insulting epithets in tumultuous, compact waves? Without respect for herself or for him, she would pick a quarrel with him at the top of her voice, in the street, in the theatre, and in her jealousy would make terrible scenes. To complete her portrait, she had no artistic sentiment, was utterly ignorant of her husband's profession, of the French language, customs, everything. As the little French which he taught her served only to make her forget Italian, she had composed a sort of half-and-half jargon, which was comical to the last degree. In fact, this love-story, after beginning like one of Lamartine's poems, was ending like a novel by Champfleury. After trying for a long while to civilize his savage, the poet became convinced that he must abandon the attempt. As he was too upright to desert her, — perhaps he was still in love, — he adopted the course of living in retirement, seeing nobody and working hard.

The few intimate friends whom he had admitted to his house saw that they embarrassed him and soon ceased to go thither. So it was that for fifteen years he had lived shut up in his own home, as in a leper's cabin.

With my mind upon that wretched existence, I watched the strange couple walking before me,—he tall and thin and slightly bent; she square-shouldered and broad, shaking off her shawl which annoyed her, for she had a gait as free as a man's. She was in very good humour, talked a great deal, and turned from time to time to see if we were following, calling those of us whom she knew by their first names, familiarly and in a loud tone, emphasizing her words by energetic gestures, as if she were hailing a fishing-boat on the Tiber. When we reached their domicile, the concierge, enraged to see a noisy party enter the house at an unseemly hour, refused to let us go upstairs. There was a terrible scene in the hall between her and the Italian. We were all standing one above another on the steps of the winding staircase, which was dimly lighted by the flickering gas-jet, embarrassed and uncomfortable, wondering if we ought to take our leave.

"Come, let's go up," said the poet in a low voice; and we followed him in silence, while the Italian, leaning on the stair-rail, which trembled beneath her weight and her wrath, poured forth a volley of vituperation, in which Roman oaths alternated with the vocabulary of the outer boulevards. What a home-coming for that poet, who had just stirred all artistic Paris to its depths, and in whose fever-bright eyes there was still a trace of the dazzling joy of his first night! What a humiliating recall to life!

Not until we were seated by the fire in his little salon was the icy cold atmosphere generated by that ridiculous episode dissipated, and we should soon have forgotten all about it, had it not been for the loud voice and coarse laughter of the signora, whom we could hear in the kitchen telling her maid how she had given it to that *choulato!* The table laid and the supper prepared, she came and sat down with us, without shawl or hat or veil, and I was able to scrutinize her at my leisure. She was no longer beautiful. The square face, the heavy, broad chin, the coarse hair, now turning gray, and above all the vulgar expression of the mouth were in striking contrast to the eternal, unmeaning reverie of the eyes. With both elbows resting on the table, flabby in appearance and familiar in manner, she joined in the conversation without losing sight of her plate for an instant. Just above her head a large portrait signed by an illustrious name stood proudly forth from the shadow, among the melancholy old lumber in the salon; it was Maria Assunta at twenty. The bright purple dress, the milky white of the plaited wimple, the brilliancy of the abundant false jewels set off magnificently the splendor of a complexion like the sun, the velvety shadow of the thick hair growing low over the forehead and connected by an almost imperceptible down with the superb straight line of the eyebrows. How could such exuberance of life and beauty have developed into such coarseness? And while La Trasteverina was speaking I questioned with deep interest her profound, sweet glance upon the canvas.

The warmth of the feast put her in good humor. To enliven the poet, whose heart was doubly oppressed by his failure with its slight admixture of glory, she slapped him violently on the back and laughed with her mouth full, saying in her horrible jargon that it was not worth while to leave one's head at the foot of the *campanile del domo* for so small a matter.

"Ain't that so, *cato?*" she added, turning to the old tom-cat, helpless with rheumatism, who lay snoring in front of the fire. Then suddenly, in the midst of an interesting discussion, she shouted to her husband in a hoarse voice, with the brutal abruptness of a pistol-shot: —

"Hé! artist, *la lampo qui filo!*"[1]

The poor fellow, interrupting himself, hastily turned up the lamp, humbly and submissively, eager to avoid the scene which he dreaded, and which, in spite of everything, he did not avoid.

On returning from the theatre, we had stopped at the *Maison d'Or* to buy a bottle of choice wine with which to water the *estoufato.* Maria Assunta had carried it religiously under her shawl all the way, and on our arrival had placed it on the table, where she brooded over it with tender watchfulness, for the Roman women love good wine. Two or three times, distrusting her husband's absent-mindedness and his long arms, she had said to him: —

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[1] The lamp 's going out.

"Look out for the *boteglia;* you 'll break it."

And when she went to the kitchen to take the famous *estoufato* from the stove with her own hand, she cried out to him once more: —

"Above all things, don't break the *boteglia!*"

Unfortunately, as soon as his wife had left the room, the poet seized the opportunity to talk about art, the stage, and success, so freely, with such energy and profusion of words that — *patatras!* — as the result of a gesture more eloquent than the rest, the wonderful bottle lay on the floor in a thousand pieces! I have never seen such utter dismay. He stopped short, turned as pale as death. At the same time Assunta's contralto began to rumble in the adjoining room, and the Italian appeared in the doorway, with fire in her eye, her lips swollen with anger, her face flushed with the heat of the stove.

"The *boteglia!*" she cried in an awful voice.

At that he leaned timidly toward me and whispered: —

"Say that you did it."

And the poor devil was so frightened that I could feel his long legs trembling under the table.

IV.

A FAMILY OF SINGERS.

HOW could they have failed to love each other, — handsome and famous both, singing in the same pieces, living every evening through five acts of the same artificial, passionate life? One cannot play with fire with impunity. Two people cannot say to each other twenty times a month, "I love you!" to the sighs of the flute and the tremolos of the violin, without finally being infected by the emotion of their own voices. Sooner or later passion comes to them enveloped in harmony, in rhythmical surprises, in splendid costumes and drop-curtains. It came to them through the window which Elsa and Lohengrin throw open to the night vibrating with melody and beauty: —

> "Come breathe th' intoxicating perfume."

It glided between the white pillars of the Capulets' balcony, where Romeo and Juliet lingered beneath the first rays of dawn.

> "No, 't is not the dawn, 't is not the lark."

And it crept softly upon Faust and Marguerite in the moon-beam that ascends from the rustic bench to the shutters of the little chamber, amid the intertwined ivy and flowering rose-bushes.

> "Let me, oh! let me gaze upon thy face."

Soon all Paris knew of their love and became interested in it. It was the curiosity of the season. People came to admire those two lovely stars gravitating toward each other in the musical sky of the Opera. At last, one evening after an enthusiastic recall, just as the curtain had fallen, separating the wildly applauding audience from the flower-strewn stage, where Juliet's white dress swept the petals from the camellias, the two singers were assailed by an irresistible impulse, as if their love, hitherto slightly artificial, were awaiting only the excitement of a great triumph to awake in earnest. Their hands met, vows were exchanged, and consecrated by the persistent, far-off bravos of the audience. The two stars had effected their conjunction.

After their marriage they were not seen again on the stage for some time. But when their leave of absence had expired they reappeared, acting in the same play. That reappearance was a revelation. Hitherto the man had always taken precedence. Being the older of the two and more accustomed to the public, with whose foibles and preferences he was familiar, he swayed pit and boxes with his voice. Beside him the other seemed to be hardly more than an admirably gifted pupil, giving promise of future genius; her too youthful voice had angles, like her slender, somewhat thin shoulders. And so, on their return to the stage when she appeared in one of her familar rôles, and the first notes came forth full-toned, rich and strong, and pure as the water of a living spring, the charm of amazement in the audience was so great that all the interest of the evening centred about her. For the young woman it was one of those blest days when the surrounding atmosphere becomes limpid, rare, and vibrating, in order to carry the more perfectly all the effulgence, all the adulation of success. As for the husband, they almost forgot to applaud him, and as every dazzling light causes profound darkness in its neighborhood, he found himself relegated to the darkest corner of the stage, like any supernumerary.

After all, that passion which had appeared in the singer's acting, in the increased charm and tenderness of her voice, was inspired by him. He alone awoke the flame in those profound eyes; and that thought should have made him proud; but the actor's vanity was too strong. At the end of the play he summoned the leader of the *claque* and scolded him savagely. They had failed to applaud when he came on and went off; they had forgotten the recall after the third act. He would complain to the manager.

Alas! It made no difference what he said or what the *claque* did, the public favor then accorded to his wife remained permanently with her. She was extremely fortunate in a series of well-selected rôles, appropriate to her talent and beauty, which she acted with the tranquillity of a society belle entering the ball-room dressed in colors which become her, and sure of an ovation. At each fresh triumph the husband seemed depressed, nervous, irritable. It seemed to him as if he had been robbed of the popularity which had passed beyond hope of recovery from him to her. He tried for a long while to conceal from everybody, especially from his wife, this unavowable torture; but one evening, as she was ascending the stairs to her dressing-room, holding up her skirt, which was filled with bouquets, with both hands, and as, all aglow with her triumph, she said to him in a voice still trembling with the emotion caused by the applause, "We had a fine house to-night!" he replied, "Do you think so?" in such a bitter, ironical tone that the truth suddenly flashed upon the young wife's mind.

Her husband was jealous! not with the jealousy of a lover who wishes his wife to be beautiful for him alone, but with a cold, savage, implacable artist's jealousy. Sometimes, when she stopped at the end of an aria, and plaudits fell about her from every outstretched hand, he would affect an unmoved, distraught countenance, and his absent glance seemed to say to the spectators, "When you have finished applauding I will sing."

Ah! when one has once tasted applause, that patter as of hail which echoes so sweetly in the corridors, the wings, the hall, it is impossible to do without it. Great actors do not die of disease or old age; they cease to exist when the public ceases to applaud them. This man, in face of the indifference of his audiences, was actually driven to desperation. He grew thin, he became sullen and ill-tempered. To no purpose did he argue with himself, look his incurable malady in the face, repeat to himself before going on the stage, —

"But she is my wife. And I love her!"

In the artificial atmosphere of the theatre, the genuine sentiment vanished at once. He still loved the woman, but he detested the singer. She saw it plainly enough, and she kept watch over that pitiable mania as one nurses an invalid. At first it had occurred to her to minimize deliberately her own triumphs, to hold herself back, not put forth her whole voice, all her powers; but her resolutions were no stronger than her husband's in front of the footlights. Her talent went beyond her will, almost independently of herself; thereupon she humbled herself, made herself small before him; she asked his advice, whether he had thought that she did well, whether he read her part as she did.

Naturally, the other was never satisfied. With the patronizing air, the tone of false good-fellowship which actors adopt among themselves, he would say to her, on those evenings when she had won her greatest triumphs: —

"Look out for yourself, my girl — things are n't going very well just now — you 're not making any progress."

