Tartarin of Tarascon

by Alphonse Daudet

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TARTARIN OF TARASCON

By Alphonse Daudet

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EPISODE THE FIRST, IN TARASCON

I. The Garden Round the Giant Trees.

MY first visit to Tartarin of Tarascon has remained a never-to-be-forgotten date in my life; although quite ten or a dozen years ago, I remember it better than yesterday.

At that time the intrepid Tartarin lived in the third house on the left as the town begins, on the Avignon road. A pretty little villa in the local style, with a front garden and a balcony behind, the walls glaringly white and the venetians very green; and always about the doorsteps a brood of little Savoyard shoe-blackguards playing hopscotch, or dozing in the broad sunshine with their heads pillowed on their boxes.

Outwardly the dwelling had no remarkable features, and none would ever believe it the abode of a hero; but when you stepped inside, ye gods and little fishes! what a change! From turret to foundation-stone—I mean, from cellar to garret,—the whole building wore a heroic front; even so the garden!

O that garden of Tartarin’s! there’s not its match in Europe! Not a native tree was there—not one flower of France; nothing hut exotic plants, gum-trees, gourds, cotton-woods, cocoa and cacao, mangoes, bananas, palms, a baobab, nopals, cacti, Barbary figs—well, you would believe yourself in the very midst of Central Africa, ten thousand leagues away. It is but fair to say that these were none of full growth; indeed, the cocoa-palms were no bigger than beet root and the baobab (arbos gigantea—“giant tree,” you know) was easily enough circumscribed by a

window-pot; but, notwithstanding this, it was rather a sensation for Tarascon, and the townsfolk who were admitted on Sundays to the honour of contemplating Tartarin's baobab, went home chokeful of admiration.

Try to conceive my own emotion, which I was bound to feel on that day of days when I crossed through this marvellous garden, and that was capped when I was ushered into the hero's sanctum.

His study, one of the lions—I should say, lions' dens—of the town, was at the end of the garden, its glass door opening right on to the baobab.

You are to picture a capacious apartment adorned with firearms and steel blades from top to bottom: all the weapons of all the countries in the wide world—carbines, rifles, blunderbusses, Corsican, Catalan, and dagger knives, Malay kreeses, revolvers with spring-bayonets, Carib and flint arrows, knuckle-dusters, life-preservers, Hottentot clubs, Mexican lassoes—now, can you expect me to name the rest? Upon the whole fell a fierce sunlight, which made the blades and the brass butt-plate of the muskets gleam as if all the more to set your flesh creeping. Still, the beholder was soothed a little by the tame air of order and tidiness reigning over the arsenal. Everything was in place, brushed, dusted, labelled, as in a museum; from point to point the eye descried some obliging little card reading:

———————————————————- I Poisoned Arrows! I I Do Not Touch! I ———————————————————- Or, ———————————————————- I Loaded! I I Take care, please! I ———————————————————-

If it had not been for these cautions I never should have dared venture in.

In the middle of the room was an occasional table, on which stood a decanter of rum, a siphon of soda-water, a Turkish tobacco-pouch, "Captain Cook's Voyages," the Indian tales of Fenimore Cooper and Gustave Aimard, stories of hunting the bear, eagle, elephant, and so on. Lastly, beside the table sat a man of between forty

and forty-five, short, stout, thick-set, ruddy, with flaming eyes and a strong stubbly beard; he wore flannel tights, and was in his shirt sleeves; one hand held a book, and the other brandished a very large pipe with an iron bowl-cap. Whilst reading heaven only knows what startling adventure of scalp-hunters, he pouted out his lower lip in a terrifying way, which gave the honest phiz of the man living placidly on his means the same impression of kindly ferocity which abounded throughout the house.

This man was Tartarin himself—the Tartarin of Tarascon, the great, dreadnought, incomparable Tartarin of Tarascon.

II. A general glance bestowed upon the good town of Tarascon, and a particular one on “the cap-poppers.”

AT the time I am telling of, Tartarin of Tarascon had not become the present-day Tartarin, the great one so popular in the whole South of France: but yet he was even then the cock of the walk at Tarascon.

Let us show whence arose this sovereignty.

In the first place you must know that everybody is shooting mad in these parts, from the greatest to the least. The chase is the local craze, and so it has ever been since the mythological times when the Tarasque, as the county dragon was called, flourished himself and his tail in the town marshes, and entertained shooting parties got up against him. So you see the passion has lasted a goodish bit.

It follows that, every Sunday morning, Tarascon flies to arms, lets loose the dogs of the hunt, and rushes out of its walls, with game-bag slung and fowling-piece on the shoulder, together with a hurly-burly of hounds, cracking of whips, and blowing of whistles and hunting-horns. It’s splendid to see! Unfortunately, there’s a lack of game, an absolute dearth.

Stupid as the brute creation is, you can readily understand that, in time, it learnt some distrust.

For five leagues around about Tarascon, forms, lairs, and burrows are empty, and

nesting-places abandoned. You'll not find a single quail or blackbird, one little leveret, or the tiniest tit. And yet the pretty hillocks are mightily tempting, sweet smelling as they are of myrtle, lavender, and rosemary; and the fine muscatels plumped out with sweetness even unto bursting, as they spread along the banks of the Rhone, are deucedly tempting too. True, true; but Tarascon lies behind all this, and Tarascon is down in the black books of the world of fur and feather. The very birds of passage have ticked it off on their guide-books, and when the wild ducks, coming down towards the Camargue in long triangles, spy the town steeples from afar, the outermost flyers squawk out loudly:

"Look out! there's Tarascon! give Tarascon the go-by, duckies!"

And the flocks take a swerve.

In short, as far as game goes, there's not a specimen left in the land save one old rogue of a hare, escaped by miracle from the massacres, who is stubbornly determined to stick to it all his life! He is very well known at Tarascon, and a name has been given him. "Rapid" is what they call him. It is known that he has his form on M. Bompard's grounds—which, by the way, has doubled, ay, tripled, the value of the property—but nobody has yet managed to lay him low. At present, only two or three inveterate fellows worry themselves about him. The rest have given him up as a bad job, and old Rapid has long ago passed into the legendary world, although your Tarasconer is very slightly superstitious naturally, and would eat cock-robins on toast, or the swallow, which is Our Lady's own bird, for that matter, if he could find any.

"But that won't do!" you will say. Inasmuch as game is so scarce, what can the sportsmen do every Sunday?

What can they do?

Why, goodness gracious! they go out into the real country two or three leagues from town. They gather in knots of five or six, recline tranquilly in the shade of some

well, old wall, or olive tree, extract from their game-bags a good-sized piece of boiled beef, raw onions, a sausage, and anchovies, and commence a next to endless snack, washed down with one of those nice Rhone wines, which sets a toper laughing and singing. After that, when thoroughly braced up, they rise, whistle the dogs to heel, set the guns on half cock, and go “on the shoot”—another way of saying that every man plucks off his cap, “shies” it up with all his might, and pops it on the fly with No. 5, 6, or 2 shot, according to what he is loaded for.

The man who lodges most shot in his cap is hailed as king of the hunt, and stalks back triumphantly at dusk into Tarascon, with his riddled cap on the end of his gun-barrel, amid any quantity of dog-barks and horn-blasts.

It is needless to say that cap-selling is a fine business in the town. There are even some hatters who sell hunting-caps ready shot, torn, and perforated for the bad shots; but the only buyer known is the chemist Bezuquet. This is dishonourable!

As a marksman at caps, Tartarin of Tarascon never had his match.

Every Sunday morning out he would march in a new cap, and back he would strut every Sunday evening with a mere thing of shreds. The loft of Baobab Villa was full of these glorious trophies. Hence all Tarascon acknowledged him as master; and as Tartarin thoroughly understood hunting, and had read all the handbooks of all possible kinds of venery, from cap-popping to Burmese tiger-shooting, the sportsmen constituted him their great cynegetical judge, and took him for referee and arbitrator in all their differences.

Between three and four daily, at Costecalde the gunsmith’s, a stout stern pipe-smoker might be seen in a green leather-covered arm-chair in the centre of the shop crammed with cap-poppers, they all on foot and wrangling. This was Tartarin of Tarascon delivering judgement—Nimrod plus Solomon.

III. “Naw, naw, naw!” The general glance protracted upon the good town.

AFTER the craze for sporting, the lusty Tarascon race cherishes one love:

ballad-singing. There's no believing what a quantity of ballads is used up in that little region. All the sentimental stuff turning into sere and yellow leaves in the oldest portfolios, are to be found in full pristine lustre in Tarascon. Ay, the entire collection. Every family has its own pet, as is known to the town.

For instance, it is an established fact that this is the chemist Bezuquet's family's:

"Thou art the fair star that I adore!"

The gunmaker Costecalde's family's:

"Would'st thou come to the land Where the log-cabins rise?"

The official registrar's family's:

"If I wore a coat of invisible green, Do you think for a moment I could be seen?"

And so on for the whole of Tarascon. Two or three times a week there were parties where they were sung. The singularity was their being always the same, and that the honest Tarasconers had never had an inclination to change them during the long, long time they had been harping on them. They were handed down from father to son in the families, without anybody improving on them or bowdlerising them: they were sacred. Never did it occur to Costecalde's mind to sing the Bezuquets', or the Bezuquets to try Costecalde's. And yet you may believe that they ought to know by heart what they had been singing for two-score years! But, nay! everybody stuck to his own,and they were all contented.

In ballad-singing, as in cap-popping, Tartarin was still the foremost. His superiority over his fellow-townsmen consisted in his not having any one song of his own, but in knowing the lot, the whole, mind you! But—there's a but—it was the devil's own work to get him to sing them.

Surfeited early in life with his drawing-room successes, our hero preferred by far burying himself in his hunting story-books, or spending the evening at the club, to making a personal exhibition before a Nimes piano between a pair of home-made

candles. These musical parades seemed beneath him. Nevertheless, at whiles, when there was a harmonic party at Bezuquet's, he would drop into the chemist's shop, as if by chance, and, after a deal of pressure, consent to do the grand duo in Robert le Diable with old Madame Bezuquet. Whoso never heard that never heard anything! For my part, even if I lived a hundred years, I should always see the mighty Tartarin solemnly stepping up to the piano, setting his arms akimbo, working up his tragic mien, and, beneath the green reflection from the show-bottles in the window, trying to give his pleasant visage the fierce and satanic expression of Robert the Devil. Hardly would he fall into position before the whole audience would be shuddering with the foreboding that something uncommon was at hand. After a hush, old Madame Bezuquet would commence to her own accompaniment:

"Robert, my love is thine! To thee I my faith did plight, Thou seest my affright,— Mercy for thine own sake, And mercy for mine!"

In an undertone she would add: "Now, then, Tartarin!" Whereupon Tartarin of Tarascon, with crooked arms, clenched fists, and quivering nostrils, would roar three times in a formidable voice, rolling like a thunderclap in the bowels of the instrument:

"No! no! no!" which, like the thorough southerner he was, he pronounced nasally as "Naw! naw! naw!" Then would old Madame Bezuquet again sing:

"Mercy for thine own sake, And mercy for mine!"

"Naw! naw! naw!" bellowed Tartarin at his loudest, and there the gem ended.

Not long, you see; but it was so handsomely voiced forth, so clearly gesticulated, and so diabolical, that a tremor of terror overran the chemist's shop, and the "Naw! naw! naw!" would be encored several times running.

Upon this Tartarin would sponge his brow, smile on the ladies, wink to the sterner sex, and withdraw upon his triumph to go remark at the club with a trifling, offhand air:

“I have just come from the Bezuquets’, where I was forced to sing ‘em the duo from Robert le Diable.”

The cream of the joke was that he really believed it!

IV. “They!”

CHIEFLY to the account of these diverse talents did Tartarin owe his lofty position in the town of Tarascon. Talking of captivating, though, this deuce of a fellow knew how to ensnare everybody. Why, the army, at Tarascon, was for Tartarin. The brave commandant, Bravida, honorary captain retired—in the Military Clothing Factory Department—called him a game fellow; and you may well admit that the warrior knew all about game fellows, he played such a capital knife and fork on game of all kinds.

So was the legislature on Tartarin’s side. Two or three times, in open court, the old chief judge, Ladevese, had said, in alluding to him:

“He is a character!”

Lastly, the masses were for Tartarin. He had become the swell bruiser, the aristocratic pugilist, the crack bully of the local Corinthians for the Tarasconers, from his build, bearing, style—that aspect of a guard’s-trumpeter’s charger which fears no noise; his reputation as a hero coming from nobody knew whence or for what, and some scramblings for coppers and a few kicks to the little ragamuffins basking at his doorway.

Along the waterside, when Tartarin came home from hunting on Sunday evenings, with his cap on the muzzle of his gun, and his fustian shooting-jacket belted in tightly, the sturdy river-lightermen would respectfully bob, and blinking towards the huge biceps swelling out his arms, would mutter among one another in admiration:

“Now, there’s a powerful chap if you like! he has double-muscles!”

“Double muscles!” why, you never heard of such a thing outside of Tarascon!

For all this, with all his numberless parts, double-muscles, the popular favour, and the so precious esteem of brave Commandant Bravida, ex-captain (in the Army Clothing Factory), Tartarin was not happy: this life in a petty town weighed upon him and suffocated him.

The great man of Tarascon was bored in Tarascon.

The fact is, for a heroic temperament like his, a wild adventurous spirit which dreamt of nothing but battles, races across the pampas, mighty battues, desert sands, blizzards and typhoons, it was not enough to go out every Sunday to pop at a cap, and the rest of the time to ladle out casting-votes at the gunmaker's. Poor dear great man! If this existence were only prolonged, there would be sufficient tedium in it to kill him with consumption.

In vain did he surround himself with baobabs and other African trees, to widen his horizon, and some little to forget his club and the market-place; in vain did he pile weapon upon weapon, and Malay kreese upon Malay kreese; in vain did he cram with romances, endeavouring like the immortal Don Quixote to wrench himself by the vigour of his fancy out of the talons of pitiless reality. Alas! all that he did to appease his thirst for deeds of daring only helped to augment it. The sight of all the murderous implements kept him in a perpetual stew of wrath and exaltation. His revolvers, repeating rifles, and ducking-guns shouted "Battle! battle!" out of their mouths. Through the twigs of his baobab, the tempest of great voyages and journeys soughed and blew bad advice. To finish him came Gustave Aimard, Mayne Reid, and Fenimore Cooper.

Oh, how many times did Tartarin with a howl spring up on the sultry summer afternoons, when he was reading alone amidst his blades, points, and edges; how many times did he dash down his book and rush to the wall to unhook a deadly arm! The poor man forgot he was at home in Tarascon, in his underclothes, and with a handkerchief round his head. He would translate his readings into action, and,

goading himself with his own voice, shout out whilst swinging a battle-axe or tomahawk:

“Now, only let ‘em come!”

“Them”? who were they?

Tartarin did not himself any too clearly understand. “They” was all that should be attacked and fought with, all that bites, claws, scalps, whoops, and yells—the Sioux Indians dancing around the war-stake to which the unfortunate pale-face prisoner is lashed. The grizzly of the Rocky Mountains, who wobbles on his hind legs, and licks himself with a tongue full of blood. The Touareg, too, in the desert, the Malay pirate, the brigand of the Abruzzi—in short, “they” was warfare, travel, adventure, and glory.

But, alas!! it was to no avail that the fearless Tarasconer called for and defied them; never did they come. Odsboddikins! what would they have come to do in Tarascon?

Nevertheless Tartarin always expected to run up against them, particularly some evening in going to the club.

V. How Tartarin went round to his club.

LITTLE, indeed, beside Tartarin of Tarascon, arming himself capa-pie to go to his club at nine, an hour after the retreat had sounded on the bugle, was the Templar Knight preparing for a sortie upon the infidel, the Chinese tiger equipping himself for combat, or the Comanche warrior painting up for going on the war-path. “All hands make ready for action!” as the men-of-war’s men say.

In his left hand Tartarin took a steel-pointed knuckle-duster; in the right he carried a sword-cane; in his left pocket a life-preserver; in the right a revolver. On his chest, betwixt outer and under garment, lay a Malay kreese. But never any poisoned arrows—they are weapons altogether too unfair.

Before starting, in the silence and obscurity of his study, he exercised himself for a

while, warding off imaginary cuts and thrusts, lunging at the wall, and giving his muscles play; then he took his master-key and went through the garden leisurely; without hurrying, mark you. “Cool and calm—British courage, that is the true sort, gentlemen.” At the garden end he opened the heavy iron door, violently and abruptly so that it should slam against the outer wall. If “they” had been skulking behind it, you may wager they would have been jam. Unhappily, they were not there.

The way being open, out Tartarin would sally, quickly glancing to the right and left, ere banging the door to and fastening it smartly with double-locking. Then, on the way.

Not so much as a cat upon the Avignon road—all the doors closed, and no lights in the casements. All was black, except for the parish lamps, well spaced apart, blinking in the river mist.

Calm and proud, Tartarin of Tarascon marched on in the night, ringing his heels with regularity, and sending sparks out of the paving-stones with the ferule of his stick. Whether in avenues, streets, or lanes, he took care to keep in the middle of the road—an excellent method of precaution, allowing one to see danger coming, and, above all, to avoid any droppings from windows, as happens after dark in Tarascon and the Old Town of Edinburgh. On seeing so much prudence in Tartarin, pray do not conclude that Tartarin had any fear—dear, no! he only was on his guard.

The best proof that Tartarin was not scared is, that instead of going to the club by the shortest cut, he went over the town by the longest and darkest way round, through a mass of vile, paltry alleys, at the mouth of which the Rhone could be seen ominously gleaming. The poor knight constantly hoped that, beyond the turn of one of these cut-throats’ haunts, “they” would leap from the shadow and fall on his back. I warrant you, “they” would have been warmly received, though; but, alack! by reason of some nasty meanness of destiny, never indeed did Tartarin of Tarascon enjoy the luck to meet any ugly customers—not so much as a dog or a drunken

man—nothing at all!

Still, there were false alarms somewhiles. He would catch a sound of steps and muffled voices.

