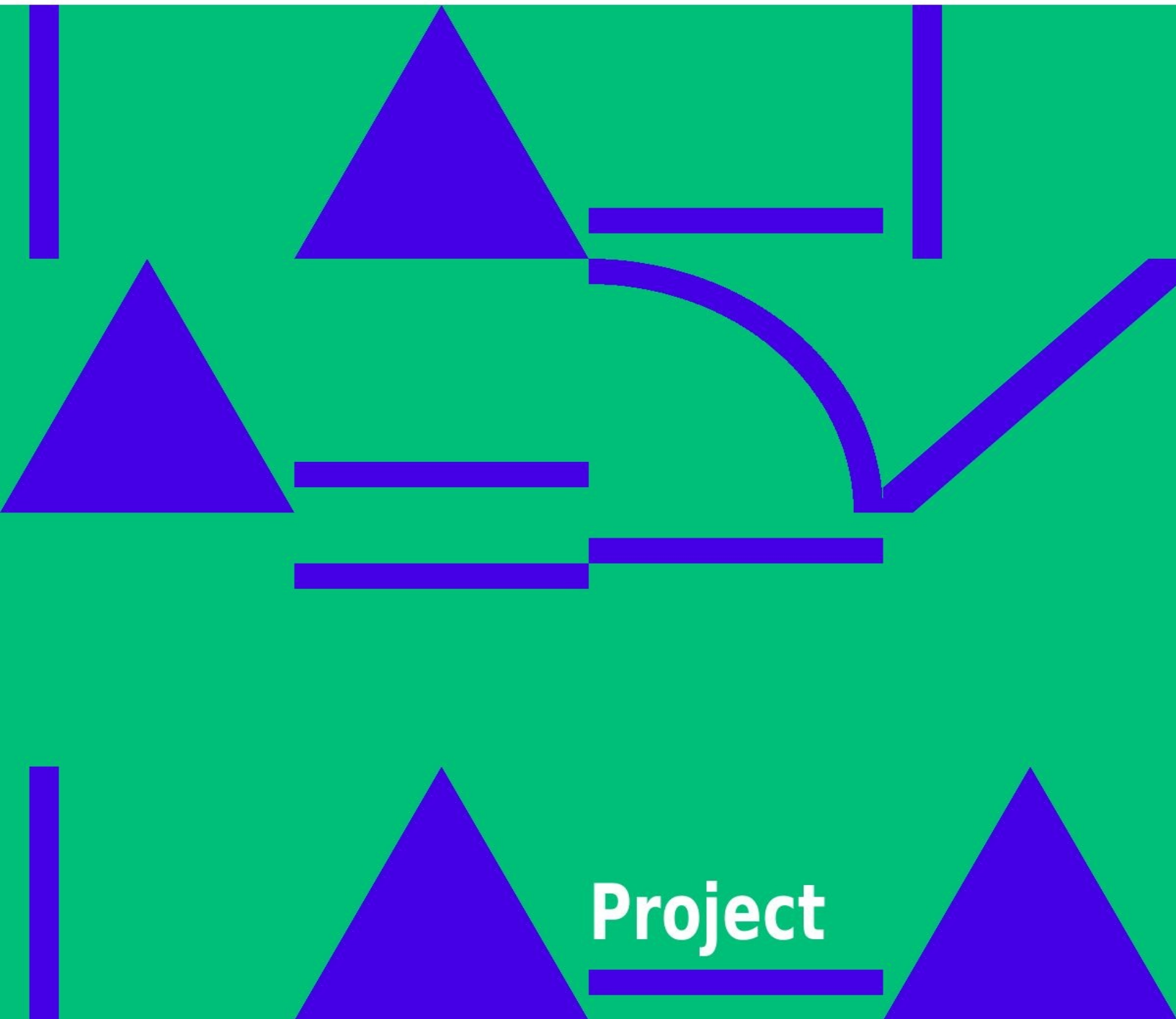


Tartarin De Tarascon

Alphonse Daudet



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TARTARIN DE TARASCON

By A. Daudet.

Translated by Oliver C. Colt.

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Introduction.