At other times he would try to prevent her singing.

"Take care, you 're overtaxing your strength — you 're doing too much. Don't tire out your luck. I tell you, I think you should ask for a leave of absence."

He even descended to the most stupid pretexts: she had a cold, was not in good voice. Or else he would seek a quarrel with her in true strolling-player fashion: —

"You took up the finale of the duo too soon — you spoiled my effect. You did it on purpose."

He did not realize, the wretch! that it was really he who embarrassed her in her acting, hurried his replies to prevent her being applauded, and, in his frantic longing to recapture his audiences, monopolized the front of the stage, leaving his wife to sing in the background. She did not complain, she loved him too dearly. Moreover, triumph makes one indulgent, and every evening her success forced her to come forth triumphantly into the bright light from the darkness where she tried to blot herself out, to efface herself. At the theatre this strange case of jealousy was soon detected, and their comrades were amused by it. They overwhelmed the singer with congratulations on his wife's talent. They put before him newspaper articles wherein the critic, after four long columns devoted to the star, accorded a few lines to the almost extinct popularity of the husband. One day, after reading one of these articles, he entered his wife's dressing-room in a frenzy, with the newspaper open in his hand, and said to her, white with anger: —

"In God's name, has this man been your lover?"

He descended to that degree of infamy. Thus the unhappy woman, fêted and envied, whose name could now be read in every corner of Paris, in huge letters at the top of the posters, and was seized upon by tradesmen as a bait for customers and printed on the little gilt labels of confectioners and perfumers, led the saddest, most humiliated life. She dared not open a newspaper for fear of reading an article in her own praise; she wept over the flowers that were thrown to her, and let them wither in a corner of her dressing-room, in order not to perpetuate in their home the painful memory of her triumphant evenings. She would have left the stage, but her husband would not listen to it.

"People will say that I made you do it."

And the horrible torture for them both continued.

One evening — it was a first performance — the actress was just going on the stage. Some one said to her: "Be on your guard. There's a hostile *claque* in the hall." That made her laugh. A *claque* hostile to her! For what cause, in heaven's name? She was on good terms with everybody, she held aloof from all coteries. And yet it was very true. In the middle of the play, during a grand duo with her husband, just as her superb voice, soaring to the highest point of its register, was finishing the phrase with a succession of notes as sweet and pure as the pearls of a necklace, a volley of hisses stopped her short. The audience was as taken aback, as surprised, as she herself. Their very breath seemed suspended, held captive in their lungs, like the passage she had been unable to finish. Suddenly an insane, horrible idea shot through her mind. He and she were alone on the stage. She gazed fixedly at him and saw the gleam of a wicked smile in his eyes. The poor woman understood. Her whole frame shook with sobs. She could only burst into tears and disappear, with streaming eyes, into the obscurity of the wings.

It was her husband who had caused her to be hissed!

V.

A MISUNDERSTANDING.

THE WIFE'S VERSION.

What is the matter? Why is he angry with me? I cannot understand it at all. I have done all that I can to make him happy. Mon Dieu! I don't say that I would not have preferred to marry a notary, a solicitor, a member of some more sedate, less flighty profession, instead of a poet; but such as he was he attracted me. I thought him a little high-flown in his ideas, but very pleasant all the same, and so well-bred; and then he had some means, and I thought that when he was once married his poetry would not prevent him from looking out for a good place, which would put us altogether at our ease. He found me to his liking, too, in those days. When he came to see me at my aunt's in the country, he could n't find words enough to express his admiration of the orderly arrangement of our little house, which was kept as neat as a convent. "It is amusing!" he used to say. And he would laugh and call me by all sorts of names taken from the poems and novels he had read. That annoyed me a little, I confess; I would have preferred to have him more serious. But not until we

V.

A MISUNDERSTANDING.

THE HUSBAND'S VERSION.

I HAD thought of everything, taken all my precautions. I would not have a Parisian, because I was afraid of Parisians. I would not have a rich woman, who would bring with her a whole train of petty tyrannies. I also dreaded the family, that terrible network of bourgeois affections which monopolize you, imprison you, stifle you, make you smaller. My wife was just the sort of person I had dreamed of. I said to myself: —

"She will owe everything to me. What a delight to train this innocent mind to appreciate lovely things; to admit this pure soul to the secret of my enthusiasms, my hopes; to give life to this statue!"

She really had the appearance of a statue, with her great eyes, so serious and calm, her regular Greek profile, her slightly sharp and severe features, softened, however, by the blending of tones common to all youthful faces, by that rose-tinted down, the shadow of the hair when brushed back from the forehead. Add to this a slight provincial accent which was my delight, to which I lis-

were married and installed in Paris did I realize the difference between our two natures.

I, who had dreamed of a light and airy little home, tidy and neat, was horrified to see him fill our apartment at once with useless pieces of furniture, long out of fashion, inches deep with dust, and with faded tapestries hundreds of years old. It was the same way in everything. Just fancy that he made me put a very pretty Empire clock which came to me from my aunt, and some magnificently framed pictures given me by some boarding-school friends, into the attic. He thought they were all hideous. I am still wondering why. For his study was a motley collection of old, smoke-begrimed canvases, statuettes that I was ashamed to look at, broken curios, good for nothing, chandeliers covered with verdigris, vases that would n't hold water, and mismatched cups. Beside my lovely violet-wood piano he had placed a wretched battered little thing, with half the notes gone, and so worn-out that you could hardly hear it. I began to say to myself: "Well, well! it seems that an artist is a bit of a lunatic. He cares for nothing but useless things, he despises anything that will serve any useful purpose."

When I saw his friends, the people whom he received, it was much worse. Men with long hair and beards, unkempt, poorly dressed, who had no compunctions about smoking in my presence, and who made me ill to hear them talk, all their ideas were so entirely contrary to mine. It was all long tened with closed eyes as to a memory of happy childhood, the echo of a tranquil life in some faraway, unknown retreat. And to think that now that accent has become unendurable to me! But I had faith then. I loved, I was happy, and disposed to be still more so. Overflowing with ardor and love of toil, I had begun a new poem as soon as I was married, and in the evening I would read her the lines I had written during the day. I desired that she should enter completely into my life. The first two or three times she said, "That is very pretty," — and I was grateful to her for that childlike approbation, hoping that before long she would reach a better understanding of the things that made up my life.

Poor creature! how I must have tortured her! After reading my lines to her, I would explain them, seeking in her lovely, astonished eyes the expected gleam, constantly fancying that I saw it. I compelled her to give me her opinion, and I glided over the foolish things she said, to remember only such clever things as chance happened to inspire. I would have liked so much to make her my true wife, the wife of an artist! But no! She did not understand. In vain did I read the great poets to her, appeal for aid to the most powerful and tenderest of them all; the golden rhymes of their poems of love were as wearisome and cold to her as a shower. Once, I remember we were reading the *Nuit d'Octobre;* she interrupted me to ask me a question on some more serious subject.

words, involved sentences; nothing natural, nothing simple. And with it all not the slightest idea of the proprieties; you might have them to dinner twenty times in succession, but never a call, never an act of courtesy. Not even a card, a bonbon on New Year's Day. Nothing. Some of these gentry were married and used to bring their wives. You should have seen the sort of creatures they were! Superb dresses every day, such as I shall never wear, thank God! And so badly arranged, without order or method. Fluffy hair, trailing skirts, and talents which they displayed with the utmost effrontery. There were some who sang like actresses, some who played the piano like professors, and they all chattered like men on every subject. Is that reasonable, I ask you? Is it proper for serious-minded women, when they are once married, to think about anything but their household cares? That is what I tried to make my husband understand when he was distressed because I gave up music. Music is all right when one is a small girl and has nothing better to do. But, frankly, I should have made a very absurd appearance, it seems to me, planting myself in front of a piano every day.

Oh! I am perfectly well aware that his great grievance against me is that I tried to remove him from that environment which is so dangerous for him. "You have driven away all my friends," is a charge he often brings against me. Yes, I have done it, and I do not repent. Those people would have ended by driving him mad. Sometimes, after

Thereupon I tried to explain that there is nothing more serious in the world than poetry, which is the very essence of life and floats above it like a vibrating light into which words and thoughts ascend, there to be transfigured. Oh! the disdainful smile that played about her pretty mouth, and the pitying condescension of her glance! You would have said that it was a child or a madman who was speaking to her.

Ah! the energy and eloquence I expended thus, and all in vain! Nothing could produce any effect. I constantly came in collision with what she called common-sense, reason, the everlasting excuse of cold hearts and narrow minds. And poetry is not the only thing that bored her. Before we were married I had thought that she was a musician. She seemed to understand the pieces she played, underscored by her teacher. She was no sooner married than she closed her piano, gave up her music. Can you imagine anything sadder than this renunciation by the young wife of everything that was attractive in the girl? The reply delivered, the play ended, the *ingénue* lays aside her costume. It was all assumed with a view to marriage, a superficial gloss of petty talents, pretty smiles, and temporary refinement. In her case the change was instantaneous. I had hoped at first that the taste I could not instil in her, appreciation of art, of beautiful things, would come to her in spite of herself in this marvellous Paris where the eyes and mind are refined *leaving them, he would pass the whole night making paltry rhymes, pacing the room and talking aloud. As if he were not odd enough, original enough himself, without people coming to make him worse! How many of his whims, his crochets I have put up with! He would suddenly appear in my room in the morning. "Come, put on your hat quickly. We are going into the country." I must drop everything, sewing and housework, hire cabs, ride in railway cars, and spend a lot of money! And when I thought of nothing but economizing! For I tell you it takes more than fifteen thousand francs a year to be rich in Paris and at the same time lay by a little something for your children. In the beginning he used to laugh at my remarks, and try to make me laugh; then, when he saw that I was determined to remain serious, he was displeased with me for my simplicity, my domestic tastes. Is it my fault, pray, if I detest the theatre, concerts, all the artistic functions to which he insisted on dragging me, and where he met his acquaintances of the old days, a parcel of hare-brained, dissipated bohemians?*

For a moment I thought that he was going to be more reasonable. I had succeeded in removing him from his disgusting circle of intimates, in forming a little coterie of sensible, sober-minded people, in establishing connections that might be useful to him. But no, Monsieur was bored. He was bored from morning till night. At our little evening-parties, although I provided whist-tables, a tea-table, every-

without suspecting it. But what was to be done with a woman who does not know how to open a book or look at a picture, to whom everything is a bore, who does not care to see anything? I realized that I must resign myself to the prospect of having beside me simply a bustling and economical — oh! a very economical — housekeeper; the wife according to Proudhon, nothing more. I would have done the best I could; so many artists are in my plight! But that modest rôle did not satisfy her.