“Ware hawks!” Tartarin would mutter, and stop short, as if taking root on the spot, scrutinising the gloom, sniffing the wind, even glueing his ear to the ground in the orthodox Red Indian mode. The steps would draw nearer, and the voices grow more distinct, till no more doubt was possible. “They” were coming—in fact, here “they” were!

Steady, with eye afire and heaving breast, Tartarin would gather himself like a jaguar in readiness to spring forward whilst uttering his war-cry, when, all of a sudden, out of the thick of the murkiness, he would hear honest Tarasconian voices quite tranquilly hailing him with:

“Hullo! you, by Jove! it’s Tartarin! Good night, old fellow!”

Maledictions upon it! It was the chemist Bezuquet, with his family, coming from singing their family ballad at Costecalde’s.

“Oh, good even, good even!” Tartarin would growl, furious at his blunder, and plunging fiercely into the gloom with his cane waved on high.

On arriving in the street where stood his club-house, the dauntless one would linger yet a moment, walking up and down before the portals ere entering. But, finally, weary of awaiting “them,” and certain “they” would not show “themselves,” he would fling a last glare of defiance into the shades and snarl wrathfully:

“Nothing, nothing at all! there never is nothing!”

Upon which double negation, which he meant as a stronger affirmative, the worthy champion would walk in to play his game of bezique with the commandant.

VI. The two Tartarins.

ANSWER me, you will say, how the mischief is it that Tartarin of Tarascon never

left Tarascon with all this mania for adventure, need of powerful sensations, and folly about travel, rides, and journeys from the Pole to the Equator?

For that is a fact: up to the age of five-and-forty, the dreadless Tarasconian had never once slept outside his own room. He had not even taken that obligatory trip to Marseilles which every sound Provencal makes upon coming of age. The most of his knowledge included Beaucaire, and yet that's not far from Tarascon, there being merely the bridge to go over. Unfortunately, this rascally bridge has so often been blown away by the gales, it is so long and frail, and the Rhone has such a width at this spot that—well, faith! you understand! Tartarin of Tarascon preferred terra firma.

We are afraid we must make a clean breast of it: in our hero there were two very distinct characters. Some Father of the Church has said: "I feel there are two men in me." He would have spoken truly in saying this about Tartarin, who carried in his frame the soul of Don Quixote, the same chivalric impulses, heroic ideal, and crankiness for the grandiose and romantic; but, worse is the luck! he had not the body of the celebrated hidalgo, that thin and meagre apology for a body, on which material life failed to take a hold; one that could get through twenty nights without its breast-plate being unbuckled off, and forty-eight hours on a handful of rice. On the contrary, Tartarin's body was a stout honest bully of a body, very fat, very weighty, most sensual and fond of coddling, highly touchy, full of low-class appetite and homely requirements—the short, paunchy body on stumps of the immortal Sancho Panza.

Don Quixote and Sancho Panza in the one same man! you will readily comprehend what a cat-and-dog couple they made! what strife! what clapper-clawing! Oh, the fine dialogue for Lucian or Saint-Evremond to write, between the two Tartarins—Quixote-Tartarin and Sancho-Tartarin! Quixote-Tartarin firing up on the stories of Gustave Aimard, and shouting: "Up and at 'em!" and Sancho-Tartarin

thinking only of the rheumatics ahead, and murmuring: “I mean to stay at home.”

THE DUET. QUIXOTE-TARTARIN. SANCHO-TARTARIN. (Highly excited.) (Quite calmly.) Cover yourself with glory, Tartarin, cover yourself Tartarin. with flannel. (Still more excitedly.) (Still more calmly.) O for the terrible double- O for the thick knitted barrelled rifle! O for waistcoats! and warm bowie-knives, lassoes, knee-caps! O for the and moccasins! welcome padded caps with ear-flaps! (Above all self-control.) (Ringing up the maid.) A battle-axe! fetch me a Now, then, Jeannette, do battle-axe! bring up that chocolate!

Whereupon Jeannette would appear with an unusually good cup of chocolate, just right in warmth, sweetly smelling, and with the play of light on watered silk upon its unctuous surface, and with succulent grilled steak flavoured with anise-seed, which would set Sancho-Tartarin off on the broad grin, and into a laugh that drowned the shouts of Quixote-Tartarin.

Thus it came about that Tartarin of Tarascon never had left Tarascon.

VII. Tartarin—The Europeans at Shanghai—Commerce—The Tartars—Can Tartarin of Tarascon be an Impostor?—The Mirage.

UNDER one conjunction of circumstances, Tartarin did, however, once almost start out upon a great voyage.

The three brothers Garcio-Camus, relatives of Tarascon, established in business at Shanghai, offered him the managership of one of their branches there. This undoubtedly presented the kind of life he hankered after. Plenty of active business, a whole army of under-strappers to order about, and connections with Russia, Persia, Turkey in Asia—in short, to be a merchant prince!

In Tartarin’s mouth, the title of Merchant Prince thundered out as something stunning!

The house of Garcio-Camus had the further advantage of sometimes being favoured with a call from the Tartars. Then the doors would be slammed shut, all the clerks

flew to arms, up ran the consular flag, and zizz! phit! bang! out of the windows upon the Tartars.

I need not tell you with what enthusiasm Quixote-Tartarin clutched this proposition; sad to say, Sancho-Tartarin did not see it in the same light, and, as he was the stronger party, it never came to anything. But in the town there was much talk about it. Would he go or would he not? “I’ll lay he will!”—and “I’ll wager he won’t!” It was the event of the week. In the upshot, Tartarin did not depart, but the matter redounded to his credit none the less. Going or not going to Shanghai was all one to Tarascon. Tartarin’s journey was so much talked about that people got to believe he had done it and returned, and at the club in the evening members would actually ask for information on life at Shanghai, the manners and customs and climate, about opium, and commerce.

Deeply read up, Tartarin would graciously furnish the particulars desired, and, in the end, the good fellow was not quite sure himself about not having gone to Shanghai, so that, after relating for the hundredth time how the Tartars came down on the trading post, it would most naturally happen him to add:

“Then I made my men take up arms and hoist the consular flag, and zizz! phit! bang! out of the windows upon the Tartars.”

On hearing this, the whole club would quiver.

“But according to that, this Tartarin of yours is an awful liar.”

“No, no, a thousand times over, no! Tartarin was no liar.”

“But the man ought to know that he has never been to Shanghai”—

“Why, of course, he knows that; but still”—

“But still,” you see—mark that! It is high time for the law to be laid down once for all on the reputation as drawers of the long bow which Northerners fling at Southerners. There are no Baron Munchausens in the south of France, neither at

Nimes nor Marseilles, Toulouse nor Tarascon. The Southerner does not deceive but is self-deceived. He does not always tell the cold-drawn truth, but he believes he does. His falsehood is not any such thing, but a kind of mental mirage.

Yes, purely mirage! The better to follow me, you should actually follow me into the South, and you will see I am right. You have only to look at that Lucifer's own country, where the sun transmogrifies everything, and magnifies it beyond life-size. The little hills of Provence are no bigger than the Butte Montmartre, but they will loom up like the Rocky Mountains; the Square House at Nimes—a mere model to put on your sideboard—will seem grander than St. Peter's. You will see—in brief, the only exaggerator in the South is Old Sol, for he does enlarge everything he touches. What was Sparta in its days of splendour? a pitiful hamlet. What was Athens? at the most, a second-class town; and yet in history both appear to us as enormous cities. This is a sample of what the sun can do.

Are you going to be astonished after this that the same sun falling upon Tarascon should have made of an ex-captain in the Army Clothing Factory, like Bravida, the "brave commandant;" of a sprout an Indian fig-tree; and of a man who had missed going to Shanghai one who had been there?

VIII. Mitaine's Menagerie—A Lion from the Atlas at Tarascon—A Solemn and Fearsome Confrontation.

EXHIBITING Tartarin of Tarascon, as we are, in his private life, before Fame kissed his brow and garlanded him with her well-worn laurel wreath, and having narrated his heroic existence in a modest state, his delights and sorrows, his dreams and his hopes, let us hurriedly skip to the grandest pages of his story, and to the singular event which was to give the first flight to his incomparable career.

It happened one evening at Costecalde the gunmaker's, where Tartarin was engaged in showing several sportsmen the working of the needle-gun, then in its first novelty. The door suddenly flew open, and in rushed a bewildered cap-popper, howling "A

lion, a lion!" General was the alarm, stupor, uproar and tumult. Tartarin prepared to resist cavalry with the bayonet, whilst Costecalde ran to shut the door. The sportsman was surrounded and pressed and questioned, and here follows what he told them: Mitaine's Menagerie, returning from Beaucaire Fair, had consented to stay over a few days at Tarascon, and was just unpacking, to set up the show on the Castle-green, with a lot of boas, seals, crocodiles, and a magnificent lion from the Atlas Mountains.

An African lion in Tarascon?

Never in the memory of living man had the like been seen. Hence our dauntless cap-poppers looked at one another how proudly! What a beaming on their sunburned visages! and in every nook of Costecalde's shop what hearty congratulatory grips of the hand were silently exchanged! The sensation was so great and unforeseen that nobody could find a word to say—not even Tartarin.

Blanched and agitated, with the needle-gun still in his fist, he brooded, erect before the counter. A lion from the Atlas Range at pistol range from him, a couple of strides off? a lion, mind you—the beast heroic and ferocious above all others, the King of the Brute Creation, the crowning game of his fancies, something like the leading actor in the ideal company which played such splendid tragedies in his mind's eye. A lion, heaven be thanked! and from the Atlas, to boot! It was more than the great Tartarin could bear.

Suddenly a flush of blood flew into his face. His eyes flashed. With one convulsive movement he shouldered the needle-gun, and turning towards the brave Commandant Bravida (formerly captain in the Army Clothing Department, please to remember), he thundered to him—

"Let's go have a look at him, commandant."

"Here, here, I say! that's my gun—my needle-gun you are carrying off," timidly ventured the wary Costecalde; but Tartarin had already got round the corner, with all

the cap-poppers proudly lock-stepping behind him.

When they arrived at the menagerie, they found a goodly number of people there. Tarascon, heroic but too long deprived of sensational shows, had rushed upon Mitaine's portable theatre, and had taken it by storm. Hence the voluminous Madame Mitaine was highly contented. In an Arab costume, her arms bare to the elbow, iron anklets on, a whip in one hand and a plucked though live pullet in the other, the noted lady was doing the honours of the booth to the Tarasconians; and, as she also had "double muscles," her success was almost as great as her animals.

The entrance of Tartarin with the gun on his shoulder was a damper.

All our good Tarasconians, who had been quite tranquilly strolling before the cages, unarmed and with no distrust, without even any idea of danger, felt momentary apprehension, naturally enough, on beholding their mighty Tartarin rush into the enclosure with his formidable engine of war. There must be something to fear when a hero like he was, came weaponed; so, in a twinkling, all the space along the cage fronts was cleared. The youngsters burst out squalling for fear, and the women looked round for the nearest way out. The chemist Bezuquet made off altogether, alleging that he was going home for his gun.

Gradually, however, Tartarin's bearing restored courage. With head erect, the intrepid Tarasconian slowly and calmly made the circuit of the booth, passing the seal's tank without stopping, glancing disdainfully on the long box filled with sawdust in which the boa would digest its raw fowl, and going to take his stand before the lion's cage.

A terrible and solemn confrontation, this! The lion of Tarascon and the lion of Africa face to face!

On the one part, Tartarin erect, with his hamstrings in tension, and his arms folded on his gun barrel; on the other, the lion, a gigantic specimen, humped up in the straw, with blinking orbs and brutish mien, resting his huge muzzle and tawny

full-bottomed wig on his forepaws. Both calm in their gaze.

Singular thing! whether the needle-gun had given him “the needle,” if the popular idiom is admissible, or that he scented an enemy of his race, the lion, who had hitherto regarded the Tarasconians with sovereign scorn, and yawned in their faces, was all at once affected by ire. At first he sniffed; then he growled hollowly, stretching out his claws; rising, he tossed his head, shook his mane, opened a capacious maw, and belched a deafening roar at Tartarin.

A yell of fright responded, as Tarascon precipitated itself madly towards the exit, women and children, lightermen, cap-poppers, even the brave Commandant Bravida himself. But, alone, Tartarin of Tarascon had not budged. There he stood, firm and resolute, before the cage, lightnings in his eyes, and on his lip that gruesome grin with which all the town was familiar. In a moment’s time, when all the cap-poppers, some little fortified by his bearing and the strength of the bars, re-approached their leader, they heard him mutter, as he stared Leo out of countenance:

“Now, this is something like a hunt!”

All the rest of that day, never a word farther could they draw from Tartarin of Tarascon.

IX. Singular effects of Mental Mirage.

CONFINING his remarks to the sentence last recorded, Tartarin had unfortunately still said overmuch.

On the morrow, there was nothing talked about through town but the near-at-hand departure of Tartarin for Algeria and lion-hunting. You are all witness, dear readers, that the honest fellow had not breathed a word on that head; but, you know, the mirage had its usual effect. In brief, all Tarascon spoke of nothing but the departure.

On the Old Walk, at the club, in Costecalde’s, friends accosted one another with a startled aspect:

“And furthermore, you know the news, at least?”

“And furthermore, rather? Tartarin’s setting out, at least?”

For at Tarascon all phrases begin with “and furthermore,” and conclude with “at least,” with a strong local accent. Hence, on this occasion more than upon others, these peculiarities rang out till the windows shivered.

The most surprised of men in the town on hearing that Tartarin was going away to Africa, was Tartarin himself. But only see what vanity is! Instead of plumply answering that he was not going at all, and had not even had the intention, poor Tartarin, on the first of them mentioning the journey to him, observed with a neat little evasive air, “Aha! maybe I shall—but I do not say as much.” The second time; a trifle more familiarised with the idea, he replied, “Very likely;” and the third time, “It’s certain.”

Finally, in the evening, at Costecalde’s and the club, carried away by the egg-nogg, cheers, and illumination; intoxicated by the impression that bare announcement of his departure had made on the town, the hapless fellow formally declared that he was sick of banging away at caps, and that he would shortly be on the trail of the great lions of the Atlas. A deafening hurrah greeted this assertion. Whereupon more egg-nogg, bravoes, handshaking, slappings of the shoulder, and a torchlight serenade up to midnight before Baobab Villa.

It was Sancho-Tartarin who was anything but delighted. This idea of travel in Africa and lion-hunting made him shudder beforehand; and when the house was re-entered, and whilst the complimentary concert was sounding under the windows, he had a dreadful “row” with Quixote-Tartarin, calling him a cracked head, a visionary, imprudent, and thrice an idiot, and detailing by the card all the catastrophes awaiting him on such an expedition—shipwreck, rheumatism, yellow fever, dysentery, the black plague, elephantiasis, and the rest of them.

In vain did Quixote-Tartarin vow that he had not committed any imprudence—that

he would wrap himself up well, and take even superfluous necessaries with him. Sancho-Tartarin would listen to nothing. The poor craven saw himself already torn to tatters by the lions, or engulfed in the desert sands like his late royal highness Cambyses, and the other Tartarin only managed to appease him a little by explaining that the start was not immediate, as nothing pressed.

It is clear enough, indeed, that none embark on such an enterprise without some preparations. A man is bound to know whither he goes, hang it all! and not fly off like a bird. Before anything else, the Tarasconian wanted to peruse the accounts of great African tourists, the narrations of Mungo Park, Du Chaillu, Dr. Livingstone, Stanley, and so on.

In them, he learnt that these daring explorers, before donning their sandals for distant excursions, hardened themselves well beforehand to support hunger and thirst, forced marches, and all kinds of privation. Tartarin meant to act like they did, and from that day forward he lived upon water broth alone. The water broth of Tarascon is a few slices of bread drowned in hot water, with a clove of garlic, a pinch of thyme, and a sprig of laurel. Strict diet, at which you may believe poor Sancho made a wry face.

To the regimen of water broth Tartarin of Tarascon joined other wise practices. To break himself into the habit of long marches, he constrained himself to go round the town seven or eight times consecutively every morning, either at the fast walk or run, his elbows well set against his body, and a couple of white pebbles in the mouth, according to the antique usage.

To get inured to fog, dew, and night coolness, he would go down into his garden every dusk, and stop out there till ten or eleven, alone with his gun, on the lookout, behind the baobab.

Finally, so long as Mitaine’s wild beast show tarried in Tarascon, the cap-poppers who were belated at Costecalde’s might spy in the shadow of the booth, as they

crossed the Castle-green, a mysterious figure stalking up and down. It was Tartarin of Tarascon, habituating himself to hear without emotion the roarings of the lion in the sombre night.

X. Before the Start.

PENDING Tartarin's delay of the event by all sorts of heroic means, all Tarascon kept an eye upon him, and nothing else was busied about. Cap-popping was winged, and ballad-singing dead. The piano in Bezuquet's shop mouldered away under a green fungus, and the Spanish flies dried upon it, belly up. Tartarin's expedition had a put a stopper on everything.

Ah, you ought to have seen his success in the parlours. He was snatched away by one from another, fought for, loaned and borrowed, ay, stolen. There was no greater honour for the ladies than to go to Mitaine's Menagerie on Tartarin's arms, and have it explained before the lion's den how such large game are hunted, where they should be aimed at, at how many paces off; if the accidents were numerous, and the like of that.

Tartarin furnished all the elucidation desired. He had read "The Life of Jules Gerard, the Lion-Slayer," and had lion-hunting at his finger ends, as if he had been through it himself. Hence he orated upon these matters with great eloquence.

But where he shone the brightest was at dinner at Chief Judge Ladeveze's, or brave Commandant Bravida's (the former captain in the Army Clothing Factory, you will keep in mind), when coffee came in, and all the chairs were brought up closer together, whilst they chatted of his future hunts.

Thereupon, his elbow on the cloth, his nose over his Mocha, our hero would discourse in a feeling tone of all the dangers awaiting him thereaway. He spoke of the long moonless night lyings-in-wait, the pestilential fens, the rivers envenomed by leaves of poison-plants, the deep snow-drifts, the scorching suns, the scorpions, and rains of grasshoppers; he also descanted on the peculiarities of the great lions of

the Atlas, their way of fighting, their phenomenal vigour; and their ferocity in the mating season.