The tale of Tartarin de Tarascon was written by Alphonse Daudet in 1872, and was one of the many works which he produced. In it he pokes gentle fun at a type of Frenchman who comes from the Midi, the area where he himself was born. Tartarin has characteristics which may remind the English-speaking reader of Toad of Toad Hall, a boastful braggart, easily deceived, but good-hearted au fond.

The world he inhabits is, of course, very different from ours. There is no radio or television, the motor car is no more than a plaything for the rich. There is only the beginnings of a telephone system. Much sea transport is still by sailing ship and the idea of mass air travel is in the realm of science-fiction. France lost the Franco-Prussian war at the battle of Sedan in 1870, which accounts for the flood of refugees from Alsace. She had also, in the 19th century rush to carve up the African continent, seized among other places, Algeria, which she held in subjection by force of arms. So-called Big Game Hunters were regarded with some admiration, and indeed it was a much more perilous activity than it is today, when high power repeating rifles with telescopic sights make motor-borne "Sportsmen" little more than butchers.

Daudet's humour is on the whole inoffensive, but anti-semitism was rife in certain circles in France. It was the era of the Dreyfus scandal, and he indulges in one or two tasteless gibes at the expense of the Jews, which I have suppressed or at least amended. He also has a passage which might well offend the delicate susceptibilities of the less tolerant believers in Islam, although to anyone with a nodding acquaintance with the tents of that faith, the incident is so far-fetched as to neutralise "The willing suspension of disbelief" I have therefore decided to eliminate it from this version of the story. It is not very amusing and is no great loss.

Although Daudet's humour is in the main kindly, he does not spare the French colonial administration of the time. His treatment of the subject is acidly satirical. It may be said that Daudet seems to know little about firearms, less about lions and nothing about camels, but he is not striving for verisimilitude. After all, the adventures of James Bond do not mirror the reality of international espionage, nor do the exploits of Bertie Wooster and Jeeves truly reflect life in the upper echelons of British society.

This is not a schoolroom exercise in translation. It might be more accurately described as a version in English. I have not tampered with the story line nor made any changes in the events related, but where I thought it necessary I have not shrunk from altering the words and phrases used in the original to describe them. All translation must be a matter of paraphrase. What sounds well in one language may sound ridiculous if translated literally into another, and it is for the translator to judge how far this process of paraphrase may be carried.

I have attempted to produce a text which will entertain the average reader. Those who want to know exactly what Daudet wrote must consult the French original.

TARTARIN DE TARASCON

Chapter 1.

Although it is now some twelve or fifteen years since my first meeting with Tartarin de Tarascon, the memory of the encounter remains as fresh as if it had been yesterday.

At that time Tartarin lived near the entrance to the town, in the third house on the left on the Avignon road, a pretty little Tarascon villa, with a garden in front, a balcony behind, very white walls and green shutters.

From outside the place looked perfectly ordinary, one would never have believed that it was the home of a hero, but when one went inside, well... My goodness! The whole establishment had an heroic air, even the garden!

Ah...! The Garden... there was not another like it in Europe. Not one indigenous tree grew there, not one French flower; nothing but exotic plants, gum trees, calabashes, cotton trees, coconut palms, mangos, bananas, cactuses, figs and a baobab. One might have thought oneself in the middle of Africa, thousands of miles from Tarascon. Of course none of these trees was fully grown, the coconut palm was about the size of a swede and the baobab (*arbos gigantica*) fitted comfortably into a pot full of earth and gravel. No matter... For Tarascon it was quite splendid, and those citizens who were admitted, on Sundays, to have the privilege of inspecting Tartarin's baobab went home full of admiration.

You may imagine my emotions as I walked through this remarkable garden... they were nothing, however, to what I felt on being admitted to the sanctum of the great man himself.

This building, one of the curiosities of the town, was at the end of the garden, to which it opened through a glass door. Picture a large room hung from floor to ceiling with firearms and swords; weapons from every country in the world. Guns, carbines, rifles, blunderbusses, knives, spears, revolvers, daggers, arrows, assegais, knobkerries, knuckledusters and I know not what.