Little by little, craftily, stealthily, she succeeded in driving away all my friends. We were perfectly unconstrained in her presence. We talked just as we used to do; and she comprehended neither the idealism nor the irony of our artistic exaggerations, of those extravagant axioms, those paradoxes in which the idea assumes a burlesque costume the better to draw forth a smile. It all simply irritated and puzzled her. She would sit in a corner of the salon, listening without speaking, firmly resolved to eliminate one by one all those men who were so offensive to her. Notwithstanding the apparent heartiness of her welcome, they soon began to feel in my house the little current of cold air which warns you that the door is open and that it is time to go.

When my friends had gone she replaced them by her own. I found myself overrun by a parcel of imbeciles, unacquainted with art, tiresome to the last degree, who despised poetry because "it *thing that was proper, he would appear with such a sour face, in such an ill-humor! When we were alone it was the same thing. And yet I was constantly showing him little attentions. I would say to him, "Read me what you are doing." And he would recite verses, whole passages. I could n't understand them at all, but I always pretended to be deeply interested, and I would make some little comment at random here and there, which always had the effect of irritating him. In a whole year, working day and night, he was only able, with all his rhymes, to make just one book, which did not sell at all. I said to him, "There! you see —" by way of argument to turn him to something easier to understand, more productive. He flew into a terrible rage, and that was followed by a constant depression which made me very unhappy. My friends advised me as best they could. "You see, my dear, it's ennui, the ill-humor of an idle man. If he would work a little more, he would n't be so dismal."*

So I and all my friends began to look about to find a place for him. I moved heaven and earth; I made heaven knows how many visits to wives of general secretaries and department chiefs; I even went as far as the minister's private office, — all without a word to him. I intended to give him a pleasant surprise. I said to myself, "We will see if he will be satisfied this time." At last, on the day when I received his appointment, a great envelope with five seals, I went and left it on his table, wild with delight. It meant that our future was is n't productive." They purposely mentioned before me, in a loud tone, the names of fashionable scribblers, manufacturers of plays and novels by the dozen: "So-and-so earns a great deal of money!"

To earn money! that is the sole object in life with these monsters, and I had the chagrin of seeing that my wife agreed with them. In that unpropitious environment, all her provincial habits, her narrow, parsimonious views, had degenerated into incredible avarice.

Fifteen thousand francs a year! It seemed to me that with that income one might live without worrying about the morrow. But no. I was obliged to listen to constant complaints from her, talk of economy, of reforms, of advantageous investments. As she enveloped me in these paltry details, I felt the taste and desire for work turning their backs on me. Sometimes she would come to my table and disdainfully turn over the leaves of a poem I was just beginning. "What 's all this?" she would exclaim, reckoning the hours wasted on those insignificant little lines. Ah! if I had chosen to listen to her, this glorious name of poet, which I have spent so many years in earning, would be trailing in the black mud of production at wholesale. And when I think that at first I gave my whole heart and all my dreams into that woman's keeping; when I think that this contempt she now displays for me, because I do not earn money, dates from the first moments of *assured, a comfortable home, the tranquillity born of honest toil and self-content. What do you suppose he said? He said that he would never forgive me! Whereupon he tore the minister's letter into a thousand pieces and fled, slamming the doors behind him. Oh! these artists, poor deranged creatures who take life all awry! What will become of me with such a man? I would have talked with him, argued with him. But no. That person was right who told me, "He's a madman!" Indeed, what is the use of speaking to him? We do not use the same language. He would not understand me any more than I understand him. And so here we are, looking blankly at each other. I can read hatred in his eyes, and yet I am still fond of him. It is very painful.*

our married life! Really I am ashamed for myself and for her.

I do not earn money! That explains everything, the reproach in her glance, her admiration for productive nobodies, and the steps she took to procure for me some place or other in a government office.

But I would have none of it. That is all I have left now, an inert will, proof against all assaults, all invasions. She can talk for hours, congeal me with her coldest smile, but my thoughts elude her, and always will elude her. And that is where we stand! Married, doomed to live together as we are, long leagues separate us, and we are too weary, too discouraged, to try to move toward each other. And it is for life. Oh! it is horrible!

VI.

ACTS OF VIOLENCE.

OFFICE OF MAÎTRE PETITBRY,
Consulting Advocate.

*To Madame Nina de B——,
at her aunt's at Moulins:*

MADAME, — In accordance with the instructions of Madame your aunt, I have given my attention to the matter in question. I have taken up the facts one after another and subjected all your grievances to a most careful examination. Very good; in my heart and conscience, I do not consider that the fruit is yet ripe enough, or, to speak more plainly, that you have as yet any serious basis for a petition for judicial separation. Let us not forget that French law is a very positive person, who has neither delicacy nor an appreciation of nice shades of sentiment. She takes cognizance of nothing but the fact, the brutal, downright fact, and unluckily that fact is just what we have not. I certainly was deeply touched when I read your story of that first year of married life, which was so painful to you. You paid very dear for the glory of marrying a famous artist, one of those men in whom renown and flattery develop abnormal egotism, and who must either live alone or shatter the fragile and timid existence which tries to cling to theirs. Ah! madame, since the beginning of my professional career, how many unhappy wives I have seen in the sad plight in which you now are! These artists who live by the public and for it exclusively, bring to the domestic fireside only the fatigue of their glory or the depression caused by their failures. A life devoid of order, without rudder or compass, subversive ideas at variance with all social conventions, contempt for the family and its joys, cerebral excitement sought in the excessive use of tobacco, of strong liquors, to say nothing of the rest, — these are what constitute this dangerous artistic element from which your aunt is so desirous to remove you; but I say again, while I appreciate her anxiety, yes, and her remorse for having given her consent to such a marriage, I do not see that affairs have reached the point at which you would be justified in the petition you contemplate.

I have, however, already begun the draft of a memorandum in which your principal grievances are grouped and set forth with some skill. These are the main divisions of the work: —

1st. *Monsieur's ungentlemanly treatment of Madame's family.* — His refusal to receive our aunt from Moulins, who brought us up and is very fond of us. — The sobriquets of *Tata-Bobosse*, *Fée Carabosse*, and the like, applied to that venerable spinster, whose back is slightly bent. — Mockery, epigrams, pen and pencil sketches of the said spinster and her infirmity.

2d. *Unsociableness.* — Refusal to see Madame's friends, to make wedding calls, to send cards, to answer invitations, etc.

3d. *Extravagance.* — Money loaned without receipt to all sorts of bohemians. — Table always laid, house transformed into a caravansary. — Constant subscriptions for statues, gravestones, and productions of unfortunate brethren. — Foundation of an artistic and literary review ! ! ! !

4th. *Vulgar remarks about Madame.* — Saying aloud, referring to us, "What a turkey !"

5th. *Ill-usage and Violence.* — Monsieur's excessive brutality. — Flies into a rage on the slightest pretext. — Shatters crockery and furniture. — Uproar, scandal, unseemly expressions.

All this, dear madame, as you see, forms a very respectable, but insufficient indictment. We lack the actual violence. Ah ! if we only had an act of violence, one tiny little act of violence before witnesses, our case would be magnificent. But we cannot hope for an event of that kind, now that you have placed fifty leagues between yourself and your husband. I say "hope," because, in the present situation of affairs, an exhibition of brutality on that man's part would have been the most fortunate thing that could happen.

Awaiting your commands, madame, I am your respectful and devoted servant,

PETITBRY.

P. S. — Brutality before witnesses, understand !

To Maître Petitbry, Paris :

And so, monsieur, this is what we have come to ! This is what your laws have made of the old French chivalry ! And so, although a misunderstanding is often sufficient to separate two hearts forever, your courts must have acts of violence to justify such a separation ! Is it not a shameful, unjust, barbarous, crying outrage? To think that, in order to recover her liberty, my poor girl must go and hold out her neck to the executioner, must abandon herself to all the monster's fury, ay, in-flame it! But no matter, our minds are made up. You must have acts of violence. Very good! you shall have them. To-morrow Nina returns to Paris. How will she be greeted? What will happen? I cannot think of it without a shudder. At the thought my hand trembles, my eyes fill with tears. Ah! Monsieur. Ah! Maître Petitbry! Ah!

NINA'S UNFORTUNATE AUNT.

OFFICE OF MAÎTRE MARESTANG,
Solicitor to the Tribunal of the Seine.

Monsieur Henri de B——,
Man of Letters, Paris:

Be calm, be calm, be calm! I forbid you to go to Moulins, to rush off in pursuit of your fugitive. It is the wisest and surest plan to wait by your own chimney-corner. After all, what was it that happened? You refused to receive that absurd, evil-tongued old maid; your wife went off to join her. You must wait. Family ties are very strong in the heart of a young woman so newly married. You attempted to go too fast. Remember that this aunt brought her up, that she has no other relations. She has her husband, you will say. Ah! my dear boy, between ourselves we can afford to admit that husbands are not amiable every day. I know one in particular who, notwithstanding his kind heart, is so nervous and high-strung! I agree that hard work and artistic preoccupation are partly responsible for it. Nevertheless the bird has taken fright and flown back to its old cage. Have no fear; it will not remain there long. Either I am sadly mistaken or that Parisian of yesterday will very soon grow weary of her superannuated surroundings and will not be long without regretting her poet's outbursts. Above all things, do not budge.

Your old friend,

MARESTANG.

To Maître Marestang,
Solicitor, Paris:

At the same time that your sensible and friendly letter reached me, I received a telegram from Moulins announcing Nina's return. Ah! what an excellent prophet you were! She arrives this evening, entirely alone, as she went away, without the slightest move on my part. What I must do now is to make her life so peaceful and pleasant that she will have no further temptation to go away. I have laid in a vast stock of affection and patience during this week's separation. There is only one point on which I am unchangeable. I do not propose to have that horrible Tata-Bobosse in my house again, that blue-stocking of 1820, who gave her niece to me solely because she hoped that my petty celebrity would give hers a boost. Consider, my dear Marestang, that ever since my marriage that wretched little old woman has constantly come between my wife and myself, protruding her hunchback into all our pleasures, all our parties, at the theatre, at the exhibitions, in society, in the country, everywhere. That being so, are you surprised that I was somewhat precipitate about turning her out, sending her back to her good town of Moulins? I tell you, my dear fellow, you have no idea of the mischief these old maids, naturally suspicious and ignorant of life, are capable of making in a young family. She had stuffed my wife's pretty little head with false, old-fashioned, ridiculous ideas, a rococo sentimentalism of the days of Ipsiboé and young Florange: *Ah, if my lady* *should see me!* — To her mind I was simply a *poâte*, the kind of *poâte* you see in Renduel's or Ladvocat's frontispieces, crowned with laurel, with a lyre on his hip, and the breeze from the lofty mountain-tops swelling his short cloak with its velvet collar. That is the sort of husband she had promised her niece, and you can imagine my poor Nina's disappointment. However, I agree that I was very maladroit in dealing with the poor child. As you say, I tried to go too fast, I frightened her. Her education was so narrow, she had imbibed such false ideas from the convent and from her aunt's sentimental maunderings, that it was my duty to begin very gently to educate her anew, giving the provincial perfume time to evaporate. However, it is all reparable, since she is coming back. She is coming back, my dear friend! To-night I shall go and meet her at the station, and we shall return home arm-in-arm, reconciled and happy.