Heating with his own recital, he would rise from table, bounding to the middle of the dining-room, imitating the roar of a lion and the going off of a rifle crack! bang! the zizz of the explosive bullet—gesticulating and roaring about till he had overset the chairs.

Everybody turned pale around the board: the gentlemen looking at one another and wagging their heads, the ladies shutting their eyes with pretty screams of fright, the elderly men combatively brandishing their canes; and, in the side apartments, the little boys, who had been put to bed betimes, were greatly startled by the sudden outcries and imitated gun-fire, and screamed for lights. Meanwhile, Tartarin did not start.

XI. “Let’s have it out with swords gentleman, not pins!”

A DELICATE question: whether Tartarin really had any intention of going, and one which the historian of Tartarin would be highly embarrassed to answer. In plain words, Mitaine’s Menagerie had left Tarascon over three months, and still the lion-slayer had not started. After all, blinded by a new mirage, our candid hero may have imagined in perfectly good faith that he had gone to Algeria. On the strength of having related his future hunts, he may have believed he had performed them as sincerely as he fancied he had hoisted the consular flag and fired on the Tartars, zizz, phit, bang! at Shanghai.

Unfortunately, granting Tartarin was this time again dupe of an illusion, his fellow-townsfolk were not. When, after the quarter’s expectation, they perceived that the hunter had not packed even a collar-box, they commenced murmuring.

“This is going to turn out like the Shanghai expedition,” remarked Costecalde, smiling.

The gunsmith’s comment was welcomed all over town, for nobody believed any

longer in their late idol. The simpletons and poltroons—all the fellows of Bezuquet's stamp, whom a flea would put to flight, and who could not fire a shot without closing their eyes—were conspicuously pitiless. In the club-rooms or on the esplanade, they accosted poor Tartarin with bantering mien:

"And furthermore, when is that trip coming off?"

In Costecalde's shop, his opinions gained no credence, for the cap-poppers renounced their chief!

Next, epigrams dropped into the affair. Chief Judge Ladevese, who willingly paid court in his leisure hours to the native Muse, composed in local dialect a song which won much success. It told of a sportsman called "Master Gervais," whose dreaded rifle was bound to exterminate all the lions in Africa to the very last. Unluckily, this terrible gun was of a strange kind: "though loaded daily, it never went off."

"It never went off"—you will catch the drift.

In less than no time, this ditty became popular; and when Tartarin came by, the longshoremen and the little shoeblacks before his door sang in chorus—

"Muster Jarvey's roifle Allus gittin' chaarged; Muster Jarvey's roifle 'il hev to git enlaarged; Muster Jarvey's roifle's Loaded oft—don't scoff; Muster Jarvey's roifle Nivver do go off!"

But it was shouted out from a safe distance, on account of the double muscles.

Oh, the fragility of Tarascon's fads!

The great object himself feigned to see and hear nothing; but, under the surface, this sullen and venomous petty warfare much afflicted him. He felt aware that Tarascon was slipping out of his grip, and that popular favour was going to others; and this made him suffer horribly.

Ah, the huge bowl of popularity! it's all very well to have a seat in front of it, but what a scalding you catch when it is overturned!

Notwithstanding his pain, Tartarin smiled and peacefully jogged on in the same life as if nothing untoward had happened. Still, the mask of jovial heedlessness glued by pride on his face would sometimes be suddenly detached. Then, in lieu of laughter, one saw grief and indignation. Thus it was that one morning, when the little blackguards yelped “Muster Jarvey’s Roifle” beneath his window, the wretches’ voices rose even into the poor great man’s room, where he was shaving before the glass. (Tartarin wore a full beard, but as it grew very thick, he was obliged to keep it trimmed orderly.)

All at once the window was violently opened, and Tartarin appeared in shirt-sleeves and nightcap, smothered in lather, flourishing his razor and shaving-brush, and roaring with a formidable voice:

“Let’s have it out with swords, gentlemen, not pins!”

Fine words, worthy of history’s record, with only the blemish that they were addressed to little scamps not higher than their boot-boxes, and who were quite incapable of holding a smallsword.

XII. A memorable Dialogue in the little Baobab Villa.

AMID the general falling off, the army alone stuck out firmly for Tartarin. Brave Commandant Bravida (the former captain in the Army Clothing Department) continued to show him the same esteem as ever. “He’s game!” he persisted in saying—an assertion, I beg to believe, fully worth the chemist Bezuquet’s. Not once did the brave officer let out any allusion to the trip to Africa; but when the public clamour grew too loud, he determined to have his say.

One evening the luckless Tartarin was in his study, in a brown study himself, when he saw the commandant stride in, stern, wearing black gloves, buttoned up to his ears.

“Tartarin,” said the ex-captain authoritatively, “Tartarin, you’ll have to go!”

And there he dwelt, erect in the doorway frame, grand and rigid as embodied Duty.

Tartarin of Tarascon comprehended all the sense in “Tartarin, you’ll have to ago!”

Very pale, he rose and looked around with a softened eye upon the cosy snuggery, tightly closed in, full of warmth and tender light—upon the commodious easy chair, his books, the carpet, the white blinds of the windows, beyond which trembled the slender twigs of the little garden. Then, advancing towards the brave officer, he took his hand, grasped it energetically, and said in a voice somewhat tearful, but stoical for all that:

“I am going, Bravida.”

And go he did, as he said he would. Not straight off though, for it takes time to get the paraphernalia together.

To begin with, he ordered of Bompard two large boxes bound with brass, and an inscription to be on them:

———————————————————————- I TARTARIN, OF TARASCON

I I Firearms, &c. I ———————————————————————-

The binding in brass and the lettering took much time. He also ordered at Tastavin’s a showy album, in which to keep a diary and his impressions of travel; for a man cannot help having an idea or two strike him even when he is busy lion-hunting.

Next, he had over from Marseilles a downright cargo of tinned eatables, pemmican compressed in cakes for making soup, a new pattern shelter-tent, opening out and packing up in a minute, sea-boots, a couple of umbrellas, a waterproof coat, and blue spectacles to ward off ophthalmia. To conclude, Bezuquet the chemist made him up a miniature portable medicine chest stuffed with diachylon plaister, arnica, camphor, and medicated vinegar.

Poor Tartarin! he did not take these safeguards on his own behalf; but he hoped, by dint of precaution and delicate attentions, to allay Sancho-Tartarin’s fury, who, since the start was fixed, never left off raging day or night.

XIII. The Departure.

EFTSOON arrived the great and solemn day. From dawn all Tarascon had been on foot, encumbering the Avignon road and the approaches to Baobab Villa. People were up at the windows, on the roofs, and in the trees; the Rhone bargees, porters, dredgers, shoeblacks, gentry, tradesfolk, warpers and weavers, taffety-workers, the club members, in short the whole town; moreover, people from Beaucaire had come over the bridge, market-gardeners from the environs, carters in their huge carts with ample tilts, vinedressers upon handsome mules, tricked out with ribbons, streamers, bells, rosettes, and jingles, and even, here and there, a few pretty maids from Arles, come on the pillion behind their sweethearts, with bonny blue ribbons round the head, upon little iron-grey Camargue horses.

All this swarm squeezed and jostled before our good Tartarin's door, who was going to slaughter lions in the land of the Turks.

For Tarascon, Algeria, Africa, Greece, Persia, Turkey, and Mesopotamia, all form one great hazy country, almost a myth, called the land of the Turks. They say "Tur's," but that's a linguistic digression.

In the midst of all this throng, the cap-poppers bustled to and fro, proud of their captain's triumph, leaving glorious wakes where they had passed.

In front of the Indian fig-tree house were two large trucks. From time to time the door would open, and allow several persons to be spied, gravely lounging about the little garden. At every new box the throng started and trembled. The articles were named in a loud voice:

"That there's the shelter-tent; these the potted meats; that's the physic-chest; these the gun-cases,"—the cap-poppers giving explanations.

All of a sudden, about ten o'clock, there was a great stir in the multitude, for the garden gate banged open.

"Here he is! here he is!" they shouted.

It was he indeed. When he appeared upon the threshold, two outcries of stupefaction burst from the assemblage:

“He’s a Turk!” “He’s got on spectacles!”

In truth, Tartarin of Tarascon had deemed it his duty, on going to Algeria, to don the Algerian costume. Full white linen trousers, small tight vest with metal buttons, a red sash two feet wide around the waist, the neck bare and the forehead shaven, and a vast red fez, or chechia, on his head, with something like a long blue tassel thereto. Together with this, two heavy guns, one on each shoulder, a broad hunting-knife in the girdle, a bandolier across the breast, a revolver on the hip, swinging in its patent leather case—that is all. No, I cry your pardon, I was forgetting the spectacles—a pantomimically large pair of azure barnacles, which came in partly to temper what was rather too fierce in the bearing of our hero.

“Long life to Tartarin! hip, hip, hurrah for Tartarin!” roared the populace.

The great man smiled, but did not salute, on account of the firearms hindering him. Moreover, he knew now on what popular favour depends; it may even be that in the depths of his soul he cursed his terrible fellow-townsfolk, who obliged him to go away and leave his pretty little pleasure-house with whitened walls and green venetians. But there was no show of this.

Calm and proud, although a little pallid, he stepped out on the footway, glanced at the hand-carts, and, seeing all was right, lustily took the road to the railway-station, without even once looking back towards Baobab Villa. Behind him marched the brave Commandant Bravida, Ladevese the Chief Judge, Costecalde the gunsmith next, and then all the sportsmen who pop at caps, preceding the hand-carts and the rag, tag, and bobtail.

Before the station the station-master awaited them, an old African veteran of 1830, who shook Tartarin’s hand many times with fervency.

The Paris-to-Marseilles express was not yet in, so Tartarin and his staff went into the

waiting-rooms. To prevent the place being overrun, the station-master ordered the gates to be closed.

During a quarter of an hour, Tartarin promenaded up and down in the rooms in the midst of his brother marksmen, speaking to them of his journey and his hunting, and promising to send them skins; they put their names down in his memorandum-book for a lionskin apiece, as waltzers book for a dance.

Gentle and placid as Socrates on the point of quaffing the hemlock, the intrepid Tarasconian had a word and a smile for each. He spoke simply, with an affable mien; it looked as if, before departing, he meant to leave behind him a wake of charms, regrets, and pleasant memories. On hearing their leader speak in this way, all the sportsmen felt tears well up, and some were stung with remorse, to wit, Chief Judge Ladevese and the chemist Bezuquet. The railway employees blubbered in the corners, whilst the outer public squinted through the bars and bellowed: “Long live Tartarin!”

At length the bell rang. A dull rumble was heard, and a piercing whistle shook the vault.

“The Marseilles express, gen’lemen!”

“Good-bye, Tartarin! Good luck, old fellow!”

“Good-bye to you all!” murmured the great man, as, with his arms around the brave Commandant Bravida, he embraced his dear native place collectively in him. Then he leaped out upon the platform, and clambered into a carriage full of Parisian ladies, who were ready to die with fright at sight of this stranger with so many pistols and rifles.

XIV. The Port of Marseilles—“All aboard, all aboard!”

UPON the 1st of December 18—, in clear, brilliant, splendid weather, under a south winter sun, the startled inhabitants of Marseilles beheld a Turk come down the Canebiere, or their Regent Street. A Turk, a regular Turk—never had such a one

been seen; and yet, Heaven knows, there is no lack of Turks at Marseilles.

The Turk in question—have I any necessity of telling you it was the great Tartarin of Tarascon?—waddled along the quays, followed by his gun-cases, medicine-chest, and tinned comestibles, to reach the landing-stage of the Touache Company and the mail steamer the Zouave, which was to transport him over the sea.

With his ears still ringing with the home applause, intoxicated by the glare of the heavens and the reek of the sea, Tartarin fairly beamed as he stepped out with a lofty head, and between his guns on his shoulders, looking with all his eyes upon that wondrous, dazzling harbour of Marseilles, which he saw for the first time. The poor fellow believed he was dreaming. He fancied his name was Sinbad the Sailor, and that he was roaming in one of those fantastic cities abundant in the "Arabian Nights." As far as eye could reach there spread a forest of masts and spars, cris-crossing in every way.

Flags of all countries floated—English, American, Russian, Swedish, Greek and Tunisian.

The vessels lay alongside the wharves—ay, head on, so that their bowsprits stuck up out over the strand like rows of bayonets. Over it, too, sprawled the mermaids, goddesses, madonnas, and other figure-heads in carved and painted wood which gave names to the ships—all worn by sea-water, split, mildewed, and dripping. Ever and anon, between the hulls, a patch of harbour like watered silk splashed with oil. In the intervals of the yards and booms, what seemed swarms of flies prettily spotted the blue sky. These were the shipboys, hailing one another in all languages.

On the waterside, amidst thick green or black rivulets coming down from the soap factories loaded with oil and soda, bustled a mass of custom-house officers, messengers, porters, and truckmen with their bogheys, or trolleys, drawn by Corsican ponies.

There were shops selling quaint articles, smoky shanties where sailors were cooking

their own queer messes, dealers in pipes, monkeys, parrots, ropes, sailcloth, fanciful curios, amongst which were mingled higgledy-piggledy old culverins, huge gilded lanterns, worn-out pulley-blocks, rusty flukeless anchors, chafed cordage, battered speaking-trumpets, and marine glasses almost contemporary with the Ark. Sellers of mussels and clams squatted beside their heaps of shellfish and yawped their goods. Seamen rolled by with tar-pots, smoking soup-bowls, and big baskets full of cuttlefish, from which they went to wash the ink in the milky waters of the fountains.

Everywhere a prodigious collection of all kinds of goods: silks, minerals, wood in stacks, lead in pigs, cloths, sugars, caruba wood logs, colza seed, liquorice sticks, sugar-canes. The East and the West cheek by jowl, even to pyramids of Dutch cheeses which the Genoese were dyeing red by contact with their hands.

Yonder was the corn market: porters discharging sacks down the shoots of lofty elevators upon the pier, and loose grain rolling as a golden torrent through a blonde dust. Men in red skullcaps were sifting it as they caught it in large asses'-skin sieves, and loading it upon carts which took their millward way, followed by a regiment of women and youngsters with wisps and gleaning baskets. Farther on, the dry docks, where large vessels were laid low on their sides till their yards dipped in the water; they were singed with thorn-bushes to free them of sea weed; there rose an odour of pitch, and the deafening clatter of the sheathers coppering the bottoms with broad sheets of yellow metal.

At whiles a gap in between the masts, in which Tartarin could see the haven mouth, where the vessels came and went: a British frigate off for Malta, dainty and thoroughly washed down, with the officer in primrose gloves, or a large home-port brig hauling out in the midst of uproar and oaths, whilst the fat captain, in a high silk hat and frockcoat, ordered the operations in Provencal dialect. Other craft were making forth under all sail, and, still farther out, more were slowly looming up in the

sunshine as if they were sailing in the air.

All the time a frightful riot, the rumbling of carts, the “Haul all, haul away!” of the shipmen, oaths, songs, steamboat whistles, the bugles and drums in Forts Saint Jean and Saint Nicolas, the bells of the Major, the Accoules, and Saint Victor; with the mistral atop of all, catching up the noises and clamour, and rolling them up together with a furious shaking, till confounded with its own voice, which intoned a mad, wild, heroic melody like a grand charging tune—one that filled hearers with a longing to be off, and the farther the better—a craving for wings.

It was to the sound of this splendid blast that the intrepid Tartarin Tarasco of Tarascon embarked for the land of lions.

EPISODE THE SECOND, AMONG “THE TURKS”

I. The Passage—The Five Positions of the Fez—The Third Evening Out—Mercy upon us!

JOYFUL would I be, my dear readers, if I were a painter—a great artist, I mean—in order to set under your eyes, at the head of this second episode, the various positions taken by Tartarin’s red cap in the three days’ passage it made on board of the Zouave, between France and Algeria.

First would I show you it at the steaming out, upon deck, arrogant and heroic as it was, forming a glory round that handsome Tarasconian head. Next would I show you it at the harbour-mouth, when the bark began to caper upon the waves; I would depict it for you all of a quake in astonishment, and as though already experiencing the preliminary qualms of sea-sickness. Then, in the Gulf of the Lion, proportionably to the nearing the open sea, where the white caps heaved harder, I would make you behold it wrestling with the tempest, and standing on end upon the hero’s cranium, with its mighty mane of blue wool bristling out in the spray and breeze. Position Fourth: at six in the afternoon, with the Corsican coast in view; the

unfortunate chechia hangs over the ship's side, and lamentably stares down as though to plumb the depths of ocean. Finally and lastly, the Fifth Position: at the back of a narrow state-room, in a box-bed so small it seemed one drawer in a nest of them, something shapeless rolled on the pillow with moans of desolation. This was the fez—the fez so defiant at the sailing, now reduced to the vulgar condition of a nightcap, and pulled down over the very ears of the head of a pallid and convulsed sufferer.

How the people of Tarascon would have kicked themselves for having constrained the great Tartarin to leave home, if they had but seen him stretched in the bunk in the dull, wan gleam through the dead-light, amid the sickly odour of cooking and wet wood—the heart-heaving perfume of mail-boats; if they had but heard him gurgle at every turn of the screw, wail for tea every five minutes, and swear at the steward in a childish treble!

On my word of honour as a story-teller, the poor Turk would have made a paste-board dummy pity him. Suddenly, overcome by the nausea, the hapless victim had not even the power to undo the Algerian girdle-cloth, or lay aside his armoury; the lumpy-handled hunting-sword pounded his ribs, and the leather revolver-case made his thigh raw. To finish him arose the taunts of Sancho-Tartarin, who never ceased to groan and inveigh:

"Well, for the biggest kind of imbecile, you are the finest specimen! I told you truly how it would be. Ha, ha! you were bound to go to Africa, of course! Well, old merriman, now you are going to Africa, how do you like it?"

The cruellest part of it was that, from the retreat where he was moaning, the hapless invalid could hear the passengers in the grand saloon laughing, munching, singing, and playing at cards. On board the Zouave the company was as jolly as numerous, composed of officers going back to join their regiments, ladies from the Marseilles Alcazar Music Hall, strolling-players, a rich Mussulman returning from Mecca, and

a very jocular Montenegrin prince, who favoured them with imitations of the low comedians of Paris. Not one of these jokers felt the sea-sickness, and their time was passed in quaffing champagne with the steamer captain, a good fat born Marseillais, who had a wife and family as well at Algiers as at home, and who answered to the merry name of Barbassou.