The brilliant sunlight glittered on the steel blades of sabres and the polished butts of firearms. It was really quite a menacing scene... what was a little reassuring was the good order and discipline which ruled over this arsenal. Everything was neat tidy and dusted. Here and there a simple notice, reading "Poison arrows, Do not touch." or "Beware. Loaded firearms." made one feel it safe to approach.

In the middle of the room was a table. On the table was a flagon of rum, a turkish tobacco pouch, The voyages of Captain Cook, stories of adventure, treatises on falconry, descriptions of big-game hunts etc... and finally seated at the table was the man himself. Forty to forty-five years of age, short, fat, stocky and ruddy, clad in shirt-sleeves and flannel trousers, with a close-clipped wiry beard and a flamboyant eye. In one hand he held a book and with the other he brandished an enormous pipe, its bowl covered by a metal cap; and as he read some stirring tale of the pursuit of hairy creatures, he made, pushing out his lower lip, a fierce grimace which gave his features, those of a comfortable Tarascon "Rentier", the same air of hearty ferocity which was evident throughout the whole house. This man was Tartarin... Tartarin de Tarascon... the intrepid, great and incomparable Tartarin de Tarascon.

At that time Tartarin was not the Tartarin which he is today, the great Tartarin de Tarascon who is so popular throughout the Midi of France, however, even at this epoch, he was already the king of Tarascon.

Let us examine how he acquired his crown. You will be aware, for a start, that everyone in these parts is a hunter. From the highest to the lowest hunting is a passion with the Tarasconais and has been ever since the legendary Tarasque prowled in the marshes near the town and was hunted down by the citizens.

Now, every Sunday morning, the men of Tarascon take up arms and leave town, bag on back and gun on shoulder, with an excited collection of dogs, with ferrets, with trumpets and hunting horns, it is a splendid spectacle.... Sadly, however, there is a shortage of game... in fact there is a total absence of game.... Animals may be dumb but they are not stupid, so for miles around Tarascon the burrows are empty and the nests abandoned. There is not a quail, not a blackbird, not the smallest rabbit nor even the tiniest wheatear.

These pretty little Tarascon hills, scented with lavender, myrtle and rosemary are very tempting, and those fine muscat grapes, swollen with sugar, which line the banks of the Rhone, are wonderfully appetising... yes, but there is Tarascon in the distance, and in the world of fur and feather Tarascon is bad news. The birds of passage seem to have marked it with a cross on their maps, and when the long wedges of wild duck, heading for the Camargue, see far off the town's steeples, the whole flight veers away. In short there is nothing left by way of game in this part of the country but an old rascal of a hare, who has escaped by some miracle the guns of Tarascon and appears determined to stay there. This hare is well known. He has been given a name. He is called "Speedy". He is known to live on land belonging to M. Bompard... which, by the way, has doubled or even tripled its value. No one has yet been able to catch him, and at

the present time there are not more than two or three fanatics who go after him. The rest have given up and Speedy has become something of a protected species, though the Tarasconais are not very conservation minded and would make a stew of the rarest of creatures, if they managed to shoot one.

Now, you may say, "Since game is in such short supply, what do these Tarasconais sportsmen do every Sunday?" What do they do? Eh! Mon Dieu! They go out into the country, several miles from the town. They assemble in little groups of five or six. They settle down comfortably in some shady spot. They take out of their game-bags a nice piece of boeuf-en-daube, some raw onions, a sausage and some anchovies and they begin a very long luncheon, washed down by one of these jolly Rhone wines, which encourage singing and laughter.

When all have had enough, they whistle for the dogs, load their guns and commence the shoot. That is to say each of these gentlemen takes off his hat, sends it spinning through the air with all his strength and takes a pot-shot at it. The one who hits his hat most frequently is proclaimed king of the hunt and returns to Tarascon that evening in triumph, his perforated hat hanging from the end of his gun and to the accompaniment of much barking and blowing of trumpets.

One need hardly tell you that there is a brisk trade in hats in the town, and there are even hatters who sell hats already full of holes and tears for use by the less skillful, but scarcely anyone is known to buy them except Bezuquet the chemist.