HENRI DE B——.

NINA DE B—— TO HER AUNT AT MOULINS.

He was waiting for me at the station, and received me smiling, with outstretched arms, as if I were returning from an ordinary journey. As you can imagine, I assumed my most frigid expression. As soon as we reached home I shut myself up in my room, where I dined alone on the pretext of fatigue. Then I gave the key a double turn. He came and bade me good-night through the key-hole, and to my great surprise walked away on tiptoe without losing his temper or insisting on being admitted. This morning I called on Maître Petitbry, who instructed me at great length as to the course of conduct I should adopt, — the time, the place, the witnesses. Ah! my dear aunt, if you knew how my fear increases as the moment draws nearer! His fits of anger are so terrible. Even when he is mild and pleasant as he was last night, his eyes flash as if a storm were brewing. However, I shall be strong when I think of you, darling. Besides, as Maître Petitbry says, there is only one unpleasant moment to live through; then we will resume our former calm and happy life together. NINA DE B——.

THE SAME TO THE SAME.

I am writing in bed, dear aunt, prostrated by the excitement of that terrible scene. Who would have dreamed that things would turn out thus? And yet all my precautions were taken. I had notified Marthe and her sister, who were to come at one o'clock, and I had selected for the great scene the moment of leaving the table, while the servants were removing the dishes in the dining-room, which adjoins the study. My batteries were all prepared in the morning; an hour of scales and exercises on the piano, the *Cloches du Monastère*, the *Rêveries de Rosellen*, all the pieces he detests. That did not prevent his working constantly, without the slightest sign of irritation. At breakfast, the same unruffled patience. An execrable breakfast it was, too, — odds and ends, and sweet dishes which he cannot endure. And if you could have seen my costume! A gown five years old, a little black-silk apron, hair out of curl! I looked for signs of irritation on his forehead, for that straight furrow I know so well, which Monsieur digs between his eyebrows when he is vexed in the slightest degree. But no, nothing of the sort. It was enough to make me believe that my husband had been changed. He said to me in a calm, slightly sad tone:

"Ah! you have gone back to your old way of wearing your hair?"

I hardly answered, preferring not to hasten matters before the witnesses arrived; and then, it 's a curious thing! — I felt deeply moved, excited in anticipation of the scene I was trying to bring about. At last, after a few decidedly sharp replies on my part, he left the table and went to his study. I followed him, all in a tremble. I could hear my friends seating themselves in the small salon, and Pierre going in and out of the dining-room, arranging the silver and the glasses. The moment had come. I must incite him to acts of violence, and that seemed to me a simple matter after all that I had done since the morning to irritate him.

I must have been deathly pale when I entered his study! I felt that I was in the lion's cage. "Suppose he should kill me!" I thought. He did n't look very terrible, however, lying on his divan with a cigar in his mouth.

"Do I disturb you?" I asked in my most ironical voice.

"No," he answered tranquilly. "As you see, I am not working."

I, still very nasty: —

"Ah! do you never work, pray?"

He, still very amiable: —

"You are mistaken, my dear. On the contrary, I work a great deal. But ours is one of the trades at which a man can work when he has no tools in his hand."

"And what are you doing at this moment? Oh! yes, I know, your play in verse — always the same thing for two years past. Do you know what a lucky thing it is that your wife has a little money? That enables you to be as lazy as you please."

I thought that he would jump at me then. Not at all. He came and took my hands very kindly.

"Well, well, is it still the same old story? Are we going to begin anew our life of constant warfare? In that case why did you come back?"

I confess that I was a little touched by his sad and affectionate tone; but I thought of you, my poor aunt, of your exile, of all he has done, and that gave me courage. I tried to think what would be the bitterest, the most wounding thing I could say to him. I don't know what I said — that I was in despair at having married an artist; that at Moulins everybody pitied me; that I had found my girl friends married to magistrates, serious-minded, influential men, of assured position, while he — if he only earned money! But no, Monsieur worked for renown. And such renown! No one at Moulins knew of him, and at Paris his plays were hissed. His books did not sell. And *patati*, and *patata*. My brain whirled with all the spiteful words that rushed into it as I went on. He gazed at me without answering, with cold anger. Naturally his coldness exasperated me still more. I was so excited that I could not recognize my voice, which was pitched extraordinarily high, and the last words I shrieked at him — some unjust, foolish epigram or other — buzzed in my bewildered ears. For the moment I thought that Maître Petitbry would have his act of violence. Pale as death, with clenched teeth, Henri had taken two steps toward me.

"Madame!"

Then his wrath suddenly vanished, his face became impassive once more, and he looked at me with such a calm, scornful, insolent expression! Ah! on my word, my patience was exhausted; I raised my hand and *vlan!* I gave him the prettiest slap that I ever gave in my life. At the sound the door opened and my witnesses appeared, horrified and solemn.

"Monsieur, this is an outrage!"

"Is n't it?" said the poor fellow, pointing to his red cheek.

You can imagine whether I was confused. Luckily I had adopted the plan of fainting and of shedding all the tears I had, which relieved me very much. Henri is in my room now. He is taking care of me, nursing me, and he is really very, very kind to me. What am I to do? What a hopeless tangle! Maître Petitbry will not be pleased.

NINA DE B——.

VII.

BOHEMIA EN FAMILLE.

I DO not think that a more eccentric and more cheerful interior can be found in all Paris than Simaise the sculptor's. Life in that house is a perpetual holiday. At whatever hour you arrive you hear laughter and singing, and the music of a piano, a guitar, or a tom-tom. If you enter the studio, it rarely happens that you do not find yourself in the midst of a game of battledore, a waltz, or a figure in a quadrille, or else amid preparations for a ball, clippings of tulle, ribbons lying beside modelling tools, artificial flowers hanging on busts, and spangled skirts spread out on groups of which the clay is still moist.

There are four tall girls there, you see, from sixteen to twenty-five years of age, very pretty, but all-pervading; and when these young ladies whirl about with their hair down their backs, a mass of flying ribbons, long pins, and light curls, you would say that, instead of four, there were eight, sixteen, thirty-two Mesdemoiselles Simaise, each as frolicsome as the others, talking loud, laughing heartily, one and all with the slightly boyish manner peculiar to artists' daughters, with studio gestures and the self-possession of an art-student; and incomparably skilful in turning away a creditor or dusting the jacket of a tradesman insolent enough to present his bill at an inopportune moment.

These young women are the real mistresses of the house. The father works from daybreak, modelling and chiselling without respite, for he has no means. In the beginning he was ambitious, struggled hard to do well. Several successful works at the Exposition seemed to promise a certain measure of renown. But this expensive family to feed and dress and start in life prevented him from rising above mediocrity in his profession. As for Madame Simaise, she is of no account at all. Being very beautiful at the time of her marriage, and very popular in the artistic circle to which her husband introduced her, she condemned herself to be, at first, simply a pretty woman, and later, simply a woman who was once pretty. Being of Creole origin as she claims — although I am assured that her parents never left Courbevoie — she passes her days from morning till night in a hammock slung in every room in turn, fans herself and takes siestas, with a profound contempt for the material details of life. She has posed so often for her husband for Hebes and Dianas that she thinks of herself as passing through life with a crescent on her brow, a cup in her hand, laden with emblems, and as having no other work to do. And you should see what confusion there is in the house. It takes an hour to find anything.

"Have you my thimble? — Marthe, Éva, Geneviève, Madeleine, who has seen my thimble?"

The drawers, in which books, powder, rouge, spangles, spoons, and fans are thrown pell-mell are filled to the brim, but contain nothing of any use; moreover, they belong to odd, curious, incomplete, battered pieces of furniture. And the house itself is so singular! As they often move, they have no time to get settled, and that light-hearted establishment always seems to be awaiting the complete, indispensable setting to rights which follows a ball. But so many things are lacking that it is not worth while to try to set the place to rights, and if only they have a little something to wear, if they can flit through the streets with the brilliancy of a meteor, a suggestion of *chic*, and an appearance of splendor, honor is safe. This tribe of nomads is in no wise embarrassed by camp-life. Through the open doors poverty suddenly displays itself in the four bare walls of an unfurnished room, in the confusion of an over-crowded chamber. It is bohemianism *en famille*, a life of unexpected episodes, of surprises.

Just as they are sitting down at table they discover that there is nothing to eat, and that some one must go out in a hurry and get breakfast. In this way the hours pass swiftly, being full of excitement if not of work; and then there is this advantage in their life: when they breakfast late they do not dine, making up for it by supping at the ball, where they go almost every evening. These ladies often give evening parties too. Tea is served in outlandish receptacles, mugs, tumblers, and Japanese shells, all cracked and chipped by frequent movings. The serenity of the mother and daughters amid this destitution is something admirable. Faith! they have many other things than housekeeping in their heads. The hair of one is brushed smooth like a Swiss peasant's, another is curled like an English baby, and Madame Simaise in her hammock lives in the blissful memories of her former beauty. As for Père Simaise, he is always happy. So long as he hears his daughters' rippling laughter about him, he bears with a light heart all the burden of that disordered existence. To him they apply cajolingly: "Papa, I need a hat; papa, I must have a dress." Sometimes there is a hard winter. They go out so much, they receive so many invitations. Bah! the father manages by rising two hours earlier. They have but one fire in the house, in the studio, where the whole family assembles. The young ladies cut and make their dresses themselves, while the hammock rope creaks regularly and the father works away, squatting on his stool.

Have you ever met these ladies in society? As soon as they appear there is a murmur and stir. The two oldest have been known for a long while; but they are always so becomingly dressed, so spruce, that there is great rivalry for the honor of dancing with them. They are quite as popular as their younger sisters, almost as much as their mother in the older days; and they have such a graceful way of wearing fashionable gowns and jewels, such a charming spontaneity of manner, with the wild laughter of ill-bred children and a trick of fanning themselves in the Spanish fashion. In spite of everything, they do not marry. No admirer has ever been able to resist the spectacle of that extraordinary home. The havoc wrought by useless extravagance, the lack of plates, the profusion of old torn tapestries, of disjointed and discolored antique chandeliers, the current of air from the doors, the constant ringing of creditors, the untidiness of the young ladies in *peignoir* and slippers, dawdling about in furnished lodgings, put the best-intentioned lovers to flight. What can you expect? Not every man can resign himself to the idea of hanging an indolent woman's hammock by his side for life.