Tartarin of Tarascon hated this pack of wretches; their mirthfulness deepened his ails.

At length, on the third afternoon, there was such an extraordinary hullabaloo on the deck that our hero was roused out of his long torpor. The ship's bell was ringing and the seamen's heavy boots ran over the planks.

"Go ahead! Stop her! Turn astern!" barked the hoarse voice of Captain Barbassou; and then, "Stop her dead!"

There was an abrupt check of movement, a shock, and no more, save the silent rolling of the boat from side to side like a balloon in the air. This strange stillness alarmed the Tarasconian.

"Heaven ha' mercy upon us!" he yelled in a terrifying voice, as, recovering his strength by magic, he bounded out of his berth, and rushed upon deck with his arsenal.

II. "To arms! to arms"

ONLY the arrival, not a foundering.

The Zouave was just gliding into the roadstead—a fine one of black, deep water, but dull and still, almost deserted. On elevated ground ahead rose Algiers, the White City, with its little houses of a dead cream-colour huddling against one another lest they slid into the sea. It was like Meudon slope with a laundress's washing hung out to dry. Over it a vast blue satin sky—and such a blue!

A little restored from his fright, the illustrious Tartarin gazed on the landscape, and

listened with respect to the Montenegrin prince, who stood by his side, as he named the different parts of the capital, the Kasbah, the upper town, and the Rue Bab-Azoon. A very finely-brought-up prince was this Montenegrin; moreover, knowing Algeria thoroughly, and fluently speaking Arabic. Hence Tartarin thought of cultivating his acquaintance.

All at once, along the bulwark against which they were leaning, the Tarasconian perceived a row of large black hands clinging to it from over the side. Almost instantly a Negro's woolly head shot up before him, and, ere he had time to open his mouth, the deck was overwhelmed on every side by a hundred black or yellow desperadoes, half naked, hideous, and fearsome. Tartarin knew who these pirates were—"they," of course, the celebrated "they" who had too often been hunted after by him in the by-ways of Tarascon. At last they had decided to meet him face to face. At the outset surprise nailed him to the spot. But when he saw the outlaws fall upon the luggage, tear off the tarpaulin covering, and actually commence the pillage of the ship, then the hero awoke. Whipping out his hunting-sword, "To arms! to arms!" he roared to the passengers; and away he flew, the foremost of all, upon the buccaneers. "Ques aco? What's the stir? What's the matter with you?" exclaimed Captain Barbassou, coming out of the 'tweendecks.

"About time you did turn up, captain! Quick, quick, arm your men!"

"Eh, what for? dash it all!"

"Why, can't you see?"

"See what?"

"There, before you, the corsairs"

Captain Barbassou stared, bewildered. At this juncture a tall blackamoor tore by with our hero's medicine-chest upon his back.

"You cut-throat! just wait for me!" yelled the Tarasconer as he ran after, with the knife uplifted.

But Barbassou caught him in the spring, and holding him by the waist-sash, bade him be quiet.

“Tron de ler! by the throne on high! they’re no pirates. It’s long since there were any pirates hereabout. Those dark porters are light porters. Ha, ha!”

“P—p-porters?”

“Rather, only come after the luggage to carry it ashore. So put up your cook’s galley knife, give me your ticket, and walk off behind that nigger—an honest dog, who will see you to land, and even into a hotel, if you like.”

A little abashed, Tartarin handed over his ticket, and falling in behind the representative of the Dark Continent, clambered down by the hanging-ladder into a big skiff dancing alongside. All his effects were already there—boxes, trunks, gun-cases, tinned food,—so cramming up the boat that there was no need to wait for any other passengers. The African scrambled upon the boxes, and squatted there like a baboon, with his knees clutched by his hands. Another Negro took the oars. Both laughingly eyed Tartarin, and showed their white teeth.

Standing in the stern-sheets, making that terrifying face which had daunted his fellow-countrymen, the great Tarasconian feverishly fumbled with his hunting-knife haft; for, despite what Barbassou had told him, he was only half at ease as regarded the intention of these ebony-skinned porters, who so little resembled their honest mates of Tarascon.

Five minutes afterwards the skiff landed Tartarin, and he set foot upon the little Barbary wharf, where, three hundred years before, a Spanish galley-slave yclept Miguel Cervantes devised, under the cane of the Algerian taskmaster, a sublime romance which was to bear the title of “Don Quixote.”

III. An Invocation to Cervantes—The Disembarkation—Where are the Turks?—Not a sign of them—Disenchantment

O MIGUEL CERVANTES SAAVEDRA, if what is asserted be true, to wit, that

wherever great men have dwelt some emanation of their spirits wanderingly hovers until the end of ages, then what remained of your essence on the Barbary coast must have quivered with glee on beholding Tartarin of Tarascon disembark, that marvellous type of the French Southerner, in whom was embodied both heroes of your work, Don Quixote and Sancho Panza.

The air was sultry on this occasion. On the wharf, ablaze with sunshine, were half a dozen revenue officers, some Algerians expecting news from France, several squatting Moors who drew at long pipes, and some Maltese mariners dragging large nets, between the meshes of which thousands of sardines glittered like small silver coins.

But hardly had Tartarin set foot on earth before the quay sprang into life and changed its aspect. A horde of savages, still more hideous than the pirates upon the steamer, rose between the stones on the strand and rushed upon the new-comer. Tall Arabs were there, nude under woollen blankets, little Moors in tatters, Negroes, Tunisians, Port Mahonese, M'zabites, hotel servants in white aprons, all yelling and shouting, hooking on his clothes, fighting over his luggage, one carrying away the provender, another his medicine-chest, and pelting him in one fantastic medley with the names of preposterously-entitled hotels.

Bewildered by all this tumult, poor Tartarin wandered to and fro, swore and stormed, went mad, ran after his property, and not knowing how to make these barbarians understand him, speechified them in French, Provencal, and even in dog Latin: "Rosa, the rose; bonus, bona, bonum!"—all that he knew—but to no purpose. He was not heeded. Happily, like a god in Homer, intervened a little fellow in a yellow-collared tunic, and armed with a long running-footman's cane, who dispersed the whole riff-raff with cudgel-play. He was a policeman of the Algerian capital. Very politely, he suggested Tartarin should put up at the Hotel de l'Europe, and he confided him to its waiters, who carted him and his impedimenta thither in

several barrows.

At the first steps he took in Algiers, Tartarin of Tarascon opened his eyes widely. Beforehand he had pictured it as an Oriental city—a fairy one, mythological, something between Constantinople and Zanzibar; but it was back into Tarascon he fell. Cafes, restaurants, wide streets, four-storey houses, a little market-place, macadamised, where the infantry band played Offenbachian polkas, whilst fashionably clad gentlemen occupied chairs, drinking beer and eating pancakes, some brilliant ladies, some shady ones, and soldiers—more soldiers—no end of soldiers, but not a solitary Turk, or, better to say, there was a solitary Turk, and that was he.

Hence he felt a little abashed about crossing the square, for everybody looked at him. The musicians stopped, the Offenbachian polka halting with one foot in the air.

With both guns on his shoulders, and the revolver flapping on his hip, as fierce and stately as Robinson Crusoe, Tartarin gravely passed through the groups; but on arriving at the hotel his powers failed him. All spun and mingled in his head: the departure from Tarascon, the harbour of Marseilles, the voyage, the Montenegrin prince, the corsairs. They had to help him up into a room and disarm and undress him. They began to talk of sending for a medical adviser; but hardly was our hero's head upon the pillow than he set to snoring, so loudly and so heartily that the landlord judged the succour of science useless, and everybody considerately withdrew.

IV. The First Lying in Wait.

THREE o'clock was striking by the Government clock when Tartarin awoke. He had slept all the evening, night, and morning, and even a goodish piece of the afternoon. It must be granted, though, that in the last three days the red fez had caught it pretty hot and lively!

Our hero's first thought on opening his eyes was, "I am in the land of the lions!"

And—well, why should we not say it?—at the idea that lions were nigh hereabouts, within a couple of steps, almost at hand's reach, and that he would have to disentangle a snarled skein with them, ugh! a deadly chill struck him, and he dived intrepidly under the coverlet.

But, before a moment was over, the outward gaiety, the blue sky, the glowing sun that streamed into the bedchamber, a nice little breakfast that he ate in bed, his window wide open upon the sea, the whole flavoured with an uncommonly good bottle of Crescia wine—it very speedily restored him his former pluckiness.

"Let's out and at the lion!" he exclaimed, throwing off the clothes and briskly dressing himself.

His plan was as follows: he would go forth from the city without saying a word to a soul, plunge into the great desert, await nightfall to ambush himself, and bang away at the first lion who walked up. Then would he return to breakfast in the morning at the hotel, receive the felicitations of the natives, and hire a cart to bring in the quarry.

So he hurriedly armed himself, attached upright on his back the shelter-tent (which, when rolled up, left its centre pole sticking out a clear foot above his head), and descended to the street as stiffly as though he had swallowed it. Not caring to ask the way of anybody, from fear of letting out his project, he turned fairly to the right, and threaded the Bab-Azoon arcade to the very end, where swarms of Algerian Jews watched him pass from their corner ambushes like so many spiders; crossing the Theatre place, he entered the outer ward, and lastly came upon the dusty Mustapha highway.

Upon this was a quaint conglomeration: omnibuses, hackney coaches, corricolos, the army service waggons, huge hay-carts drawn by bullocks, squads of Chasseurs d'Afrique, droves of microscopic asses, trucks of Alsatian emigrants, spahis in scarlet cloaks—all filed by in a whirlwind cloud of dust, amidst shouts, songs, and

trumpetcalls, between two rows of vile-looking booths, at the doors of which lanky Mahonnais women might be seen doing their hair, drinking-dens filled with soldiers, and shops of butchers and knackers.

“What rubbish, to din me about the Orient!” grumbled the great Tartarin; “there are not even as many Turks here as at Marseilles.”

All of a sudden he saw a splendid camel strut by him quite closely, stretching its long legs and puffing out its throat like a turkey-cock, and that made his heart throb. Camels already, eh? Lions could not be far Off now; and, indeed, in five minutes’ time he did see a whole band of lion-hunters coming his way under arms.

“Cowards!” thought our hero as he skirted them; “downright cowards, to go at a lion in companies and with dogs!”

For it never could occur to him that anything but lions were objects of the chase in Algeria. For all that, these Nimrods wore such complacent phizzes of retired tradesmen, and their style of lion-hunting with dogs and game-bags was so patriarchal, that the Tarasconian, a little perplexed, deemed it incumbent to question one of the gentlemen.

“And furthermore, comrade, is the sport good?”

“Not bad,” responded the other, regarding the speaker’s imposing warlike equipment with a scared eye.

“Killed any?”

“Rather! Not so bad—only look.” Whereupon the Algerian sportsman showed that it was rabbits and woodcock stuffing out the bag.

“What! do you call that your bag? Do you put such-like in your bag?”

“Where else should I put ‘em?”

“But it’s such little game.”

“Some run small and some run large,” observed the hunter.

In haste to catch up with his companions, he joined them with several long strides. The dauntless Tartarin remained rooted in the middle of the road with stupefaction. “Pooh!” he ejaculated, after a moment’s reflection, “these are jokers. They haven’t killed anything whatever,” and he went his way.

Already the houses became scarcer, and so did the passengers. Dark came on and objects were blurred, though Tartarin walked on for half an hour more, when he stopped, for it was night. A moonless night, too, but sprinkled with stars. On the highroad there was nobody. The hero concluded that lions are not stage-coaches, and would not of their own choice travel the main ways. So he wheeled into the fields, where there were brambles and ditches and bushes at every step, but he kept on nevertheless.

But suddenly he halted.

“I smell lions about here!” said our friend, sniffing right and left.

V. Bang, bang!

CERTAINLY a great wilderness, bristling with odd plants of that Oriental kind which look like wicked creatures. Under the feeble starlight their magnified shadows barred the ground in every way. On the right loomed up confusedly the heavy mass of a mountain—perhaps the Atlas range. On the heart-hand, the invisible sea hollowly rolling. The very spot to attract wild beasts.

With one gun laid before him and the other in his grasp, Tartarin of Tarascon went down on one knee and waited an hour, ay, a good couple, and nothing turned up. Then he bethought him how, in his books, the great lion-slayers never went out hunting without having a lamb or a kid along with them, which they tied up a space before them, and set bleating or baa-ing by jerking its foot with a string. Not having any goat, the Tarasconer had the idea of employing an imitation, and he set to crying in a tremulous voice:

“Baa-a-a!”

At first it was done very softly, because at bottom he was a little alarmed lest the lion should hear him; but as nothing came, he baa-ed more loudly. Still nothing. Losing patience, he resumed many times running at the top of his voice, till the “Baa, baa, baa!” came out with so much power that the goat began to be mistakable for a bull.

Unexpectedly, a few steps in front, some gigantic black thing appeared. He was hushed. This thing lowered its head, sniffed the ground, bounded up, rolled over, and darted off at the gallop, but returned and stopped short. Who could doubt it was the lion? for now its four short legs could plainly be seen, its formidable mane and its large eyes gleaming in the gloom.

Up went his gun into position. Fire’s the word! and bang, bang! it was done. And immediately there was a leap back and the drawing of the hunting-knife. To the Tarasconian’s shot a terrible roaring replied.

“He’s got it!” cried our good Tartarin as, steadying himself on his sturdy supporters, he prepared to receive the brute’s charge.

But it had more than its fill, and galloped off; howling. He did not budge, for he expected to see the female mate appear, as the story-books always lay it down she should.

Unhappily, no female came. After two or three hours’ waiting the Tarasconian grew tired. The ground was damp, the night was getting cool, and the sea-breeze pricked sharply.

“I have a good mind to take a nap till daylight,” he said to himself.

To avoid catching rheumatism, he had recourse to his patent tent. But here’s where Old Nick interfered! This tent was of so very ingenious a construction that he could not manage to open it. In vain did he toil over it and perspire an hour through—the confounded apparatus would not come unfolded. There are some umbrellas which amuse themselves under torrential rains with just such tricks upon you. Fairly tired

out with the struggle, the victim dashed down the machine and lay upon it, swearing like the regular Southron he was. “Tar, tar, rar, tar! tar, rar, tar!”

“What on earth’s that?” wondered Tartarin, suddenly aroused.

It was the bugles of the Chasseurs d’Afrique sounding the turn-out in the Mustapha barracks. The stupefied lion-slayer rubbed his eyes, for he had believed himself out in the boundless wilderness; and do you know where he really was?—in a field of artichokes, between a cabbage-garden and a patch of beets. His Sahara grew kitchen vegetables.

Close to him, on the pretty verdant slope of Upper Mustapha, the snowy villas glowed in the rosy rising sun: anybody would believe himself in the neighbourhood of Marseilles, amongst its bastides and bastidons.

The commonplace and kitchen-gardenish aspect of this sleep-steeped country much astonished the poor man, and put him in bad humour.

“These folk are crazy,” he reasoned, “to plant artichokes in the prowling-ground of lions; for, in short, I have not been dreaming. Lions have come here, and there’s the proof.”

What he called the proof was blood-spots left behind the beast in its flight. Bending over this ruddy trail with his eye on the lookout and his revolver in his fist, the valiant Tarasconian went from artichoke to artichoke up to a little field of oats. In the trampled grass was a pool of blood, and in the midst of the pool, lying on its flank, with a large wound in the head, was a—guess what?

“A lion, of course!”

Not a bit of it! An ass!—one of those little donkeys so common in Algeria, where they are called bourriquots.

VI. Arrival of the Female—A Terrible Combat—“Game Fellows Meet Here!”

LOOKING on his hapless victim, Tartarin’s first impulse was one of vexation.

There is such a wide gap between a lion and poor Jack! His second feeling was one of pity. The poor bourriquot was so pretty and looked so kindly. The hide on his still warm sides heaved and fell like waves. Tartarin knelt down, and strove with the end of his Algerian sash to stanch the blood; and all you can imagine in the way of touchingness was offered by the picture of this great man tending this little ass.

At the touch of the silky cloth the donkey, who had not twopennyworth of life in him, opened his large grey eye and winked his long ears two or three times, as much as to say, “Oh, thank you!” before a final spasm shook it from head to tail, whereafter it stirred no more.

“Noiraud! Blackey!” suddenly screamed a voice, choking with anguish, as the branches in a thicket hard by moved at the same time.

Tartarin had no more than enough time to rise and stand upon guard. This was the female!

She rushed up, fearsome and roaring, under form of an old Alsatian woman, her hair in a kerchief, armed with large red umbrella, and calling for her ass, till all the echoes of Mustapha rang. It certainly would have been better for Tartarin to have had to deal with a lioness in fury than this old virago. In vain did the luckless sportsman try to make her understand how the blunder had occurred, and he had mistaken “Noiraud” for a lion. The harridan believed he was making fun of her, and uttering energetical “Der Teufels!” fell upon our hero to bang him with the gingham. A little bewildered, Tartarin defended himself as best he could, warding off the blows with his rifle, streaming with perspiration, panting, jumping about, and crying out:

“But, Madame, but”—

Much good his buts were! Madame was dull of hearing, and her blows continued hard as ever.

Fortunately a third party arrived on the battlefield, the Alsatian’s husband, of the

same race; a roadside innkeeper, as well as a very good ready-reckoner, which was better. When he saw what kind of a customer he had to deal with—a slaughterer who only wanted to pay the value of his victim—he disarmed his better-half, and they came to an understanding.

Tartarin gave two hundred francs, the donkey being worth about ten—at least that is the current price in the Arab markets. Then poor Blackey was laid to rest at the root of a fig-tree, and the Alsatian, raised to joviality by the colour of the Tarascon ducats, invited the hero to have a quencher with him in his wine-shop, which stood only a few steps off on the edge of the highway. Every Sunday the sportsmen from the city came there to regale of a morning, for the plain abounded with game, and there was no better place for rabbits for two leagues around.

“How about lions?” inquired Tartarin.

The Alsatian stared at him, greatly astounded.

“Lions!”

“Yes, lions. Don’t you see them sometimes?” resumed the poor fellow, with less confidence.

The Boniface burst out in laughter.

“Ho, ho! bless us! lions! What would we do with lions here?”

“Are there, then, none in Algeria?”

“‘Pon my faith, I never saw any, albeit I have been twenty years in the colony. Still, I believe I have heard tell of such a thing—leastwise, I fancy the newspapers said—but that is ever so much farther inland—down South, you know”—

At this point they reached the hostelry, a suburban pothouse, with a withered green bough over the door, crossed billiard-cues painted on the wall, and this harmless sign over a picture of wild rabbits, feeding:

“GAME FELLOWS MEET HERE.”

“Game fellows!” It made Tartarin think of Captain Bravida.

VII. About an Omnibus, a Moorish Beauty, and a Wreath of Jessamine.

COMMON people would have been discouraged by such a first adventure, but men of Tartarin’s mettle do not easily get cast down.

“The lions are in the South, are they?” mused the hero. “Very well, then. South I go.”

As soon as he had swallowed his last mouthful he jumped up, thanked his host, nodded good-bye to the old hag without any ill-will, dropped a final tear over the hapless Blackey, and quickly returned to Algiers, with the firm intention of packing up and starting that very day for the South.

The Mustapha highroad seemed, unfortunately, to have stretched since overnight; and what a sun and dust there were, and what a weight in that shelter-tent! Tartarin did not feel to have the courage to walk to the town, and he beckoned to the first omnibus coming along, and climbed in.

Oh, our poor Tartarin of Tarascon! how much better it would have been for his name and fame not to have stepped into that fatal ark on wheels, but to have continued on his road afoot, at the risk of falling suffocated beneath the burden of the atmosphere, the tent, and his heavy double-barrelled rifles.

When Tartarin got in the ‘bus was full. At the end, with his nose in his prayer-book, sat a large and black-bearded vicar from town; facing him was a young Moorish merchant smoking coarse cigarettes, and a Maltese sailor and four or five Moorish women muffled up in white cloths, so that only their eyes could be spied.

These ladies had been to offer up prayers in the Abdel Kader cemetery; but this funereal visit did not seem to have much saddened them, for they could be heard chuckling and chattering between themselves under their coverings whilst munching pastry. Tartarin fancied that they watched him narrowly. One in particular, seated over against him, had fixed her eyes upon his, and never took them off all the drive.

Although the dame was veiled, the liveliness of the big black eyes, lengthened out by k'hol; a delightfully slender wrist loaded with gold bracelets, of which a glimpse was given from time to time among the folds; the sound of her voice, the graceful, almost childlike, movements of the head, all revealed that a young, pretty, and loveable creature bloomed underneath the veil. The unfortunate Tartarin did not know where to shrink. The fond, mute gaze of these splendrous Oriental orbs agitated him, perturbed him, and made him feel like dying with flushes of heat and fits of cold shivers.

To finish him, the lady's slipper meddled in the onslaught: he felt the dainty thing wander and frisk about over his heavy hunting boots like a tiny red mouse. What could he do? Answer the glance and the pressure, of course. Ay, but what about the consequences? A loving intrigue in the East is a terrible matter! With his romantic southern nature, the honest Tarasconian saw himself already falling into the grip of the eunuchs, to be decapitated, or better—we mean, worse—than that, sewn up in a leather sack and sunk in the sea with his head under his arm beside him. This somewhat cooled him. In the meantime the little slipper continued its proceedings, and the eyes, widely open opposite him like twin black velvet flowers, seemed to say:

"Come, cull us!"

The 'bus stopped on the Theatre place, at the mouth of the Rue Bab-Azoon. One by one, embedded in their voluminous trousers, and drawing their mufflers around them with wild grace, the Moorish women alighted. Tartarin's confrontatress was the last to rise, and in doing so her countenance skimmed so closely to our hero's that her breath enveloped him—a veritable nosegay of youth and freshness, with an indescribable after-tang of musk, jessamine, and pastry.

The Tarasconian stood out no longer. Intoxicated with love, and ready for anything, he darted out after the beauty. At the rumpling sound of his belts and boots she

turned, laid a finger on her veiled mouth, as one who would say, “Hush!” and with the other hand quickly tossed him a little wreath of sweet-scented jessamine flowers. Tartarin of Tarascon stooped to pick it up; but as he was rather clumsy, and much overburdened with implements of war, the operation took rather long. When he did straighten up, with the jessamine garland upon his heart, the donatrix had vanished.

VIII. Ye Lions of the Atlas, repose in peace!

LIONS of the Atlas, sleep!—sleep tranquilly at the back of your lairs amid the aloes and cacti. For a few days to come, any way, Tartarin of Tarascon will not massacre you. For the time being, all his warlike paraphernalia, gun-cases, medicine chest, alimentary preserves, dwelt peacefully under cover in a corner of room 36 in the Hotel de l’Europe.

Sleep with no fear, great red lions, the Tarasconian is engaged in looking up that Moorish charmer. Since the adventure in the omnibus, the unfortunate swain perpetually fancied he felt the fidgeting of that pretty red mouse upon his huge backwoods trapper’s foot; and the sea-breeze fanning his lips was ever scented, do what he would, with a love-exciting odour of sweet cakes and patchouli.

He hungered for his indispensable light of the harem! and he meant to behold her anew.

But it was no joke of a task. To find one certain person in a city of a hundred thousand souls, only known by the eyes, breath, and slipper,—none but a son of Tarascon, panoplied by love, would be capable of attempting such an adventure.

The plague is that, under their broad white mufflers, all the Moorish women resemble one another; besides, they do not go about much, and to see them, a man has to climb up into the native or upper town, the city of the “Turks,” and that is a regular cut-throat’s den.

Little black alleys, very narrow, climbing perpendicularly up between mysterious house-walls, whose roofs lean to touching and form a tunnel; low doors, and sad,

silent little casements well barred and grated. Moreover, on both hands, stacks of darksome stalls, wherein ferocious “Turks” smoked long pipes stuck between glittering teeth in piratical heads with white eyes, and mumbled in undertones as if hatching wicked attacks.

To say that Tartarin traversed this grisly place without any emotion would be putting forth falsehood. On the contrary, he was much affected, and the stout fellow only went up the obscure lanes, where his corporation took up all the width, with the utmost precaution, his eye skinned, and his finger on his revolver trigger, in the same manner as he went to the clubhouse at Tarascon. At any moment he expected to have a whole gang of eunuchs and janissaries drop upon his back, yet the longing to behold that dark damsel again gave him a giant’s strength and boldness.

For a full week the undaunted Tartarin never quitted the high town. Yes; for all that period he might have been seen cooling his heels before the Turkish bath-houses, awaiting the hour when the ladies came forth in troops, shivering and still redolent of soap and hot water; or squatting at the doorways of mosques, puffing and melting in trying to get out of his big boots in order to enter the temples.

Betimes at nightfall, when he was returning heart-broken at not having discovered anything at either bagnio or mosque, our man from Tarascon, in passing mansions, would hear monotonous songs, smothered twanging of guitars, thumping of tambourines, and feminine laughter-peals, which would make his heart beat.

“Haply she is there!” he would say to himself.

Thereupon, granting the street was unpeopled, he would go up to one of these dwellings, lift the heavy knocker of the low postern, and timidly rap. The songs and merriment would instantly cease. There would be audible behind the wall nothing excepting low, dull flutterings as in a slumbering aviary.

“Let’s stick to it, old boy,” our hero would think. “Something will befall us yet.”

What most often befell him was the contents of the cold-water jug on the head, or

else peel of oranges and Barbary figs; never anything more serious.

Well might the lions of the Atlas Mountains doze in peace.

IX. Prince Gregory of Montenegro.

IT was two long weeks that the unfortunate Tartarin had been seeking his Algerian flame, and most likely he would have been seeking after her to this day if the little god kind to lovers had not come to his help under the shape of a Montenegrin nobleman.

It happened as follows.

Every Saturday night in winter there is a masked ball at the Grand Theatre of Algiers, just as at the Paris Opera-House. It is the undying and ever-tasteless county fancy dress ball—very few people on the floor, several castaways from the Parisian students' ballrooms or midnight dance-houses, Joans of Arc following the army, faded characters out of the Java costume-book of 1840, and half-a-dozen laundress's underlings who are aiming to make loftier conquests, but still preserve a faint perfume of their former life—garlic and saffron sauce. The real spectacle is not there, but in the green-room, transformed for the nonce into a hall of green cloth or gaming saloon.

An enfevered and motley mob hustle one another around the long green table-covers: Turcos out for the day and staking their double halfpence, Moorish traders from the native town, Negroes, Maltese, colonists from the inland, who have come forty leagues in order to risk on a turning card the price of a plough or of a yoke of oxen; all a-quivering, pale, clenching their teeth, and with that singular, wavering, sidelong look of the gamester, become a squint from always staring at the same card in the lay-out.

A little apart are the tribes of Algerian Jews, playing among acquaintances. The men are in the Oriental costume; hideously varied with blue stockings and velvet caps. The puffy and flabby women sit up stiffly in tight golden bodices. Grouped around

the tables, the whole tribe wail, squeal, combine, reckon on the fingers, and play but little. Now and anon, however, after long conferences, some old patriarch, with a beard like those of saints by the Old Masters, detaches himself from the party and goes to risk the family duro. As long as the game lasted there would be a scintillation of Hebraic eyes directed on the board—dreadful black diamonds, which made the gold pieces shiver, and ended by gently attracting them, as if drawn by a thread. Then arose wrangles, quarrels, battles, oaths of every land, mad outcries in all tongues, knives flashing out, the guard marching in, and the money disappearing.

It was into the thick of this saturnalia that the great Tartarin came straying one evening to find oblivion and heart's ease.

He was roving alone through the gathering, brooding about his Moorish beauty, when two angered voices arose suddenly from a gaming-table above all the clamour and chink of coin.

"I tell you, M'sieu, that I am twenty francs short!"

"Stuff, M'sieu!"

"Stuff yourself; M'sieu!"

"You shall learn whom you are addressing, M'sieu!"

"I am dying to do that, M'sieu!"

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

Upon this title Tartarin, much excited, cleft the throng and placed himself in the foremost rank, proud and happy to find his prince again, the Montenegrin noble of such politeness whose acquaintance he had begun on board of the mail steamer. Unfortunately the title of Highness, which had so dazzled the worthy Tarasconian, did not produce the slightest impression upon the Chasseurs officer with whom the noble had his dispute.

"I am much the wiser!" observed the military gentleman sneeringly; and turning to

the bystanders he added: "'Prince Gregory of Montenegro'—who knows any such a person? Nobody!"

The indignant Tartarin took one step forward.

"Allow me. I know the prince," said he, in a very firm voice, and with his finest Tarasconian accent.

The light cavalry officer eyed him hard for a moment, and then, shrugging his shoulders, returned:

"Come, that is good! Just you two share the twenty francs lacking between you, and let us talk no more on the score."

Whereupon he turned his back upon them and mixed with the crowd. The stormy Tartarin was going to rush after him, but the prince prevented that.

"Let him go. I can manage my own affairs."

Taking the interventionist by the arm, he drew him rapidly out of doors. When they were upon the square, Prince Gregory of Montenegro lifted his hat off; extended his hand to our hero, and as he but dimly remembered his name, he began in a vibrating voice:

"Monsieur Barbarin—"

"Tartarin!" prompted the other, timidly.

"Tartarin, Barbarin, no matter! Between us henceforward it is a league of life and death!"

The Montenegrin noble shook his hand with fierce energy. You may infer that the Tarasconian was proud.

"Prince, prince!" he repeated enthusiastically.

In a quarter of an hour subsequently the two gentlemen were installed in the Platanes Restaurant, an agreeable late supper-house, with terraces running out over the sea, where, before a hearty Russian salad, seconded by a nice Crescia wine, they

renewed the friendship.

You cannot image any one more bewitching than this Montenegrin prince. Slender, fine, with crisp hair curled by the tongs, shaved “a week under” and pumice-stoned on that, bestarred with out-of-the-way decorations, he had the wily eye, the fondling gestures, and vaguely the accent of an Italian, which gave him an air of Cardinal Mazarin without his chin-tuft and moustaches. He was deeply versed in the Latin tongues, and lugged in quotations from Tacitus, Horace, and Caesar’s Commentaries at every opening.

Of an old noble strain, it appeared that his brothers had had him exiled at the age of ten, on account of his liberal opinions, since which time he had roamed the world for pleasure and instruction as a philosophical noble. A singular coincidence! the prince had spent three years in Tarascon; and as Tartarin showed amazement at never having met him at the club or on the esplanade, His Highness evasively remarked that he never went about. Through delicacy, the Tarasconian did not dare to question further. All great existences have such mysterious nooks.

To sum up, this Signor Gregory was a very genial aristocrat. Whilst sipping the rosy Crescia juice he patiently listened to Tartarin’s expatiating on his lovely Moor, and he even promised to find her speedily, as he had full knowledge of the native ladies.

They drank hard and lengthily in toasts to “The ladies of Algiers” and “The freedom of Montenegro!”

Outside, upon the terrace, heaved the sea, and its rollers slapped the strand in the darkness with much the sound of wet sails flapping. The air was warm, and the sky full of stars.

In the plane-trees a nightingale was piping.

It was Tartarin who paid the piper.

X. “Tell me your father’s name, and I will tell you the name of that flower.”

PRINCES of Montenegro are the ones to find the love-bird.

On the morrow early after this evening at the Platanes, Prince Gregory was in the Tarasconian's bedroom.

"Quick! Dress yourself quickly! Your Moorish beauty is found, Her name is Baya. She's scarce twenty—as pretty as a love, and already a widow."

"A widow! What a slice of luck!" joyfully exclaimed Tartarin, who dreaded Oriental husbands.

"Ay, but woefully closely guarded by her brother."

"Oh, the mischief!"

"A savage chap who vends pipes in the Orleans bazaar."

Here fell a silence.

"A fig for that!" proceeded the prince; "you are not the man to be daunted by such a trifle; and, anyhow, this old corsair can be pacified, I daresay, by having some pipes bought of him. But be quick! On with your courting suit, you lucky dog!"

Pale and agitated, with his heart brimming over with love, the Tarasconian leaped out of his couch, and, as he hastily buttoned up his capacious nether garment, wanted to know how he should act.

"Write straightway to the lady and ask for a tryst."

"Do you mean to say she knows French?" queried the Tarasconian simpleton, with the disappointed mien of one who had believed thoroughly in the Orient.

"Not one word of it," rejoined the prince imperturbably; "but you can dictate the billet-doux, and I will translate it bit by bit."

"O prince, how kind you are!"

The lover began striding up and down the bedroom in silent meditation.

Naturally a man does not write to a Moorish girl in Algiers in the same way as to a

seamstress of Beaucaire. It was a very lucky thing that our hero had in mind his numerous readings, which allowed him, by amalgamating the Red Indian eloquence of Gustave Aimard's Apaches with Lamartine's rhetorical flourishes in the "Voyage en Orient," and some reminiscences of the "Song of Songs," to compose the most Eastern letter that you could expect to see. It opened with:

"Like unto the ostrich upon the sandy waste"—

and concluded by:

"Tell me your father's name, and I will tell you the name of that flower."

To this missive the romantic Tartarin would have much liked to join an emblematic bouquet of flowers in the Eastern fashion; but Prince Gregory thought it better to purchase some pipes at the brother's, which could not fail to soften his wild temper, and would certainly please the lady a very great deal, as she was much of a smoker.

"Let's be off at once to buy them!" said Tartarin, full of ardour.

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

"Eh, what? Would you save me the trouble? O prince, prince, you do me proud!"

Quite abashed, the good-hearted fellow offered his purse to the obliging Montenegrin, urging him to overlook nothing by which the lady would be gratified.

Unfortunately the suit, albeit capitally commenced, did not progress as rapidly as might have been anticipated. It appeared that the Moorish beauty was very deeply affected by Tartarin's eloquence, and, for that matter, three-parts won beforehand, so that she wished nothing better than to receive him; but that brother of hers had qualms, and to lull them it was necessary to buy pipes by the dozens; nay, the gross—well, we had best say by the shipload at once.

"What the plague can Baya do with all these pipes?" poor Tartarin wanted to know more than once; but he paid the bills all the same, and without niggardliness.

At length, after having purchased a mountainous stack of pipes and poured forth

lakes of Oriental poesy, an interview was arranged. I have no need to tell you with what throbbings of the heart the Tarasconian prepared himself; with what carefulness he trimmed, brilliantined, and perfumed his rough cap-popper's beard, and how he did not forget—for everything must be thought of—to slip a spiky life-preserver and two or three six-shooters into his pockets.

The ever-obliging prince was coming to this first meeting in the office of interpreter.

The lady dwelt in the upper part of the town. Before her doorway a boy Moor of fourteen or less was smoking cigarettes; this was the brother in question, the celebrated Ali. On seeing the pair of visitors arrive, he gave a double knock on the postern gate and delicately glided away.

The door opened. A negress appeared, who conducted the gentlemen, without uttering a word, across the narrow inner courtyard into a small cool room, where the lady awaited them, reclining on a low ottoman. At first glance she appeared smaller and stouter than the Moorish damsel met in the omnibus by the Tarasconian. In fact, was it really the same? But the doubt merely flashed through Tartarin's brain like a stroke of lightning.

The dame was so pretty thus, with her feet bare, and plump fingers, fine and pink, loaded with rings. Under her bodice of gilded cloth and the folds of her flower-patterned dress was suggested a lovable creature, rather blessed materially, rounded everywhere, and nice enough to eat. The amber mouthpiece of a narghileh smoked at her lips, and enveloped her wholly in a halo of light-coloured smoke.

On entering, the Tarasconian laid a hand on his heart and bowed as Moorlike as possible, whilst rolling his large impassioned eyes.

Baya gazed on him for a moment without making any answer; but then, dropping her pipe-stem, she threw her head back, hid it in her hands, and they could only see her white neck rippling with a wild laugh like a bag full of pearls.