I am very much afraid that Mesdemoiselles Simaise will never marry. They had, however, a unique and magnificent opportunity during the Commune. The family had taken refuge in Normandie, in a small but very litigious town, full of solicitors, notaries, and land-agents. The father looked about for work as soon as he arrived. His renown as a sculptor was of service to him; and as there was a statue of Cajas by him in a public square in the town, the notabilities vied with one another in ordering their busts. The mother slung her hammock forthwith in a corner of the studio, and the young ladies organized small parties. They made a great hit at once. There, you see, poverty seemed an incident of exile, the unsettled air of the establishment had its justification. The fashionable damsels made merry over their poverty. They had left Paris empty-handed. Paris being closed to the outside world, nothing could reach them. It rather added to their charms. It made one think of the travelling gypsies who comb their lovely hair in a barn and quench their thirst at a brook. The least poetic mentally compared them to the exiles at Coblentz, to the ladies of Marie-Antoinette's court, who left in hot haste, without powder or hoops or maids, and were forced to resort to all sorts of expedients, to learn to wait upon themselves, and who retained nevertheless the frivolous manners of the court of France, the black patches, now discarded, giving piquancy to the smile.

Every evening the Simaise study was overrun by a parcel of dazzled limbs of the law. There was a hired piano, and they all polkaed and waltzed and *schottisched*—the schottische is still danced in Normandie. "I shall surely marry off one of them at last," said Père Simaise to himself; and, in all likelihood, when one had gone the others would have followed. Unfortunately the first one did not go, but she came very, very near it. Among the young ladies' numerous partners in that *corps de ballet* of solicitors, deputy-attorneys, and notaries, the most enthusiastic dancer was a solicitor, a widower, who was very attentive to the oldest daughter. He was known in the house as "the first dancing solicitor," in memory of Molière's ballets; and Père Simaise, seeing how frantically the old dandy capered about, undoubtedly based his fondest hopes upon him. But men of affairs do not dance like other men.

And this one, as he waltzed, reflected thus: "This Simaise family is charming — tra la la — la la la — but they need not try to hurry me — la la la — la la lère — I'll make no bargain till the gates of Paris are reopened — tra la la — and I have had a chance to find out a thing or two — la la la." Thus did the first dancing solicitor reflect; and as soon as the siege of Paris was raised he made inquiries about the family and the marriage fell through.

Since then the poor little girls have missed many others. But the cheerfulness of that strange household is in no wise disturbed thereby. On the contrary, the longer they live the merrier they are. Last winter they moved three times and were sold out once, and yet they gave two large fancy-dress balls.

VIII.

FRAGMENT OF A WOMAN'S LETTER, FOUND ON RUE NOTRE-DAME-DES-CHAMPS.

. . . much it has cost me to have married an artist! Ah! my dear, if I had known! — but young girls have such queer ideas on all subjects. Just fancy that at the Salon, when I saw on the catalogue the addresses of the artists on those far-away, peaceful streets, at the extreme end of Paris, I imagined them leading tranquil, sedentary lives, wrapped up in their work and their families; and I said to myself, realizing beforehand how jealous I should be: "That is the sort of husband I want. He will always be with me. We will pass all our days together, he at his picture or his sculpture, I reading or sewing at his side in the subdued light of the studio." Poor innocent fool! I had no suspicion then of what a studio was, nor of the strange kind of people one meets there. Never, when I was looking at those statues of goddesses so brazenly *décolleté*, did it occur to me that there could be women so shameless as to — and that I myself — Otherwise I beg you to believe that I would not have married a sculptor. Ah! no indeed, I should think not! I ought to say that at home they were all opposed to my marriage, in spite of my husband's wealth, his already famous name, and the beautiful house he built for me. But I was determined upon it. He was so refined, so charming, so attentive! It seemed to me, however, that he had a little too much to say about my dress, my way of arranging my hair. "Pray brush your hair back like this — so," and monsieur would amuse himself by placing a flower amid my curls with more art than the best of our *modistes*. So much experience in such things in a man was terrifying, was n't it? I ought to have distrusted him. However, you shall hear. Listen.

We had returned from our wedding journey. While I was getting settled in my pretty, beautifully furnished little apartment — the paradise which you know so well — my husband, immediately upon our arrival, began to work, and passed his days in his studio, away from the house. When he came home at night he would talk to me feverishly about his statue in the approaching Salon. The subject was "A Roman Lady leaving the Bath." He was striving to reproduce in the marble the little shiver at the touch of the air, the moisture of the fine stuff clinging to her shoulders, and all sorts of other beautiful things that I don't now remember. Between ourselves, when he is talking sculpture to me I do not always understand very clearly. All the same, I said confidently, "That will be very pretty;" and I already imagined myself on the fine gravel of the paths, admiring my husband's work, a lovely bit of white marble standing out against the green hanging, while people behind me whispered, "The sculptor's wife."

At last, being curious to see how we were getting along with our Roman lady, it occurred to me one day to go and surprise him at his studio, which I had not then seen. It was one of my first experiments in going out alone, and I made myself beautiful, I tell you! When I arrived I found the door opening into the little garden, on the ground-floor, wide open. So I went right in, and you can imagine my indignation when I saw my husband, in a white blouse, like a mason, with hair awry and hands all smeared with dirt, and facing him, my dear, a woman, a tall creature, standing on a three-legged stool, hardly clothed at all, and as unconcerned in that guise as if she found it perfectly natural. The whole of her wretched outfit, covered with mud, walking boots, a round hat with a feather all out of curl, were tossed on a chair by her side. I saw it all in a flash, for you can guess whether I ran away. Étienne tried to speak to me, to detain me, but I made a gesture of horror at sight of his clayey hands, and I hurried away to mamma's house, where I arrived more dead than alive. You can picture the scene when I appeared.

"Ah! *mon Dieu!* my child, what is the matter?"

I told mamma what I had seen, how that horrible woman was dressed, in what costume. And I cried and cried. Mamma was deeply moved and tried to comfort me; she explained that it must have been a model.

"What? why, it's abominable! He said nothing to me about such things before we were married."

Thereupon Étienne arrived in dire dismay, and tried in his turn to make me understand that a model is not a woman like other women, and that sculptors cannot do without them; but these reasons did not convince me, and I declared formally that I would have none of a husband who passed his days *tête-à-tête* with young women in that garb.

"Let us see, my dear," said poor mamma, struggling hard to adjust everything, "could n't you, out of regard for your wife, replace this woman by a make-believe, a pasteboard figure?"

My husband gnawed his moustache with rage.

"Why, it's impossible, my dear mamma."

"Still, it does seem to me, my dear fellow — you know, our milliners have pasteboard heads that they use to show bonnets on. Now, if they do it for the head, could n't you do it for — "

It seemed that it was not possible. At all events that is what Étienne tried at great length to prove to us, with all sorts of details and technical words. He really seemed very unhappy. I watched him out of the corner of my eye as I wiped away my tears, and I saw that my suffering distressed him terribly. At last, after an interminable discussion, it was agreed that, since the model was indispensable, I should be present whenever she came. There was a very convenient little closet adjoining the studio, where I could see without being seen. It is a shameful thing, you will say, to be jealous of such creatures and to show one's jealousy. But you see, my love, one must have passed through such emotions to be able to talk about them.

The model was to come the next day. So I took my courage in both hands and installed myself in my little box, with the express understanding that, at the faintest tap on the partition, my husband was to come to me at once. I was hardly in my seat when the wretched model of the day before arrived, trussed up God knows how, and with such a poverty-stricken aspect that I asked myself how I could have been jealous of a woman who goes about the streets without white cuffs and with an old shawl with green fringe. Well, my dear, when I saw that creature drop her shawl and her dress in the middle of the studio, disrobe herself in such a free-and-easy, immodest way, it produced an effect on me which I cannot describe. Indignation choked me. I knocked hastily on the partition. Étienne came. I was pale and trembling. He laughed at me, reassured me very gently, and went back to his work. Now the woman was standing, half-naked, her long hair unbound and falling down her back in a heavy, gleaming mass. She was no longer the vile creature of a moment before, but almost a statue already, despite her worn and vulgar mien. I had a tight feeling at my heart. However, I said nothing. Suddenly I heard my husband exclaim: "The left leg. Put out the left leg." And, as the model did not understand, he walked up to her, and — Ah! I could n't stand that. I knocked. He did n't hear me. I knocked again, frantically. That time he ran to me, frowning slightly in the excitement of his work.

"Come, come, Armande — do be reasonable!" And I, weeping bitterly, laid my head on his shoulder: "It's too much for me, my dear. I can't — I cannot — "

Thereupon, without answering, he turned abruptly, went back to the studio and made a sign to that fright of a woman, who dressed and went away.

For several days Étienne did not go to his studio. He stayed at home with me, never went out, refused to see his friends; he was perfectly pleasant all the time, but his manner was so dejected. Once I asked him very timidly, "Are n't you going to work any more?" which called forth this reply, "A man can't work without a model." I had not the courage to insist, for I realized how guilty I was, and that he had the right to bear me a grudge. However, by dint of caresses and endearments, I induced him to promise to return to his studio and try to finish his statue by — what do they call it? — by *chic*, that is to say, by imagination; mamma's way, in fact. I thought it a very easy matter, but the poor fellow had a hard time of it. Every night he came home worn out and discouraged, almost ill. I went often to see him, to cheer him up. I always said, "It is charming." But as a matter of fact the statue made little progress. I am not even sure that he worked on it. When I arrived I always found him smoking on his couch, or else rolling little pellets of clay, which he threw savagely against the wall.

One afternoon when I was there looking at the poor Roman lady, half-modelled, who was so long about leaving her bath, a wild idea passed through my mind. The Roman was about my height; perhaps on a pinch I might —

"What do you call a pretty leg?" I suddenly asked my husband.

He explained the point at great length, pointing out what his statue still lacked, and what he could not succeed in giving it without a model. Poor boy! he said it with such a heart-broken air. What do you suppose I did? Faith, for better or worse, I simply picked up the drapery that lay in a corner and stepped into my box; then, without a word, while he was still gazing at his statue, I softly took my place on the platform in front of him, in the costume and attitude in which I had seen that horrid model. Ah! my love, such emotion as he showed when he raised his head! I longed to laugh and to cry. I was as red as fire. And that infernal muslin must be redraped everywhere. Never mind! Étienne seemed so overjoyed that I was soon reassured. Just fancy, my dear; to hear him talk —

IX.

A GREAT MAN'S WIDOW.