XI. Sidi Tart'ri Ben Tart'ri.

SHOULD you ever drop into the coffee-houses of the Algerian upper town after dark, even at this day, you would still hear the natives chatting among themselves, with many a wink and slight laugh, of one Sidi Tart'ri Ben Tart'ri, a rich and good-humoured European, who dwelt, a few years back, in that neighbourhood, with a buxom witch of local origin, named Baya.

This Sidi Tart'ri, who has left such a merry memory around the Kasbah, is no other than our Tartarin, as will be guessed.

How could you expect things otherwise? In the lives of heroes, of saints, too, it happens the same way—there are moments of blindness, perturbation, and weakness. The illustrious Tarasconian was no more exempt from this than another, and that is the reason during two months that, oblivious of fame and lions, he revelled in Oriental amorousness, and dozed, like Hannibal at Capua, in the delights of Algiers the white.

The good fellow took a pretty little house in the native style in the heart of the Arab town, with inner courtyard, banana-trees, cool verandahs, and fountains. He dwelt, afar from noise, in company with the Moorish charmer, a thorough woman to the manner born, who pulled at her hubble-bubble all day when she was not eating.

Stretched out on a divan in front of him, Baya would drone him monotonous tunes with a guitar in her fist; or else, to distract her lord and master, favour him with the Bee Dance, holding a hand-glass up, in which she reflected her white teeth and the faces she made.

As the Esmeralda did not know a word of French, and Tartarin none in Arabic, the conversation died away sometimes, and the Tarasconian had plenty of leisure to do penance for the gush of language of which he had been guilty in the shop of Bezuquet the chemist or that of Costecalde the gunmaker.

But this penance was not devoid of charm, for he felt a kind of enjoyable sullenness in dawdling away the whole day without speaking, and in listening to the gurgling of

the hookah, the strumming of the guitar, and the faint splashing of the fountain on the mosaic pavement of the yard.

The pipe, the bath, and caresses filled his entire life. They seldom went out of doors. Sometimes with his lady-love upon a pillion, Sidi Tart'ri would ride upon a sturdy mule to eat pomegranates in a little garden he had purchased in the suburbs. But never, without exception, did he go down into the European quarter. This kind of Algiers appeared to him as ugly and unbearable as a barracks at home, with its Zouaves in revelry, its music-halls crammed with officers, and its everlasting clank of metal sabre-sheaths under the arcades.

The sum total is, that our Tarasconian was very happy.

Sancho-Tartarin particularly, being very sweet upon Turkish pastry, declared that one could not be more satisfied than by this new existence. Quixote-Tartarin had some twinges at whiles on thinking of Tarascon and the promises of lion-skins; but this remorse did not last, and to drive away such dampening ideas there sufficed one glance from Baya, or a spoonful of those diabolical dizzying and odoriferous sweetmeats like Circe's brews.

In the evening Gregory came to discourse a little about a free Black Mountain. Of indefatigable obligingness, this amiable nobleman filled the functions of an interpreter in the household, or those of a steward at a pinch, and all for nothing for the sheer pleasure of it. Apart from him, Tartarin received none but "Turks." All those fierce-headed pirates who had given him such frights from the backs of their black stalls turned out, when once he made their acquaintance, to be good inoffensive tradesmen, embroiderers, dealers in spice, pipe-mouthpiece turners—well-bred fellows, humble, clever, close, and first-class hands at homely card games. Four or five times a week these gentry would come and spend the evening at Sidi Tart'ri's, winning his small change, eating his cakes and dainties, and delicately retiring on the stroke of ten with thanks to the Prophet.

Left alone, Sidi Tart'ri and his faithful spouse by the broomstick wedding would finish the evening on their terrace, a broad white roof which overlooked the city.

All around them a thousand of other such white flats, placid beneath the moonshine, were descending like steps to the sea. The breeze carried up tinkling of guitars.

Suddenly, like a shower of firework stars, a full, clear melody would be softly sprinkled out from the sky, and on the minaret of the neighbouring mosque a handsome muezzin would appear, his blanched form outlined on the deep blue of the night, as he chanted the glory of Allah with a marvellous voice, which filled the horizon.

Thereupon Baya would let go her guitar, and with her large eyes turned towards the crier, seem to imbibe the prayer deliciously. As long as the chant endured she would remain thrilled there in ecstasy, like an Oriental saint. The deeply impressed Tartarin would watch her pray, and conclude that it must be a splendid and powerful creed that could cause such frenzies of faith.

Tarascon, veil thy face! here is a son of thine on the point of becoming a renegade!

XII. The Latest Intelligence from Tarascon.

PARTING from his little country seat, Sidi Tart'ri was returning alone on his mule on a fine afternoon, when the sky was blue and the zephyrs warm. His legs were kept wide apart by ample saddle-bags of esparto cloth, swelled out with cedrats and water-melons. Lulled by the ring of his large stirrups, and rocking his body to the swing and swaying of the beast, the good fellow was thus traversing an adorable country, with his hands folded on his paunch, three-quarters gone, through heat, in a comfortable doze. All at once, on entering the town, a deafening appeal aroused him.

"Ahoy! What a monster Fate is! Anybody'd take this for Monsieur Tartarin."

On this name, and at the jolly southern accent, the Tarasconian lifted his head, and perceived, a couple of steps away, the honest tanned visage of Captain Barbassou,

master of the Zouave, who was taking his absinthe at the door of a little coffee-house.

“Hey! Lord love you, Barbassou!” said Tartarin, pulling up his mule.

Instead of continuing the dialogue, Barbassou stared at him for a space ere he burst into a peal of such hilarity that Sidi Tart’ri sat back dumbfounded on his melons.

“What a stunning turban, my poor Monsieur Tartarin! Is it true, what they say of your having turned Turk? How is little Baya? Is she still singing ‘Marco la Bella’?”

“Marco la Bella!” repeated the indignant Tartarin. “I’ll have you to know, captain, that the person you mention is an honourable Moorish lady, and one who does not know a word of French.”

“Baya does not know French! What lunatic asylum do you hail from, then?”

The good captain broke into still heartier laughter; but, seeing the chops of poor Sidi Tart’ri fall he changed his course.

“Howsoever, may happen it is not the same lass. Let’s reckon that I have mixed ‘em up. Still, mark you, Monsieur Tartarin, you will do well, nonetheless, to distrust Algerian Moors and Montenegrin princes.”

Tartarin rose in the stirrups, making a wry face.

“The prince is my friend, captain.”

“Come, come, don’t wax wrathy. Won’t you have some bitters to sweeten you? No? Haven’t you anything to say to the folks at home, neither? Well, then, a pleasant journey. By the way, mate, I have some good French ‘bacco upon me, and if you would like to carry away a few pipefuls, you have only to take some. Take it, won’t you? It’s your beastly Oriental ‘baccoes that have befogged your brain.”

Upon this the captain went back to his absinthe, whilst the moody Tartarin trotted slowly on the road to his little house. Although his great soul refused to credit anything, Barbassou’s insinuations had vexed him, and the familiar adjurations and

home accent had awakened vague remorse.

He found nobody at home, Baya having gone out to the bath. The negress appeared sinister and the dwelling saddening. A prey to inexpressible melancholy, he went and sat down by the fountain to load a pipe with Barbassou's tobacco. It was wrapped up in a piece of the Marseilles Semaphore newspaper. On flattening it out, the name of his native place struck his eyes.

"Our Tarascon correspondent writes:—

"The city is in distress. There has been no news for several months from Tartarin the lion-slayer, who set off to hunt the great feline tribe in Africa. What can have become of our heroic fellow-countryman? Those hardly dare ask who know, as we do, how hot-headed he was, and what boldness and thirst for adventures were his. Has he, like many others, been smothered in the sands, or has he fallen under the murderous fangs of one of those monsters of the Atlas Range of which he had promised the skins to the municipality? What a dreadful state of uncertainty! It is true some Negro traders, come to Beaucaire Fair, assert having met in the middle of the deserts a European whose description agreed with his; he was proceeding towards Timbuctoo. May Heaven preserve our Tartarin!"

When he read this, the son of Tarascon reddened, blanched, and shuddered. All Tarascon appeared unto him: the club, the cap-poppers, Costecalde's green arm-chair, and, hovering over all like a spread eagle, the imposing moustaches of brave Commandant Bravida.

At seeing himself here, as he was, cowardly lolling on a mat, whilst his friends believed him slaughtering wild beasts, Tartarin of Tarascon was ashamed of himself, and could have wept had he not been a hero.

Suddenly he leaped up and thundered:

"The lion, the lion! Down with him!"

And dashing into the dusty lumber-hole where mouldered the shelter-tent, the

medicine-chest, the potted meats, and the gun-cases, he dragged them out into the middle of the court.

Sancho-Tartarin was no more: Quixote-Tartarin occupied the field of active life.

Only the time to inspect his armament and stores, don his harness, get into his heavy boots, scribble a couple of words to confide Baya to the prince, and slip a few bank-notes sprinkled with tears into the envelope, and then the dauntless Tarasconian rolled away in the stage-coach on the Blidah road, leaving the house to the negress, stupor-stricken before the pipe, the turban, and babooshes—all the Moslem shell of Sidi Tart'ri which sprawled piteously under the little white trefoils of the gallery.

EPISODE THE THIRD, AMONG THE LIONS

I. What becomes of the Old Stage-coaches.

COME to look closely at the vehicle, it was an old stage-coach all of the olden time, upholstered in faded deep blue cloth, with those enormous rough woollen balls which, after a few hours' journey, finally establish a raw spot in the small of your back.

Tartarin of Tarascon had a corner of the inside, where he installed himself most free-and-easily: and, preliminarily to inspiring the rank emanations of the great African felines, the hero had to content himself with that homely old odour of the stage-coach, oddly composed of a thousand smells, of man and woman, horses and harness, eatables and mildewed straw.

There was a little of everything inside—a Trappist monk, some Jew merchants, two fast ladies going to join their regiment, the Third Hussars, a photographic artist from Orleansville, and so on. But, however charming and varied was the company, the Tarasconian was not in the mood for chatting; he remained quite thoughtful, with an arm in the arm-rest sling-strap and his guns between his knees. All churned up his

wits—the precipitate departure, Baya's eyes of jet, the terrible chase he was about to undertake, to say nothing of this European coach; with its Noah's Ark aspect, rediscovered in the heart of Africa, vaguely recalling the Tarascon of his youth, with its races in the suburbs, jolly dinners on the river-side—a throng of memories, in short.

Gradually night came on. The guard lit up the lamps. The rusty diligence danced creakingly on its old springs; the horses trotted and their bells jangled. From time to time in the boot arose a dreadful clank of iron: that was the war material.

Tartarin of Tarascon, nearly overcome, dwelt a moment scanning the fellow-passengers, comically shaken by the jolts, and dancing before him like the shadows in galanty-shows, till his eyes grew cloudy and his mind befogged, and only vaguely he heard the wheels grind and the sides of the conveyance squeak complainingly.

Suddenly a voice called Tartarin by his name, the voice of an old fairy godmother, hoarse, broken, and cracked.

"Monsieur Tartarin!" three times.

"Who's calling me?"

"It's I, Monsieur Tartarin. Don't you recognise me? I am the old stage-coach who used to do the road betwixt Nimes and Tarascon twenty year agone. How many times I have carried you and your friends when you went to shoot at caps over Joncquieres or Bellegarde way! I did not know you again at the first, on account of your Turk's cap and the flesh you have accumulated; but as soon as you began snoring—what a rascal is good-luck!—I twigged you straight away."

"All right, that's all right enough!" observed the Tarasconian, a shade vexed; but softening, he added, "But to the point, my poor old girl; whatever did you come out here for?"

"Pooh! my good Monsieur Tartarin, I assure you I never came of my own free will.

As soon as the Beaucaire railway was finished I was considered good for nought, and shipped away into Algeria. And I am not the only one either! Bless you, next to all the old stage-coaches of France have been packed off like me. We were regarded as too much the conservative—'the slow-coaches'—d'ye see, and now we are here leading the life of a dog. This is what you in France call the Algerian railways."

Here the ancient vehicle heaved a long-drawn sigh before proceeding. "My wheels and linchpin! Monsieur Tartarin, how I regret my lovely Tarascon! That was the good time for me, when I was young!—You ought to have seen me starting off in the morning, washed with no stint of water and all a-shine, with my wheels freshly varnished, my lamps blazing like a brace of suns, and my boot always rubbed up with oil! It was indeed lovely when the postillion cracked his whip to the tune of 'Lagadigadeou, the Tarasque! the Tarasque!' and the guard, his horn in its sling and laced cap cocked well over one ear, chucking his little dog, always in a fury, upon the top, climbed up himself with a shout: 'Right-away!'

"Then would my four horses dash off to the medley of bells, barks, and horn-blasts, and the windows fly open for all Tarascon to look with pride upon the royal mail coach dart over the king's highway.

"What a splendid road that was, Monsieur Tartarin, broad and well kept, with its mile-stones, its little heaps of road-metal at regular distances, and its pretty clumps of vines and olive-trees on either hand! Then, again, the roadside inns so close together, and the changes of horses every five minutes! And what jolly, honest chaps my patrons were!—village mayors and parish priests going up to Nimes to see their prefect or bishop, taffety-weavers returning openly from the Mazet, collegians out on holiday leave, peasants in worked smock-frocks, all fresh shaven for the occasion that morning; and up above, on the top, you gentlemen-sportsmen, always in high spirits, and singing each your own family ballad to the stars as you came back in the dark.

“Deary me! it’s a change of times now! Lord knows what rubbish I am carting here, come from nobody guesses where! They fill me with small deer, these negroes, Bedouin Arabs, swashbucklers, adventurers from every land, and ragged settlers who poison me with their pipes, and all jabbering a language that the Tower of Babel itself could make nothing of! And, furthermore, you should see how they treat me—I mean, how they never treat me: never a brush or a wash. They begrudge me grease for my axles. Instead of my good fat quiet horses of other days, little Arab ponies, with the devil in their frames, who fight and bite, caper as they run like so many goats, and break my splatterboard all to smithereens with their lashing out behind. Ouch! ouch! there they are at it again!

“And such roads! Just here it is bearable, because we are near the governmental headquarters; but out a bit there’s nothing, Monsieur—not the ghost of a road at all. We get along as best we can over hill and dale, over dwarf palms and mastic-trees. Ne’er a fixed change of horses, the stopping being at the whim of the guard, now at one farm, again at another.

“Somewhiles this rogue goes a couple of leagues out of the way to have a glass of absinthe or champoreau with a chum. After which, ‘Crack on, postillion!’ to make up for the lost time. Though the sun be broiling and the dust scorching, we whip on! We catch in the scrub and spill over, but whip on! We swim rivers, we catch cold, we get swamped, we drown, but whip! whip! whip! Then in the evening, streaming—a nice thing for my age, with my rheumatics—I have to sleep in the open air of some caravanseral yard, open to all the winds. In the dead o’ night jackals and hyaenas come sniffing of my body; and the marauders who don’t like dews get into my compartment to keep warm.

“Such is the life I lead, my poor Monsieur Tartarin, and that I shall lead to the day when—burnt up by the sun and rotted by the damp nights until unable to do anything else, I shall fall in some spot of bad road, where the Arabs will boil their

kouskous with the bones of my old carcass”—

“Blidah! Blidah!” called out the guard as he opened the door.

II. A little gentleman drops in and “drops upon” Tartarin.

VAGUELY through the mud-dimmed glass Tartarin of Tarascon caught a glimpse of a second-rate but pretty town market-place, regular in shape, surrounded by colonnades and planted with orange-trees, in the midst of which what seemed toy leaden soldiers were going through the morning exercise in the clear roseate mist. The cafes were shedding their shutters. In one corner there was a vegetable market. It was bewitching, but it did not smack of lions yet.

“To the South! farther to the South!” muttered the good old desperado, sinking back in his corner.

At this moment the door opened. A puff of fresh air rushed in, bearing upon its wings, in the perfume of the orange-blossoms, a little person in a brown frock-coat, old and dry, wrinkled and formal, his face no bigger than your fist, his neckcloth of black silk five fingers wide, a notary’s letter-case, and umbrella—the very picture of a village solicitor.

On perceiving the Tarasconian’s warlike equipment, the little gentleman, who was seated over against him, appeared excessively surprised, and set to studying him with burdensome persistency.

The horses were taken out and the fresh ones put in, whereupon the coach started off again. The little weasel still gazed at Tartarin, who in the end took snuff at it.

“Does this astonish you?” he demanded, staring the little gentleman full in the face in his turn.

“Oh, dear, no! it only annoys me,” responded the other, very tranquilly.

And the fact is, that, with his shelter-tent, revolvers, pair of guns in their cases, and hunting-knife, not to speak of his natural corpulence, Tartarin of Tarascon did take

up a lot of room.

The little gentleman's reply angered him.

"Do you by any chance fancy that I am going lion-hunting with your umbrella?" queried the great man haughtily.

The little man looked at his umbrella, smiled blandly, and still with the same lack of emotion, inquired:

"Oho, then you are Monsieur"—

"Tartarin of Tarascon, lion-killer!"

In uttering these words the dauntless son of Tarascon shook the blue tassel of his fez like a mane.

Through the vehicle was a spell of stupefaction.

The Trappist brother crossed himself, the dubious women uttered little screams of affright, and the Orleansville photographer bent over towards the lion-slayer, already cherishing the unequalled honour of taking his likeness.

The little gentleman, though, was not awed.

"Do you mean to say that you have killed many lions, Monsieur Tartarin?" he asked, very quietly.

The Tarasconian received his charge in the handsomest manner.

"Is it many have I killed, Monsieur? I wish you had only as many hairs on your head as I have killed of them."

All the coach laughed on observing three yellow bristles standing up on the little gentleman's skull.

In his turn, the Orleansville photographer struck in:

"Yours must be a terrible profession, Monsieur Tartarin. You must pass some ugly moments sometimes. I have heard that poor Monsieur Bombonnel"—"Oh, yes, the

panther-killer," said Tartarin, rather disdainfully.

"Do you happen to be acquainted with him?" inquired the insignificant person.

"Eh! of course! Know him? Why, we have been out on the hunt over twenty times together."