When it was reported that she was to marry again, no one was surprised. Despite all his genius, perhaps even because of his genius, the great man had for fifteen years led her a very hard life, interspersed with caprices, with sensational crotchets, which sometimes attracted the attention of Paris. On the high-road to renown, over which he had passed in triumph and at great speed, like those who are destined to die young, she had followed him, humble and shrinking, crouching in a corner of the chariot, and always on the lookout for accidents. When she complained, relations, friends, everybody was against her. "Respect his foibles," they would say, "they are the foibles of a god. Do not vex him, do not disturb him. Remember that your husband is not yours only. He belongs to the country, to art, much more than to the family. And who can say that every one of these faults of which you complain is not the source of some sublime work?" At last, however, exhausted by her enforced patience, she had fits of rebellion, of indignation, so that, when the great man died, they were on the point of appearing in court on a petition for a judicial separation, and of dragging their noble and illustrious name through the mire on the third page of the scandal-mongering newspapers.

After the agitation of that ill-starred union, the anxiety of the last illness, and the sudden shock of her husband's death, which had rekindled for a moment her former affection, the first three months of her widowhood had upon the young woman the salutary, restful effect of a season at the baths. The forced retirement, the tranquil charm of assuaged grief gave her at twenty-five a second youth almost as fascinating as the first. Moreover, black was very becoming to her; and she assumed the serious, somewhat haughty demeanor of a woman left alone in life with all the honor of a great name to bear. Jealous beyond measure of the dead man's renown, that accursed renown which had cost her so many tears and which was growing greater from day to day like a gorgeous flower nourished by the black soil of the grave, she appeared, enveloped in her long, gloomy weeds, at the offices of theatrical managers and publishers, negotiating for the reproduction of her husband's operas, superintending the publication of his posthumous works and unfinished manuscripts, and bringing to all these details a sort of solemn solicitude and as it were the respect inspired by a place of sanctuary.

It was at this period that her second husband met her. He too was a musician, almost unknown, the author of divers waltzes and ballads and of two operettas, which were neither sold nor acted to any appreciable extent, although they had been printed in most attractive style. With a pleasant face and a handsome fortune, which he inherited from an extremely bourgeois family, his most prominent characteristics were, an exalted respect for glory, curiosity concerning celebrated men, and the enthusiastic innocence of artists who are still young. And so, when the master's wife was pointed out to him, his head swam. It was as if the image of the glorious muse had appeared to him. He fell in love at once, and as the widow was beginning to go into society to some extent, he obtained an introduction to her house. There his passion fed upon the atmosphere of genius which still hovered in all the corners of the salon. There was the bust of the master, the piano at which he composed, his scores, scattered about over all the furniture, melodious even to the sight, as if the written phrases came forth in music from their open sheets. The undeniable fascination of the widow, planted amid the memories of that austere past as in a becoming frame, put the finishing touch to his passion.

After hesitating a long while the excellent youth ended by declaring his love, but in the most humble, timid terms. He knew of how little consequence he was in her eyes; he understood how she must regret exchanging her illustrious name for his, — an unknown, plebeian name, — and innumerable other ingenuous deliverances of this sort. In the bottom of her heart the lady was much flattered by her conquest, but she played the comedy of the broken heart, and assumed the scornful, surfeited airs of the woman whose life is ended, with no hope of beginning anew. She, who had never been so tranquil as since her great man's death, still found tears with which to regret his loss, and was able to speak of him with enthusiastic warmth. All this, of course, simply inflamed her youthful adorer, and made him more eloquent, more persuasive.

To make a long story short, this stern widowhood ended with a marriage; but the widow did not abdicate, and, although married, was more than ever the great man's widow, fully realizing that therein lay her real prestige in her second husband's eyes. As she felt less youthful than he, she prevented him from noticing it by overwhelming him with disdain, with a sort of vague compassion, of unexpressed but stinging regret because of her mésalliance. But he was not wounded; far from it, — he was so persuaded of his inferiority, and thought it so natural that the memory of such a man should be despotically enthroned in her heart! To maintain him in that attitude of humility, she sometimes read over with him the letters the master wrote her when he was paying court to her. This return to the past made her fifteen years younger, gave her the self-assurance of a beautiful, beloved woman, viewed through all the amorous dithyrambs, the delicious exaggeration of written passion. If she had changed since, her young husband was little disturbed by the change, adored her on the strength of another's word, and derived a strange, indefinable sort of vanity therefrom. It seemed to him that those impassioned entreaties added to the force of his own, and that he was the inheritor of a whole past of love.

Strange couple! They were an interesting spectacle in society. I saw them occasionally at the theatre. No one would have recognized the shrinking, timid young woman who used to accompany the *maëstro*, lost in the gigantic shadow which he cast all about him. Now she sat erect at the front of the box and attracted all eyes by the proud gleam in her own. One would have said that she wore about her head her first husband's halo, while his name echoed all about her by way of homage or of reproof. The other, seated a little farther back, with the intense expression of the sacrificed ones of life, watched her every movement, awaiting an opportunity to wait upon her.

In their home this curious relation was even more marked. I remember an evening party that they gave a year after they were married. The husband circulated among his guests, proud, yet a little embarrassed, to have so many people in his house. The wife, disdainful, melancholy, superior, was on that occasion the great man's widow to the last degree. She had a certain way of glancing at her husband over her shoulder, of calling him "my poor dear" as she overwhelmed him with ungrateful duties, as if to say, "You are good for nothing but that." About her clustered the circle of intimate friends of the earlier time, of those who had been present at the master's brilliant beginnings, his struggles, his triumphs. With them she simpered, played the young girl. They had known her when she was so young! Almost all of them called her by her Christian name, "Anaïs." It was like a gathering of artists, which the poor husband approached respectfully to hear his predecessor discussed. They recalled the glorious *first nights*, those nights of battle, almost always won; and the great man's manias, for instance, his insisting that his wife should be beside him, in full dress, *décolletée*, when he was at work, in order to bring inspiration. "Do you remember, Anaïs?" and Anaïs sighed and blushed.

His beautiful love plays dated from that period, *Savonarole* particularly, the most passionate of all, with its great duo interspersed with moonbeams, the perfume of roses, and the song of the nightingale. An enthusiast played it on the piano, amid contemplative emotion. At the last note of that admirable passage, the lady burst into tears. "That is too much for me," she said. "I have never been able to listen to it without weeping." The master's old friends, encompassing his unhappy widow with their sympathetic condolence, came forward in turn as at funeral ceremonies, to give her a tremulous clasp of the hand.

"Come, come, Anaïs, be brave."

And the most amusing thing was to see the second husband, standing beside his wife, with a deeply moved, pathetic air, distributing hand-clasps, and appropriating his share of the expressions of condolence.

"What a genius! what a genius!" he said, mopping his eyes. It was at once comical and touching.

X.

THE LIAR.

"I HAVE never loved but one woman in my life," said D—— the painter to us one day. "I passed with her five years of perfect happiness, of tranquil and fruitful joys. I may say that I owe to her my present celebrity; work was so easy to me, inspiration so natural at her side. The moment I first met her it seemed to me as if she had always been mine. Her beauty and her character fulfilled all my dreams. That woman never left me; she died in my house, in my arms, loving me to the end. But when I think of her it is with anger. If I try to represent her as I saw her for five years, in all the radiance of her love, with her tall, lithe figure, her golden pallor, the features of an Oriental Jewess, regular and delicate in the slightly puffy face, her slow speech, as smooth and velvety as her glance, — if I seek to give body to that delicious vision, it is only that I may say to her with the more force, 'I hate you!'

"Her name was Clotilde. In the friend's house where we met, she was known by the name of Madame Deloche, and she was said to be the widow of a sea-captain who made long voyages. She had, in fact, the appearance of having travelled extensively. In conversation, she would suddenly say, 'When I was at Tampico;' or, 'One time in the harbor at Valparaiso.' Aside from that there was nothing in her manners or her language that smacked of a wandering life, nothing that indicated that she was accustomed to the confusion and hurry of sudden arrivals and speedy departures. She was a Parisian, she dressed with perfect taste, with none of the *burnous* or the eccentric-looking *sarapés*, which advertise the wives of naval officers and seamen, always in their travelling costume.

"When I realized that I loved her, my first, my only thought was to ask her to marry me. Someone spoke to her in my behalf. She answered simply that she should never marry again. After that I avoided meeting her; and as I was too hard hit, too preoccupied, to do any work at all, I determined to travel. I was making my preparations for departure, when, one morning, to my unbounded amazement, I saw Madame Deloche enter my bedroom, where all the drawers were open and trunks scattered about.

"'Why are you going away?' she said softly. 'Because you love me? I love you, too. But' — here her voice trembled slightly — 'but I am married.' And she told me her story.

"A genuine romance of love and desertion. Her husband drank and beat her. They had separated after three years. Her family, of whom she seemed very proud, occupied a high position in Paris, but since her marriage they had refused to recognize her. She was the Chief Rabbi's niece. Her sister, the widow of an officer of high rank, had married for her second husband the head-keeper of the forest of Saint-Germain. As for herself, ruined as she was by her husband, she had luckily acquired, as the result of a complete and careful early education, talents which she turned to good account. She gave lessons on the piano in wealthy families, Chaussée d'Antin, Faubourg Saint-Honoré, and supported herself comfortably.

"It was a touching story, albeit a trifle long, full of the pretty repetitions, the interminable episodes, which retard feminine conversation; so that it took her several days to tell it to me. I had hired a little house for us two on Avenue de l'Impératrice, among silent streets and peaceful lawns. I could have passed a year there, listening to her, gazing at her, without thinking of work. But she sent me back to my studio, and I could not induce her not to resume her lessons. The dignity of her life, by which she set so much store, touched me deeply. I admired that proud heart, although I felt somewhat humiliated in face of her firm resolve to be indebted to nought but her own labor. Thus we were separated all day and did not meet at the little house until night.

"How joyfully I returned home, so impatient when she was late, and so happy when I found her there before me! She brought me bouquets and rare flowers from her visits in Paris. I frequently compelled her to accept some gift, but she would say laughingly that she was richer than I; and in truth her lessons must have been profitable, for she always dressed with costly refinement, and the plain black in which she clothed herself with coquettish regard for her complexion and her type of beauty, was of dull velvets, glistening satin and jet, clouds of silky laces, wherein the wondering eye discovered beneath an apparent simplicity whole worlds of feminine cunning in the myriad reflections of a single color.

"However, there was nothing painful in her profession, she said. All her pupils, daughters of bankers or brokers, adored her and respected her; and more than once she showed me a bracelet or a ring which had been given her in acknowledgment of her painstaking services. Except as our work required, we were never parted; we went nowhere. On Sundays, however, she went to Saint-Germain to see her sister, the head-keeper's wife, to whom she had become reconciled some time before. I went with her to the station. She always returned the same evening, and frequently, during the summer, we arranged to meet at some station in the suburbs, on the bank of the river or in the woods. She would tell me about her visit, how well the children looked and what a happy family it seemed to be. That made my heart ache for her, deprived forever of genuine family joys, and I redoubled my affection, in order to make her forget her false position, which must have been a cruel trial to such a heart as hers.