The little gentleman smiled.

"So you also hunt panthers, Monsieur Tartarin?" he asked.

"Sometimes, just for pastime," said the fiery Tarasconian. "But," he added, as he tossed his head with a heroic movement that inflamed the hearts of the two sweethearts of the regiment, "that's not worth lion-hunting."

"When all's said and done," ventured the photographer, "a panther is nothing but a big cat."

"Right you are!" said Tartarin, not sorry to abate the celebrated Bombonnel's glory a little, particularly in the presence of ladies.

Here the coach stopped. The conductor came to open the door, and addressed the insignificant little gentleman most respectfully, saying:

"We have arrived, Monsieur."

The little gentleman got up, stepped out, and said, before the door was closed again:

"Will you allow me to give you a bit of advice, Monsieur Tartarin?"

"What is it, Monsieur?"

"Faith! you wear the look of a good sort of fellow, so I would, rather than not, let you have it. Get you back quickly to Tarascon, Monsieur Tartarin, for you are wasting your time here. There do remain a few panthers in the colony, but, out upon the big cats! they are too small game for you. As for lion-hunting, that's all over. There are none left in Algeria, my friend Chassaing having lately knocked over the last."

Upon which the little gentleman saluted, closed the door, and trotted away

chuckling, with his document-wallet and umbrella.

“Guard,” asked Tartarin, screwing up his face contemptuously, “who under the sun is that poor little mannikin?”

“What! don’t you know him? Why, that there’s Monsieur Bombonnel!”

III. A Monastery of Lions.

AT Milianah, Tartarin of Tarascon alighted, leaving the stage-coach to continue its way towards the South.

Two days’ rough jolting, two nights spent with eyes open to spy out of window if there were not discoverable the dread figure of a lion in the fields beyond the road—so much sleeplessness well deserved some hours repose. Besides, if we must tell everything, since his misadventure with Bombonnel, the outspoken Tartarin felt ill at ease, notwithstanding his weapons, his terrifying visage, and his red cap, before the Orleansville photographer and the two ladies fond of the military.

So he proceeded through the broad streets of Milianah, full of fine trees and fountains; but whilst looking up a suitable hotel, the poor fellow could not help musing over Bombonnel’s words. Suppose they were true! Suppose there were no more lions in Algeria? What would be the good then of so much running about and fatigue?

Suddenly, at the turn of a street, our hero found himself face to face with—with what? Guess! “A donkey, of course!” A donkey? A splendid lion this time, waiting before a coffee-house door, royally sitting up on his hind-quarters, with his tawny mane gleaming in the sun.

“What possessed them to tell me that there were no more of them?” exclaimed the Tarasconian, as he made a backward jump.

On hearing this outcry the lion lowered his head, and taking up in his mouth a wooden bowl that was before him on the footway, humbly held it out towards

Tartarin, who was immovable with stupefaction. A passing Arab tossed a copper into the bowl, and the lion wagged his tail. Thereupon Tartarin understood it all. He saw what emotion had prevented him previously perceiving: that the crowd was gathered around a poor tame blind lion, and that two stalwart Negroes, armed with staves, were marching him through the town as a Savoyard does a marmot.

The blood of Tarascon boiled over at once.

“Wretches that you are!” he roared in a voice of thunder, “thus to debase such noble beasts!”

Springing to the lion, he wrenched the loathsome bowl from between his royal jaws. The two Africans, believing they had a thief to contend with, rushed upon the foreigner with uplifted cudgels. There was a dreadful conflict: the blackamoors smiting, the women screaming, and the youngsters laughing. An old Jew cobbler bleated out of the hollow of his stall, “Dake him to the shustish of the beace!” The lion himself; in his dark state, tried to roar as his hapless champion, after a desperate struggle, rolled on the ground among the spilt pence and the sweepings.

At this juncture a man cleft the throng, made the Negroes stand back with a word, and the women and urchins with a wave of the hand, lifted up Tartarin, brushed him down, shook him into shape, and sat him breathless upon a corner-post.

“What, prince, is it you?” said the good Tartarin, rubbing his ribs.

“Yes, indeed, it is I, my valiant friend. As soon as your letter was received, I entrusted Baya to her brother, hired a post-chaise, flew fifty leagues as fast as a horse could go, and here I am, just in time to snatch you from the brutality of these ruffians. What have you done, in the name of just Heaven, to bring this ugly trouble upon you?”

“What done, prince? It was too much for me to see this unfortunate lion with a begging-bowl in his mouth, humiliated, conquered, buffeted about, set up as a laughing-stock to all this Moslem rabble”—

“But you are wrong, my noble friend. On the contrary, this lion is an object of respect and adoration. This is a sacred beast who belongs to a great monastery of lions, founded three hundred years ago by Mahomet Ben Aouda, a kind of fierce and forbidding La Trappe, full of roarings and wild-beastly odours, where strange monks rear and feed lions by hundreds, and send them out all over Northern Africa, accompanied by begging brothers. The alms they receive serve for the maintenance of the monastery and its mosques; and the two Negroes showed so much displeasure just now because it was their conviction that the lion under their charge would forthwith devour them if a single penny of their collection were lost or stolen through any fault of theirs.”

On hearing this incredible and yet veracious story Tartarin of Tarascon was delighted, and sniffed the air noisily. “What pleases me in this,” he remarked, as the summing up of his opinion, “is that, whether Monsieur Bombonnel likes it or not, there are still lions in Algeria.”—

“I should think there were!” ejaculated the prince enthusiastically. “We will start to-morrow beating up the Shelliff Plain, and you will see lions enough!”

“What, prince! have you an intention to go a-hunting, too?”

“Of course! Do you think I am going to leave you to march by yourself into the heart of Africa, in the midst of ferocious tribes of whose languages and usages you are ignorant! No, no, illustrious Tartarin, I shall quit you no more. Go where you will, I shall make one of the party.”

“O Prince! prince!”

The beaming Tartarin hugged the devoted Gregory to his breast at the proud thought of his going to have a foreign prince to accompany him in his hunting, after the example of Jules Gerard, Bombonnel, and other famous lion-slayers.

IV. The Caravan on the March.

LEAVING Milianah at the earliest hour next morning, the intrepid Tartarin and the

no less intrepid Prince Gregory descended towards the Shelliff Plain through a delightful gorge shaded with jessamine, carouba, tuyas, and wild olive-trees, between hedges of little native gardens and thousands of merry, lively rills which scampered down from rock to rock with a singing splash—a bit of landscape meet for the Lebanon.

As much loaded with arms as the great Tartarin, Prince Gregory had, over and above that, donned a queer but magnificent military cap, all covered with gold lace and a trimming of oak-leaves in silver cord, which gave His Highness the aspect of a Mexican general or a railway station-master on the banks of the Danube.

This plague of a cap much puzzled the beholder; and as he timidly craved some explanation, the prince gravely answered:

“It is a kind of headgear indispensable for travel in Algeria.”

Whilst brightening up the peak with a sweep of his sleeve, he instructed his simple companion in the important part which the military cap plays in the French connection with the Arabs, and the terror this article of army insignia alone has the privilege of inspiring, so that the Civil Service has been obliged to put all its employees in caps, from the extra-copyist to the receiver-general. To govern Algeria (the prince is still speaking) there is no need of a strong head, or even of any head at all. A military cap does it alone, if showy and belaced, and shining at the top of a non-human pole, like Gessler’s.

Thus chatting and philosophising, the caravan proceeded. The barefooted porters leaped from rock to rock with ape-like screams. The guncases clanked, and the guns themselves flashed. The natives who were passing, salaamed to the ground before the magic cap. Up above, on the ramparts of Milianah, the head of the Arab Department, who was out for an airing with his wife, hearing these unusual noises, and seeing the weapons gleam between the branches, fancied there was a revolt, and ordered the drawbridge to be raised, the general alarm to be sounded, and the whole

town put under a state of siege. A capital commencement for the caravan!

Unfortunately, before the day ended, things went wrong. Of the black luggage-bearers, one was doubled up with atrocious colics from having eaten the diachylon out of the medicine-chest: another fell on the roadside dead drunk with camphorated brandy; the third, carrier of the travelling-album, deceived by the gilding on the clasps into the persuasion that he was flying with the treasures of Mecca, ran off into the Zaccar on his best legs.

This required consideration. The caravan halted, and held a council in the broken shadow of an old fig-tree.

“It’s my advice that we turn up Negro porters from this evening forward,” said the prince, trying without success to melt a cake of compressed meat in an improved patent triple-bottomed sauce-pan. “There is, haply, an Arab trader quite near here. The best thing to do is to stop there, and buy some donkeys.”

“No, no; no donkeys,” quickly interrupted Tartarin, becoming quite red at memory of Noiraud. “How can you expect,” he added, hypocrite that he was, “that such little beasts could carry all our apparatus?”

The prince smiled.

“You are making a mistake, my illustrious friend. However weakly and meagre the Algerian bourriquot may appear to you, he has solid loins. He must have them so to support all that he does. Just ask the Arabs. Hark to how they explain the French colonial organisation. ‘On the top,’ they say, ‘is Mossoo, the Governor, with a heavy club to rap the staff; the staff, for revenge, canes the soldier; the soldier clubs the settler, and he hammers the Arab; the Arab smites the Negro, the Negro beats the Jew, and he takes it out of the donkey. The poor bourriquot having nobody to belabour, arches up his back and bears it all.’ You see clearly now that he can bear your boxes.”

“All the same,” remonstrated Tartarin, “it strikes me that jackasses will not chime in

nicely with the effect of our caravan. I want something more Oriental. For instance, if we could only get a camel"—

"As many as you like," said His Highness; and off they started for the Arab mart.

It was held a few miles away, on the banks of the Shelliff. There were five or six thousand Arabs in tatters here, grovelling in the sunshine and noisily trafficking, amid jars of black olives, pots of honey, bags of spices; and great heaps of cigars; huge fires were roasting whole sheep, basted with butter; in open air slaughter-houses stark naked Negroes, with ruddy arms and their feet in gore, were cutting up kids hanging from crosspoles, with small knives.

In one corner, under a tent patched with a thousand colours, a Moorish clerk of the market in spectacles scrawled in a large book. Here was a cluster of men shouting with rage: it was a spinning-jenny game, set on a corn-measure, and Kabyles were ready to cut one another's throats over it. Yonder were laughs and contortions of delight: it was a Jew trader on a mule drowning in the Shelliff. Then there were dogs, scorpions, ravens, and flies—rather flies than anything else.

But a plentiful lack of camels abounded. They finally unearthed one, though, of which the M'zabites were trying to get rid—the real ship of the desert, the classical, standard camel, bald, woe-begone, with a long Bedouin head, and its hump, become limp in consequence of unduly long fasts, hanging melancholically on one side.

Tartarin considered it so handsome that he wanted the entire party to get upon it. Still his Oriental craze!

The beast knelt down for them to strap on the boxes.

The prince enthroned himself on the animal's neck. For the sake of the greater majesty, Tartarin got them to hoist him on the top of the hump between two boxes, where, proud, and cosily settled down, he saluted the whole market with a lofty wave of the hand, and gave the signal of departure.

Thunderation! if the people of Tarascon could only have seen him!

The camel rose, straightened up its long knotty legs, and stepped out.

Oh, stupor! At the end of a few strides Tartarin felt he was losing colour, and the heroic chechia assumed one by one its former positions in the days of sailing in the Zouave. This devil's own camel pitched and tossed like a frigate.

"Prince! prince!" gasped Tartarin pallid as a ghost, as he clung to the dry tuft of the hump, "prince, let's get down. I find—I feel that I m-m-must get off; or I shall disgrace France."

A deal of good that talk was—the camel was on the go, and nothing could stop it. Behind it raced four thousand barefooted Arabs, waving their hands and laughing like mad, so that they made six hundred thousand white teeth glitter in the sun.

The great man of Tarascon had to resign himself to circumstances. He sadly collapsed on the hump, where the fez took all the positions it fancied, and France was disgraced.

V. The Night-watch in a Poison-tree Grove.

SWEETLY picturesque as was their new steed, our lion-hunters had to give it up, purely out of consideration for the red cap, of course. So they continued the journey on foot as before, the caravan tranquilly proceeding southwardly by short stages, the Tarasconian in the van, the Montenegrin in the rear, and the camel, with the weapons in their cases, in the ranks.

The expedition lasted nearly a month.

During that seeking for lions which he never found, the dreadful Tartarin roamed from douar to douar on the immense plain of the Shelliff, through the odd but formidable French Algeria, where the old Oriental perfumes are complicated by a strong blend of absinthe and the barracks, Abraham and "the Zouzou" mingled, something fairy-tale-like and simply burlesque, like a page of the Old Testament related by Tommy Atkins.

A curious sight for those who have eyes that can see.

A wild and corrupted people whom we are civilising by teaching them our vices. The ferocious and uncontrolled authority of grotesque bashaws, who gravely use their grand cordons of the Legion of Honour as handkerchiefs, and for a mere yea or nay order a man to be bastinadoed. It is the justice of the conscienceless, bespectacled cadis under the palm-tree, Maw-worms of the Koran and Law, who dream languidly of promotion and sell their decrees, as Esau did his birthright, for a dish of lentils or sweetened kouskous. Drunken and libertine cadis are they, formerly servants to some General Yusuf or the like, who get intoxicated on champagne, along with laundresses from Port Mahon, and fatten on roast mutton, whilst before their tents the whole tribe waste away with hunger, and fight with the harriers for the bones of the lordly feast.

All around spread the plains in waste, burnt grass, leafless shrubs, thickets of cactus and mastic—“the Granary of France!”—a granary void of grain, alas! and rich alone in vermin and jackals. Abandoned camps, frightened tribes fleeing from them and famine, they know not whither, and strewing the road with corpses. At long intervals French villages, with the dwellings in ruins, the fields untilled, the maddened locusts gnawing even the window-blinds, and all the settlers in the drinking-places, absorbing absinthe and discussing projects of reform and the Constitution.

This is what Tartarin might have seen had he given himself the trouble; but, wrapped up entirely in his leonine-hunger, the son of Tarascon went straight on, looking to neither right nor left, his eyes steadfastly fixed on the imaginary monsters which never really appeared.

As the shelter-tent was stubborn in not unfolding, and the compressed meat-cakes would not dissolve, the caravan was obliged to stop, morn and eve, at tribal camps. Everywhere, thanks to the gorgeous cap of Prince Gregory, our hunters were welcomed with open arms. They lodged in the aghas’ odd palaces, large white

windowless farmhouses, where they found, pell-mell, narghilehs and mahogany furniture, Smyrna carpets and moderator lamps, cedar coffers full of Turkish sequins, and French statuette-decked clocks in the Louis Philippe style.

Everywhere, too, Tartarin was given splendrous galas, diffas, and fantasias, which, being interpreted, mean feasts and circuses. In his honour whole goums blazed away powder, and floated their burnouses in the sun. When the powder was burnt, the agha would come and hand in his bill. This is what is called Arab hospitality.

But always no lions, no more than on London Bridge.

Nevertheless, the Tarasconian did not grow disheartened. Ever bravely diving more deeply into the South, he spent the days in beating up the thickets, probing the dwarf-palms with the muzzle of his rifle, and saying “Boh!” to every bush. And every evening, before lying down, he went into ambush for two or three hours. Useless trouble, however, for the lion did not show himself.

One evening, though, going on six o’clock, as the caravan scrambled through a violet-hued mastic-grove, where fat quails tumbled about in the grass, drowsy through the heat, Tartarin of Tarascon fancied he heard though afar and very vague, and thinned down by the breeze—that wondrous roaring to which he had so often listened by Mitaine’s Menagerie at home.

At first the hero feared he was dreaming; but in an instant further the roaring recommenced more distinct, although yet remote; and this time the camel’s hump shivered in terror, and made the tinned meats and arms in the cases rattle, whilst all the dogs in the camps were heard howling in every corner of the horizon.

Beyond doubt this was the lion.

Quick, quick! to the ambush. There was not a minute to lose.

Near at hand there happened to be an old marabout’s, or saint’s, tomb, with a white cupola, and the defunct’s large yellow slippers placed in a niche over the door, and a mass of odd offerings—hems of blankets, gold thread, red hair—hung on the wall.

Tartarin of Tarascon left his prince and his camel and went in search of a good spot for lying in wait. Prince Gregory wanted to follow him, but the Tarasconian refused, bent on confronting Leo alone. But still he besought His Highness not to go too far away, and, as a measure of foresight, he entrusted him with his pocket-book, a good-sized one, full of precious papers and bank-notes, which he feared would get torn by the lion's claws. This done, our hero looked up a good place.

A hundred steps in front of the temple a little clump of rose-laurel shook in the twilight haze on the edge of a rivulet all but dried up. There it was that Tartarin went and ensconced himself, one knee on the ground, according to the regular rule, his rifle in his hand, and his huge hunting-knife stuck boldly before him in the sandy bank.

Night fell.

The rosy tint of nature changed into violet, and then into dark blue. A pretty pool of clear water gleamed like a hand-glass over the river-pebbles; this was the watering-place of the wild animals.

On the other slope the whitish trail was dimly to be discerned which their heavy paws had traced in the brush—a mysterious path which made one's flesh creep. Join to this sensation that from the vague swarming sound in African forests, the swishing of branches, the velvety-pads of roving creatures, the jackal's shrill yelp, and up in the sky, two or three hundred feet aloft, vast flocks of cranes passing on with screams like poor little children having their weasands slit. You will own that there were grounds for a man being moved.

Tartarin was so, and even more than that, for the poor fellow's teeth chattered, and on the cross-bar of his hunting-knife, planted upright in the bank, as we repeat, his rifle-barrel rattled like a pair of castanets. Do not ask too much of a man! There are times when one is not in the mood; and, moreover, where would be the merit if heroes were never afraid?

Well, yes, Tartarin was afraid, and all the time, too, for the matter of that. Nevertheless, he held out for an hour; better, for two; but heroism has its limits. Nigh him, in the dry part of the rivulet-bed, the Tarasconian unexpectedly heard the sound of steps and of pebbles rolling. This time terror lifted him off the ground. He banged away both barrels at haphazard into the night, and retreated as fast as his legs would carry him to the marabout's chapel-vault, leaving his knife standing up in the sand like a cross commemorative of the grandest panic that ever assailed the soul of a conqueror of hydras.

"Help! this Way, prince; the lion is on me!"

There was silence. "Prince, prince, are you there?"

The prince was not there. On the white moonlit wall of the fane the camel alone cast the queer-shaped shadow of his protuberance. Prince Gregory had cut and run with the wallet of bank-notes. His Highness had been for the month past awaiting this opportunity.

VI. Bagged him at Last.

IT was not until early on the morrow of this adventurous and dramatic eve that our hero awoke, and acquired assurance doubly sure that the prince and the treasure had really gone off, without any prospect of return. When he saw himself alone in the little white tombhouse, betrayed, robbed, abandoned in the heart of savage Algeria, with a one-humped camel and some pocket-money as all his resources, then did the representative of Tarascon for the first time doubt. He doubted Montenegro, friendship, glory, and even lions; and the great man blubbered bitterly.

Whilst he was pensively seated on the sill of the sanctuary, holding his head between his hands and his gun between his legs, with the camel mooning at him, the thicket over the way was divided, and the stupor-stricken Tartarin saw a gigantic lion appear not a dozen paces off. It thrust out its high head and emitted powerful roars, which made the temple walls shake beneath their votive decorations, and even

the saint's slippers dance in their niche.

The Tarasconian alone did not tremble.

"At last you've come!" he shouted, jumping up and levelling the rifle.

Bang, bang! went a brace of shells into its head.

It was done. For a minute, on the fiery background of the African sky, there was a dreadful firework display of scattered brains, smoking blood, and tawny hair. When all fell, Tartarin perceived two colossal Negroes furiously running towards him, brandishing cudgels. They were his two Negro acquaintances of Milianah!

Oh, misery!

This was the domesticated lion, the poor blind beggar of the Mohammed Monastery, whom the Tarasconian's bullets had knocked over.

This time, spite of Mahound, Tartarin escaped neatly. Drunk with fanatical fury, the two African collectors would have surely beaten him to pulp had not the god of chase and war sent him a delivering angel in the shape of the rural constable of the Orleansville commune. By a bypath this garde champetre came up, his sword tucked under his arm.

The sight of the municipal cap suddenly calmed the Negroes' choler. Peaceful and majestic, the officer with the brass badge drew up a report on the affair, ordered the camel to be loaded with what remained of the king of beasts, and the plaintiffs as well as the delinquent to follow him, proceeding to Orleansville, where all was deposited with the law-courts receiver.

There issued a long and alarming case!

After the Algeria of the native tribes which he had overrun, Tartarin of Tarascon became thence acquainted with another Algeria, not less weird and to be dreaded—the Algeria in the towns, surcharged with lawyers and their papers. He got to know the pettifogger who does business at the back of a cafe—the legal

Bohemian with documents reeking of wormwood bitters and white neckcloths spotted with champoreau; the ushers, the attorneys, all the locusts of stamped paper, meagre and famished, who eat up the colonist body and boots—ay, to the very straps of them, and leave him peeled to the core like an Indian cornstalk, stripped leaf by leaf.

Before all else it was necessary to ascertain whether the lion had been killed on the civil or the military territory. In the former case the matter regarded the Tribunal of Commerce; in the second, Tartarin would be dealt with by the Council of War: and at the mere name the impressionable Tarasconian saw himself shot at the foot of the ramparts or huddled up in a casemate-silo.

The puzzle lay in the limitation of the two territories being very hazy in Algeria.

At length, after a month's running about, entanglements, and waiting under the sun in the yards of Arab Departmental offices, it was established that, whereas the lion had been killed on the military territory, on the other hand Tartarin was in the civil territory when he shot. So the case was decided in the civil courts, and our hero was let off on paying two thousand five hundred francs damages, costs not included.

How could he pay such a sum?

The few piashtres escaped from the prince's sweep had long since gone in legal documents and judicial libations. The unfortunate lion-destroyer was therefore reduced to selling the store of guns by retail, rifle by rifle; so went the daggers, the Malay kreeses, and the life-preservers. A grocer purchased the preserved aliments; an apothecary what remained of the medicaments. The big boots themselves walked off after the improved tent to a dealer of curiosities, who elevated them to the dignity of "rarities from Cochin-China."

When everything was paid up, only the lion's skin and the camel remained to Tartarin. The hide he had carefully packed, to be sent to Tarascon to the address of brave Commandant Bravida, and, later on, we shall see what came of this fabulous

trophy. As for the camel, he reckoned on making use of him to get back to Algiers, not by riding on him, but by selling him to pay his coach-fare—the best way to employ a camel in travelling. Unhappily the beast was difficult to place, and no one would offer a copper for him.

Still Tartarin wanted to regain Algiers by hook or crook. He was in haste again to behold Baya's blue bodice, his little snuggery and his fountains, as well as to repose on the white trefoils of his little cloister whilst awaiting money from France. So our hero did not hesitate; distressed but not downcast, he undertook to make the journey afoot and penniless by short stages.

In this enterprise the camel did not cast him off. The strange animal had taken an unaccountable fancy for his master, and on seeing him leave Orleansville, he set to striding steadfastly behind him, regulating his pace by this, and never quitting him by a yard.

At the first outset Tartarin found this touching; such fidelity and devotion above proof went to his heart, all the more because the creature was accommodating, and fed himself on nothing. Nevertheless, after a few days, the Tarasconian was worried by having this glum companion perpetually at his heels, to remind him of his misadventures. Ire arising, he hated him for his sad aspect, hump and gait of a goose in harness. To tell the whole truth, he held him as his Old Man of the Sea, and only pondered on how to shake him off; but the follower would not be shaken off. Tartarin attempted to lose him, but the camel always found him; he tried to outrun him, but the camel ran faster. He bade him begone, and hurled stones at him. The camel stopped with a mournful mien, but in a minute resumed the pursuit, and always ended by overtaking him. Tartarin had to resign himself.

For all that, when, after eight full days of tramping, the dusty and harassed Tarasconian espied the first white housetops of Algiers glimmer from afar in the verdure, and when he got to the city gates on the noisy Mustapha Avenue, amid the

Zouaves, Biskris, and Mahonnais, all swarming around him and staring at him trudging by with his camel, overtasked patience escaped him.

“No! no!” he growled, “it is not likely! I cannot enter Algiers with such an animal!”

Profiting by a jam of vehicles, he turned off into the fields and jumped into a ditch. In a minute or so he saw over his head on the highway the camel flying off with long strides and stretching his neck with a wistful air.

Relieved of a great weight thereby, the hero sneaked out of his covert, and entered the town anew by a circuitous path which skirted the wall of his own little garden.

VII. Catastrophes upon Catastrophes.

ENTIRELY astonished was Tartarin before his Moorish dwelling when he stopped.

Day was dying and the street deserted. Through the low pointed-arch doorway which the negress had forgotten to close, laughter was heard; and the clink of wine-glasses, the popping of champagne corks; and, floating over all the jolly uproar, a feminine voice singing clearly and joyously:

“Do you like, Marco la Bella, to dance in the hall hung with bloom?”

“Throne of heaven!” ejaculated the Tarasconian, turning pale, as he rushed into the enclosure.

Hapless Tartarin! what a sight awaited him! Beneath the arches of the little cloister, amongst bottles, pastry, scattered cushions, pipes, tambourines, and guitars, Baya was singing “Marco la Bella” with a ship captain’s cap over one ear. She had on no blue vest or bodice; indeed, her only wear was a silvery gauze wrapper and full pink trousers. At her feet, on a rug, surfeited with love and sweetmeats, Barbassou, the infamous skipper Barbassou, was bursting with laughter at hearing her.

The apparition of Tartarin, haggard, thinned, dusty, his flaming eyes, and the bristling up fez tassel, sharply interrupted this tender Turkish-Marseillais orgie. Baya piped the low whine of a frightened leveret, and ran for safety into the house.

But Barbassou did not wince; he only laughed the louder, saying:

“Ha, ha, Monsieur Tartarin! What do you say to that now? You see she does know French.”

Tartarin of Tarascon advanced furiously, crying:

“Captain!”

“Digo-li que vengue, moun bon!—Tell him what’s happened, old dear!” screamed the Moorish woman, leaning over the first floor gallery with a pretty low-bred gesture!

The poor man, overwhelmed, let himself collapse upon a drum. His genuine Moorish beauty not only knew French, but the French of Marseilles!

“I told you not to trust the Algerian girls,” observed Captain Barbassou sententiously! “They’re as tricky as your Montenegrin prince.”

Tartarin lifted his head

“Do you know where the prince is?”

“Oh, he’s not far off. He has gone to live five years in the handsome prison of Mustapha. The rogue let himself be caught with his hand in the pocket. Anyways, this is not the first time he has been clapped into the calaboose. His Highness has already done three years somewhere, and—stop a bit! I believe it was at Tarascon.”

“At Tarascon!” cried out her worthiest son, abruptly enlightened. “That’s how he only knew one part of the Town.”

“Hey? Of course. Tarascon—a jail bird’s-eye view from the state prison. I tell you, my poor Monsieur Tartarin, you have to keep your peepers jolly well skinned in this deuce of a country, or be exposed to very disagreeable things. For a sample, there’s the muezzin’s game with you.”

“What game? Which muezzin?”

“Why your’n, of course! The chap across the way who is making up to Baya. That

newspaper, the Akbar, told the yarn t'other day, and all Algiers is laughing over it even now. It is so funny for that steeplejack up aloft in his crow's-nest to make declarations of love under your very nose to the little beauty whilst singing out his prayers, and making appointments with her between bits of the Koran."

"Why, then, they're all scamps in this country!" howled the unlucky Tarasconian.

Barbassou snapped his fingers like a philosopher.

"My dear lad, you know, these new countries are 'rum!' But, anyhow, if you'll believe me, you'd best cut back to Tarascon at full speed."

"It's easy to say, 'Cut back.' Where's the money to come from? Don't you know that I was plucked out there in the desert?"

"What does that matter?" said the captain merrily. "The Zouave sails tomorrow, and if you like I will take you home. Does that suit you, mate? Ay? Then all goes well. You have only one thing to do. There are some bottles of fizz left, and half the pie. Sit you down and pitch in without any grudge."

After the minute's wavering which self-respect commanded, the Tarasconian chose his course manfully. Down he sat, and they touched glasses. Baya, gliding down at that chink, sang the finale of "Marco la Bella," and the jollification was prolonged deep into the night.

About 3 A.M., with a light head but a heavy foot, our good Tarasconian was returning from seeing his friend the captain off when, in passing the mosque, the remembrance of his muezzin and his practical jokes made him laugh, and instantly a capital idea of revenge flitted through his brain.

The door was open. He entered, threaded long corridors hung with mats, mounted and kept on mounting till he finally found himself in a little oratory, where an openwork iron lantern swung from the ceiling, and embroidered an odd pattern in shadows upon the blanched walls.

There sat the crier on a divan, in his large turban and white pelisse, with his Mostaganam pipe, and a bumper of absinthe before him, which he whipped up in the orthodox manner, whilst awaiting the hour to call true believers to prayer. At view of Tartarin, he dropped his pipe in terror.

“Not a word, knave!” said the Tarasconian, full of his project. “Quick! Off with turban and coat!”

The Turkish priest-crier tremblingly handed over his outer garments, as he would have done with anything else. Tartarin donned them, and gravely stepped out upon the minaret platform.

In the distance the sea shone. The white roofs glittered in the moonbeams. On the sea breeze was heard the strumming of a few belated guitars. The Tarasconian muezzin gathered himself up for the effort during a space, and then, raising his arms, he set to chanting in a very shrill voice:

“La Allah il Allah! Mahomet is an old humbug! The Orient, the Koran, bashaws, lions, Moorish beauties—they are all not worth a fly’s skip! There is nothing left but gammoners. Long live Tarascon!”

Whilst the illustrious Tartarin, in his queer jumbling of Arabic and Provencal, flung his mirthful maledictions to the four quarters, sea, town, plain and mountain, the clear, solemn voices of the other muezzins answered him, taking up the strain from minaret to minaret, and the believers of the upper town devoutly beat their bosoms.

VIII. Tarascon again!

MID-DAY has come.

The Zouave had her steam up, ready to go. Upon the balcony of the Valentin Cafe, high above, the officers were levelling telescopes, and, with the colonel at their head, looking at the lucky little craft that was going back to France. This is the main distraction of the staff. On the lower level, the roads glittered. The old Turkish cannon breaches, stuck up along the waterside, blazed in the sun. The passengers

hurried, Biskris and Mahonnais piled their luggage up in the wherries.

Tartarin of Tarascon had no luggage. Here he comes down the Rue de la Marine through the little market, full of bananas and melons, accompanied by his friend Barbassou. The hapless Tarasconian left on the Moorish strand his gun-cases and his illusions, and now he had to sail for Tarascon with his hands in his otherwise empty pockets. He had barely leaped into the captain's cutter before a breathless beast slid down from the heights of the square and galloped towards him. It was the faithful camel, who had been hunting after his master in Algiers during the last four-and-twenty hours.

On seeing him, Tartarin changed countenance, and feigned not to know him, but the camel was not going to be put off. He scampered along the quay; he whinnied for his friend, and regarded him with affection.

"Take me away," his sad eyes seemed to say, "take me away in your ship, far, far from this sham Arabia, this ridiculous Land of the East, full of locomotives and stage coaches, where a camel is so sorely out of keeping that I do not know what will become of me. You are the last real Turk, and I am the last camel. Do not let us part, O my Tartarin!"

"Is that camel yours?" the captain inquired.

"Not a bit of it!" replied Tartarin, who shuddered at the idea of entering Tarascon with that ridiculous escort; and, impudently denying the companion of his misfortunes, he spurned the Algerian soil with his foot, and gave the cutter the shoving-off start. The camel sniffed of the water, extended its neck, cracked its joints, and, jumping in behind the row-boat at haphazard, he swam towards the Zouave with his humpback floating like a bladder, and his long neck projecting over the wave like the beak of a galley.

Cutter and camel came alongside the mail steamer together.

"This dromedary regularly cuts me up," observed Captain Barbassou, quite affected.

“I have a good mind to take him aboard and make a present of him to the Zoological Gardens at Marseilles.”

And so they hauled up the camel with many blocks and tackles upon the deck, being increased in weight by the brine, and the Zouave started.

Tartarin spent the two days of the crossing by himself in his stateroom, not because the sea was rough, or that the red fez had too much to suffer, but because the deuced camel, as soon as his master appeared above decks, showed him the most preposterous attentions. You never did see a camel make such an exhibition of a man as this.

From hour to hour, through the cabin portholes, where he stuck out his nose now and then, Tartarin saw the Algerian blue sky pale away; until one morning, in a silvery fog, he heard with delight Marseilles bells ringing out. The Zouave had arrived and cast anchor.

Our man, having no luggage, got off without saying anything, hastily slipped through Marseilles for fear he was still pursued by the camel, and never breathed till he was in a third-class carriage making for Tarascon.

Deceptive security!

Hardly were they two leagues from the city before every head was stuck out of window. There were outcries and astonishment. Tartarin looked in his turn, and what did he descry! the camel, reader, the inevitable camel, racing along the line behind the train, and keeping up with it! The dismayed Tartarin drew back and shut his eyes.

After this disastrous expedition of his he had reckoned on slipping into his house incognito. But the presence of this burdensome quadruped rendered the thing impossible. What kind of a triumphal entry would he make? Good heavens! not a sou, not a lion, nothing to show for it save a camel!

“Tarascon! Tarascon!”

He was obliged to get down.

O amazement!

Scarce had the hero's red fez popped out of the doorway before a loud shout of "Tartarin for ever!" made the glazed roof of the railway station tremble. "Long life to Tartarin, the lion-slayer!" And out burst the windings of horns and the choruses of the local musical societies.

Tartarin felt death had come: he believed in a hoax. But, no! all Tarascon was there, waving their hats, all of the same way of thinking. Behold the brave Commandant Bravida, Costecalde the armourer, the Chief Judge, the chemist, and the whole noble corps of cap-poppers, who pressed around their leader, and carried him in triumph out through the passages.

Singular effects of the mirage!—the hide of the blind lion sent to Bravida was the cause of all this riot. With that humble fur exhibited in the club-room, the Tarasconians, and, at the back of them, the whole South of France, had grown exalted. The Semaphore newspaper had spoken of it. A drama had been invented. It was not merely a solitary lion which Tartarin had slain, but ten, nay, twenty—pooh! a herd of lions had been made marmalade of. Hence, on disembarking at Marseilles, Tartarin was already celebrated without being aware of it, and an enthusiastic telegram had gone on before him by two hours to his native place.

But what capped the climax of the popular gladness was to see a fancifully shaped animal, covered with foam and dust, appear behind the hero, and stumble down the station stairs.

Tarascon for an instant believed that its dragon was come again.

Tartarin set his fellow-citizens at ease.

"This is my camel," he said.

Already feeling the influence of the splendid sun of Tarascon, which makes people

tell “bouncers” unwittingly, he added, as he fondled the camel’s hump:

“It is a noble beast! It saw me kill all my lions!”

Whereupon he familiarly took the arm of the commandant, who was red with pleasure; and followed by his camel, surrounded by the cap-hunters, acclaimed by all the population, he placidly proceeded towards the Baobab Villa; and, on the march, thus commenced the account of his mighty hunting:

“Once upon an evening, you are to imagine that, out in the depths of the Sahara”—

APPENDIX

Obituary of Alphonse Daudet.

17th December 1897 DEATH OF A FRENCH NOVELIST. ALPHONSE DAUDET.

M. Alphonse Daudet, the eminent French novelist and playwright, died suddenly yesterday evening while at dinner The cause of death was syncope due to failure of the heart.

Alphonse Daudet was born of poor parents at Nimes in 1840. He studied in the Lyons Lyceum, and then became usher in a school at Alais. Going to Paris to seek his fortune in literature in 1858, he succeeded in publishing a book of verses entitled Les Amoreuses, which led to his employment by several newspapers. He published many novels and tales, and about half a dozen plays. His most popular work is “Les Morticoles.” His son, Leon Daudet, is a litterateur of promise.

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