"What a happy time of work and confidence!

I had no suspicions. All that she said seemed so true, so natural. I reproached her for but one thing. Sometimes when she spoke of the houses to which she went, of the families of her pupils, she would pour forth an abundance of fancied details, of imaginary intrigues, which she would persist in inventing in spite of all I could say. Calm as she was, she saw romance in everything about her, and her life passed in dramatic combinations. These chimeras disturbed my felicity. To me, who would have liked to hide from the rest of the world and live alone with her, it seemed that she devoted too much attention to indifferent matters. But I could readily pardon that failing in a young and unfortunate woman, whose life thus far had been a sad romance with no probability of a happy ending.

"Once only I had a suspicion, or rather a presentiment. One Sunday night she did not come home. I was in despair. What was I to do? Go to Saint-Germain? I might compromise her reputation. However, after a ghastly night, I had just determined to start, when she appeared, very pale and very much disturbed in mind. Her sister was ill, she had had to remain to take care of her. I believed what she told me, nor were my suspicions aroused by that flood of words, overflowing at the slightest question, forever drowning the principal idea beneath a mass of useless details: the hour of her arrival, a rude railway employé, a delayed train. Two or three times that week she went to Saint-Germain for the night; then, her sister having recovered, she resumed her regular and peaceful life.

"Unfortunately, not long after, it came her own turn to fall sick. One day she returned from her lessons trembling, feverish, drenched with perspiration. Inflammation of the lungs set in, serious at the outset, and very soon — so the doctor told me — beyond hope. I was almost mad with grief. Then I thought of nothing but making her last hours happier. I would bring her family, that family she loved so dearly and was so proud of, to her death-bed. Without saying anything to her, I wrote first of all to her sister at Saint-Germain, and I went in person to see her uncle, the Chief Rabbi. I don't know at what unearthly hour I appeared there. Great catastrophes derange life to its lowest depths and in its most trivial details. I believe that the excellent Rabbi was dining. He came to me in dire alarm, receiving me in the antechamber.

"His venerable face turned toward me with an expression of intense astonishment.

"I said: —

"'Your niece is dying.'

"'My niece! Why, I have no niece; you are mistaken.'

"'Oh! I implore you, monsieur, forget these foolish family quarrels. I speak of Madame Deloche, the captain's wife — '

"'I do not know any Madame Deloche. You are mistaken in your man, my child, I assure you.'

"And he gently edged me toward the door, taking me for a sharper or a lunatic. I must have cut a very strange figure, in truth. What I had learned was so unexpected, so terrible! So she had lied to me. Why? Suddenly an idea came to my mind. I gave orders to be driven to the address of one of her pupils of whom she was constantly talking, the daughter of a well-known banker.

"I said to the servant, 'Madame Deloche?

"'She is n't here.'

"'Yes, I know. She 's the lady who gives lessons on the piano to your young ladies.'

"'We have no young ladies in our house, monsieur, not even a piano. I don't know what you mean.'

"And he angrily closed the door in my face.

"I pursued my investigations no farther. I was sure of meeting with the same reply, the same disappointment everywhere. As I entered our poor little house, some one handed me a letter postmarked Saint-Germain. I opened it, knowing beforehand what it contained. The head-keeper did n't know Madame Deloche. Moreover, he had neither wife nor child.

"That was the last stroke. So every word of hers for five long years had been a lie! A thousand jealous thoughts seized me on the instant; and, unconscious of what I was doing, I rushed frantically into the room where she lay dying. All the questions which were torturing me fell together upon that bed of pain: 'What did you go to Saint-Germain for on Sundays? With whom did you pass your days? Where did you sleep those nights? Come, answer me!' And I leaned over her, seeking in the depths of her still proud and lovely eyes the answers which I awaited in an agony of dread; but she remained silent, impassive.

"I continued, trembling with rage: 'You did not give lessons; I have been everywhere. No one knows you. Where did you get all that money, then, and the laces and jewels?' She glanced at me, a glance of heartrending distress, and that was all. Really I ought to have spared her, to have let her die in peace. But I had loved her too dearly. Jealousy was stronger than pity. I continued: 'You have deceived me for five years. You have lied to me every day, every hour. You have known my whole life and I have known nothing of yours. Nothing, not even your name. For the name you bear is not yours, is it? Oh! the liar! the liar! To think that she is dying and that I do not know by what name to call her. Tell me, who are you? Whence do you come? Why did you force yourself into my life? Speak to me, I say! Tell me something!'

"In vain! Instead of replying, she turned painfully to the wall, as if she feared that her last glance would betray her secret. And in that position she died, the miserable wretch! — died, concealing her face from me, a liar to the end."

XI.

COMTESSE IRMA.

"MONSIEUR Charles d'Athis, man of letters, has the honor to inform you of the birth of his son Robert.

"The child is well."

About ten years ago all literary and artistic Paris received a copy of this notice, on satin paper, bearing the crest of the Comtes d'Athis, the last of whom, Charles d'Athis, had succeeded — young as he was — in earning genuine celebrity as a poet.

"The child is well."

And the mother? Oh! the note did not mention her. Everybody knew her too well. She was the daughter of an old poacher of Seine-et-Oise, a former model named Irma Sallé, whose portrait had passed through all the exhibitions as the original had passed through all the studios. Her low forehead, her lip raised at the corners *à l'antique*, that fortuitous reproduction of primitive lives in a peasant-woman's face, — a keeper of turkeys with Grecian features, — the slightly tanned complexion due to a childhood passed in the open air, which gives to light hair a reflection as of pale silk, gave to that hussy a sort of uncivilized originality which was made complete by a pair of eyes of a magnificent green, buried beneath dense eyebrows.

One night, on leaving the *bal de l'Opéra*, d'Athis had taken her to supper, and the supper lasted two years. But, although Irma had entered completely into the poet's life, this aristocratically insolent note shows plainly enough how little place she occupied there. In fact, in that temporary household the woman was little more than an upper servant, bringing to the management of the poet-nobleman's house the asperity of her twofold nature of peasant and courtesan, and doing her utmost, regardless of cost, to make herself indispensable. Too boorish and too stupid ever to have any comprehension of d'Athis's genius, of those lovely verses, polished and worldly, which made of him a sort of Parisian Tennyson, she had been shrewd enough none the less to submit to all his disdain, to all his demands, as if, at the bottom of that vulgar nature, there had remained a little of the grovelling admiration of the peasant for the nobleman, of the vassal for her lord. The birth of the child simply emphasized her nullity in the house.

When the dowager Comtesse d'Athis-Mons, the poet's mother, a person of the highest distinction in the most exalted society, learned that a grandson had been born to her, a pretty little viscount, well and duly acknowledged by the author of his being, she desired to see and embrace him. Unquestionably it was hard for one who had formerly been reader to Queen Marie-Amélie to think that the heir of so great a name had such a mother; but, taking courage from the form of the little notes announcing the child's birth, the old lady forgot that creature's existence. She chose for her visits to her grandson at his nurse's, days when she was sure of meeting nobody; she gloated over him, petted him, took him into her heart, made him her idol, with that last love of grandmothers which furnishes them with an excuse for living a few years longer in order to watch the growth of the little ones.

Then, when the baby viscount was a little bigger and had left his nurse to live with his father and mother, as the countess could not abandon her cherished visits, an agreement was entered into: when the grandmother rang the bell, Irma submissively and silently disappeared; or else the child was taken to its grandmother's; and, being equally spoiled by both mothers, it loved one as much as the other, and was astonished to notice in the violence of their caresses a determination to monopolize him, to exclude the other from his affection. The heedless d'Athis, preoccupied with his verses, with his growing renown, contented himself with worshipping his little Robert, talking to everybody about him, and imagining that the child belonged to him, to him alone. This illusion was of brief duration.

"I would like to see you married," his mother said to him one day.

"Yes — but the child?"

"Have no fear. I have discovered a young girl, of noble birth but poor, who adores you. I have shown Robert to her and they are old friends already. At all events, I will keep the little fellow with me the first year. After that, we will see."

"But this — this girl?" faltered the poet, blushing a little, for it was the first time he had mentioned Irma before his mother.

"Bah!" replied the old dowager with a laugh, "we will give her a nice little dowry, and I am very sure that she too will find some one to marry her. The Parisian bourgeois is not superstitious."

That same evening d'Athis, who had never been madly in love with his mistress, spoke to her of these arrangements, and found her, as always, submissive and ready for anything. But the next day, when he went home, the mother and child had disappeared. They found them at last with Irma's father, in a horrible little hut on the edge of Rambouillet forest; and when the poet arrived, his son, his little prince, dressed in velvet and lace, was jumping on the old poacher's knees, playing with his pipe, running after the hens, delighted to shake his golden curls in the fresh air. D'Athis, although deeply moved, attempted to take the thing as a joke and to drive his two fugitives home with him at once. But Irma did not view the matter in that light. He turned her out of the house; she took her child. What could be more natural? Nothing less than the poet's promise to abandon the idea of marrying would induce her to return. Even then she imposed her own conditions. He had forgotten too long that she was

Robert's mother. To keep always out of sight, to disappear when Madame d'Athis arrived — that sort of life was no longer possible. The child was growing too old for her to be exposed to such humiliation before him. It was agreed that, since Madame d'Athis did not choose to meet her son's mistress, she should come no more to his house, and that the boy should be taken to see her every day.

Thereupon began a life of genuine torture for the old grandmother. Every day pretexts were invented to keep the child at home. He had been coughing, it was too cold, it rained. Then there were the driving and riding and gymnastics. The poor old lady never saw her grandson at all. At first she attempted to complain to d'Athis; but none but women know the secret of this petty warfare. Their wiles are invisible, like the concealed pins which keep their flounces and laces in place. The poet was incapable of penetrating them; and the broken-hearted grandmother passed her life waiting for her darling's visit, watching for him in the street when he went out with a servant, and by those stealthy kisses, those hurried glances, she added to her maternal passion without ever succeeding in satisfying it.

Meanwhile Irma Sallé — with the assistance of the child — was making her way into the father's heart. Now she was at the head of the house, received, gave entertainments, established herself in her position like a woman who intends to remain. She took pains to say to the little viscount from time to time, in his father's presence: "Do you remember grandpa Sallé's hens? Would you like to go and see them again?" And by that constant threat of departure, she paved the way for the definitive step of marriage.

It took her five years to become a countess; but at last she succeeded. One day the poet went in fear and trembling to inform his mother that he had decided to marry his mistress, and the old lady, instead of losing her temper, welcomed the calamity as a deliverance, seeing but one thing in the proposed step, namely the possibility of returning to her son's house and loving her little Robert to her heart's content. In fact the grandmother enjoyed the real honeymoon. D'Athis, after his impulsive act, preferred to absent himself from Paris for a while. He felt embarrassed there. And as the child, clinging to his mother's skirts, ruled the whole house, they took up their quarters in Irma's country, near Père Sallé's hens. It was surely the most curious, most ill-assorted household that can be imagined. Grandmamma d'Athis and grandpapa Sallé met every night by their grandson's bedside. The old poacher, with his short black pipe stuck in the corner of his mouth, and the former reader at the Château, with her powdered hair and her grand manners, stood side by side watching the lovely child rolling on the carpet at their feet, and were equally devoted to him. One brought him all the newest, the most gorgeous, most expensive toys from Paris; the other made him magnificent whistles from bits of elderwood; and, on my word, the dauphin hesitated between them.

Among all these beings grouped as if by force around a cradle, the only really miserable one was Charles d'Athis. His delicate Parisian inspiration was impaired by this life in the heart of the woods, like those frail Parisian ladies who cannot endure the fresh and invigorating air of the country. He did not work, and at so great a distance from that pitiless Paris, which closes its gates so quickly on the absent, he felt that he was already forgotten. Luckily the child was there, and when the child smiled the father ceased to think of his triumphs as a poet and of Irma Sallé's past.

And now, do you wish to know the dénoûment of this strange drama? Read the little black-edged note which I received a few days ago, and which forms, so to speak, the last page of this Parisian episode: —

"M. le Comte and Mme. la Comtesse d'Athis grieve to announce the death of their son Robert."

The poor creatures! Can you not see them, all four, glaring at one another about that empty cradle?

XII.

THE CONFIDENCES OF A COAT EMBROIDERED WITH GREEN PALM-LEAVES.

THAT morning was the morning of a glorious day for Guillardin the sculptor.

Chosen the day before a member of the Institute, he was about to christen, in presence of the five academies assembled in solemn conclave, his academician's coat, a superb coat with green palm-leaves, glistening with the sheen of new broadcloth and the silky embroidery of the color of hope. The blessed coat was spread out on a chair, all ready to be worn, and Guillardin gazed fondly at it as he finished tying his black cravat.

"Above all things, I must not hurry, I have plenty of time," thought the good man.

The fact was that in his feverish impatience he had dressed himself two hours too soon; and the fair Madame Guillardin — who was always a trifle long at her toilet — had informed him that on that day of all others she would not be ready until the precise hour; not one minute earlier, you understand!

Unhappy Guillardin! what could he do to kill the intervening time?

"Let's try on the coat," he said to himself, and he raised the precious garment gently, as if he were handling tulle, and, having put it on with infinite precautions, he went and stood in front of his mirror. Ah! the graceful image that the mirror displayed to him! Such a charming little academician, newly hatched, plump, happy, smiling, grizzly, corpulent, with arms all too short, which had a stiff and automatic sort of dignity in the new sleeves. Evidently satisfied with his appearance, Guillardin walked up and down the room, bowed as if he were entering the meeting, smiled at his colleagues of the Beaux-Arts, assumed academic attitudes. But, however proud one may be of one's person, one cannot stand for two hours in full dress before a mirror. Our academician became weary at last, and, being afraid that he should rumple his coat, he concluded to take it off and carefully replace it on a chair. He himself sat down facing it, at the other side of the fireplace; then, stretching out his legs and folding his hands over his state waistcoat, he began to muse ecstatically, gazing at his green coat.

As the traveller who has finally reached the end of his journey loves to recall its dangers and difficulties, so Guillardin reviewed his life year by year, from the day when he began to try his hand at sculpture in the Jouffroy studio. Ah! the first years are hard in that infernal profession. He remembered the winters without fire, the sleepless nights, the running about in search of work, and the dull rage you feel at the thought that you are an infinitesimal atom, lost, unknown, in the vast crowd that pushes you, jostles you, throws you down, and crushes you. And to think that he had been able, unaided, without patronage or fortune, to extricate himself from that slough! Solely by talent, monsieur! And, with his head thrown back, his eyes half-closed, plunged in blissful contemplation, the excellent man repeated aloud to himself: —

"Simply by my talent. Simply by my talent!"

A burst of laughter, dry and cracked like the laugh of a very old man, suddenly interrupted him. Guillardin, a little startled, glanced all around the room. He was alone, quite alone, *tête-à-tête* with his green coat, that academician's shadow solemnly spread out before him on the other side of the fire. And yet the insolent laughter continued. Thereupon the sculptor, looking a little more closely, fancied that he could see that his coat was no longer where he had put it, but was actually seated in the chair, with its skirts raised, its two sleeves resting on the arms, and its chest inflated with an appearance of life. And — a most extraordinary thing! — it was the coat that was laughing. Yes, it was that strange green coat from which proceeded those frantic bursts of laughter, which shook it, twisted it, made it tremble, made its skirts dance up and down, and at times brought its two sleeves toward its sides as if to check that supernaturally excessive and inextinguishable hilarity. At the same time he heard a sharp, spiteful little voice exclaim between two gasps: "*Mon Dieu! Mon Dieu!* how it hurts me to laugh! how it hurts me to laugh like this!"

"Who in the devil is that, anyway?" asked the bewildered academician, opening his eyes wide.

The voice replied, sharper and more spiteful than before: "Why, it's I, Monsieur Guillardin, it's I, your green coat with the palms, waiting for you to go to the meeting. I ask your pardon for interrupting your musings so unseasonably; but really it was so amusing to hear you talk about your talent! I could n't restrain myself. Tell me, did you mean that? Do you, in all conscience, believe that your talent is sufficient to carry you so far and so high with such speed, to give you all you have: honors, position, fame, fortune? Do you believe that is possible, Guillardin? Search your own heart, my friend, before you answer. Search again, again! Now answer me. You see that you dare not."

"But," stammered Guillardin with comical hesitation, "I have — I have worked hard."

"Yes, very hard, tremendously hard. You are a plodder, a mechanic, a great doer of tasks. You reckon your days by the hour like a cabman. But the spark of genius, my dear fellow, the golden bee that flies through the brain of the genuine artist, shedding there the radiance and humming of its wings — when did it pay you a visit? Never once, as you well know. The divine little bee has always frightened you. And yet, it alone gives real talent. Ah! I know other men who work, but very differently from you, with all the feverish restlessness of investigators, and who will never reach the point you have reached.

Come! let us agree upon this, while we are alone; your talent consists in having married a pretty woman."

"Monsieur!" exclaimed Guillardin, red as a beet.

The voice continued unmoved:—

"Well, well! That indignation pleases me. It proves, what everybody knows by the way, that you are more fool than knave. There, there! you need not roll your eyes at me so savagely. In the first place, if you touch me, if there is a simple false fold or crease in me, it 's impossible for you to attend the meeting; and Madame Guillardin would not like that. For, after all, it is she who reaps all the glory of this great day. It is she whom the five academies are to receive in a little while; and I promise you that, if I should appear at the Institute upon her graceful figure, — still erect and slender despite her age — I should cause a much greater sensation than on you. What the devil! Monsieur Guillardin, you must look things in the face! You owe that woman everything; everything, — your fine house, your forty thousand francs a year, your crosses, your laurel wreaths, your medals."

And with a wooden gesture the green coat called the poor fellow's attention with its embroidered sleeve to the glorious trophies hanging on the wall of his alcove. Then, as if it were his purpose to assume all possible aspects and attitudes, the better to torment his victim, the cruel coat moved its chair toward the fireplace and, leaning forward with a confidential air, continued familiarly, in a tone denoting an intimacy of long standing: —

"Well, old man, what I say seems to give you pain. But it is best that you should know what all the world knows. And who should tell you, if not your coat? Come! let us reason a bit. What did you have when you married? Nothing. What did your wife bring you? Zero. Then how do you account for your present fortune? You will tell me again that you have worked hard. But I tell you that, by working day and night, with special privileges, with orders from the government, which you certainly have not lacked since your marriage, you have never earned more than fifteen thousand francs a year. Do you think that that was enough to run an establishment like yours? Remember that the fair Madame Guillardin has always been classed among the women of fashion, that she has been prominent in all the social sets where money is spent freely. *Parbleu!* I am well aware that, walled up in your studio as you are from morning till night, you have never thought about these things. You have been content to say to your friends: 'I have a wife who is a perfect marvel for understanding business. With what I earn, she makes out to save money, even with such an establishment as ours!'

"You are the marvel, poor man. The truth is that you married one of those pretty monsters of whom there are many in Paris, an ambitious, dissolute woman, serious for your benefit and frivolous on her own account, capable of managing your affairs and her own pleasure at the same time. The lives of such women, my dear fellow, resemble orders of dances at a ball, on which you put figures beside the names of your partners. Your wife argued thus: 'My husband has no talent, no fortune, and is not very good-looking either; but he's an excellent fellow, obliging, gullible, and as little in the way as possible. If he will allow me to amuse myself in peace, I will undertake to supply him with all he needs.' And from that day, money, orders, decorations of all countries began to rain down into your studio with their pleasant metallic jingle, their ribbons of all colors. — Look at my buttons. — Then one morning madame was assailed by a longing — the longing of a mature woman — to be the wife of an academician, and it was her daintily gloved hand that opened to you one by one the doors of the sanctuary. *Dame!* old man, your colleagues alone could tell you what it has cost you to wear the green palm-leaves."

"You lie, you lie!" cried Guillardin, choking with indignation.

"Oh! no, old man, I don't lie. You have only to look about when you enter the meeting. You will see mischief lurking in every eye, a smile playing about every mouth, while people will whisper as you pass, 'There's the lovely Madame Guillardin's husband!' For you will never be anything else while you live, my dear fellow, than a pretty woman's husband."

Guillardin could restrain himself no longer.

White with rage, he rushed forward to seize that insolent, doting garment and hurl it into the fire, after removing its lovely green garland; but at that moment a door opened, and a well-known voice, with a slight inflection of disdain and condescension, woke him most opportunely from his horrible dream: —

"Ah! that is just like you, upon my word! — to fall asleep by the fire on such a day!"

Madame Guillardin stood before him, tall and still fair, albeit a little too imposing with her almost natural pink complexion under her powdered hair, and the exaggerated brilliancy of her painted eyes. With the gesture of a master-spirit she raised the coat with the green palm-leaves, and briskly, with a faint smile, assisted her husband to put it on, while the poor man, still drenched with the perspiration caused by his nightmare, drew a long breath with an air of relief, and said to himself, "What bliss! — it was a dream!"

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