As a hat shooter Tartarin had no equal. Every Sunday morning he left with a new hat. Every evening he returned with a rag. In the little house of the baobab, the attic was full of these glorious trophies. All of Tarascon recognised him as their master in this respect. The gentlemen elected him as their chief justice in matters relating to the chase and arbitrator in any dispute, so that every day, between the hours of three and four in the afternoon, at Costecalde the gunsmith's one could see the plump figure of a man, seated gravely on a green leather arm-chair, in the middle of the shop, which was full of hat hunters standing about and arguing. It was Tartarin delivering justice. Nimrod doubling as Soloman.

Chapter 2.

In addition to their passion for hunting the good people of Tarascon had another passion, which was for drawing-room ballads. The number of ballads which were sung in this part of the world passed all belief. All the old sentimental songs, yellowing in ancient cardboard boxes, could be found in Tarascon alive and flourishing. Each family had its own ballad and in the town this was well understood. One knew, for example, that for Bezuquet the chemist it was:-“Thou pale star whom I adore.”

For the gunsmith Costecalde:-“Come with me to the forest glade.”

For the Town Clark:—“If I was invisible, no one would see me.” (a comic song) Two or three times a week people would gather in one house or another and sing, and the remarkable thing is that the songs were always the same. No matter for how long they had been singing them, the people of Tarascon had no desire to change them. They were handed down in families from father to son and nobody dared to interfere with them, they were sacrosanct. They were never even borrowed. It would never occur to the Bezuquets to sing the Costecalde's song or to the Costecalde to sing that of the Bezuquets. You might suppose that having known them for some forty years they might sometimes sing them to themselves, but no, everyone stuck to his own.

In the matter of ballads, as in that of hats, Tartarin played a leading role. His superiority over his fellow citizens arose from the fact that he did not have a song of his own, and so he could take part in all of them, only it was extremely difficult to get him to sing at all.

Returning early from some drawing-room success, our hero preferred to immerse himself in his books on hunting or spend the evening at the club rather than join in a sing-song round a Nîmes piano, between two Tarascon candles. He felt that musical evenings were a little beneath him.

Sometimes, however, when there was music at Bezuquet the chemists, he would drop in as if by chance, and after much persuasion he would consent to take part in the great duet from “Robert le Diable” with madame Bezuquet the elder.

Anyone who has not heard this has heard nothing. For my part, if I live to be a hundred, I shall always recall the great Tartarin approaching the piano with solemn steps, leaning his elbow upon it, making his grimace and in the greenish

light reflected from the chemist's jars, trying to give his homely face the savage and satanic expression of Robert le Diable.

As soon as he had taken up his position, a quiver of expectation ran through the gathering. One felt that something great was about to happen.

After a moment of silence, madame Bezuquet the elder, accompanying herself on the piano, began:

“Robert, thou whom I adore

And in whom I trust,

You see my fear (twice)

Have mercy on yourself

And mercy on me.”

She added, sotto voce, “Its you now Tartarin.”

Then Tartarin, with arm extended, clenched fist and quivering nostrils, said three times in a formidable voice which rolled like a clap of thunder in the entrails of the piano “Non! Non! Non!” Which as a good southerner he pronounced “Nan. Nan. Nan” Upon which madame Bezuquet repeated “Mercy on yourself and on me” “Nan! Nan! Nan!” Bellowed Tartarin even more loudly... and the matter ended there.... It was not very long, but it was so well presented, so well acted, so diabolic that a frisson ran round the pharmacy and he was made to repeat his “Nan. Nan. Nan.” four or five times.

Afterwards Tartarin wiped his forehead, smiled at the ladies, winked at the men and went off triumphantly to the club, where, with a casual air, he would say, “I’ve just come from the Bezuquets. They had me singing in the duet from Robert le Diable.” What is more he believed it.

Chapter 3.

It was to the possession of these various talents that Tartarin owed his high standing in the town. There were, however, other ways in which he had made his mark on society.

In Tarascon the army supported Tartarin. The gallant Commandant Bravida (Quartermaster. Ret) said of him "He's a stout fellow," and one may suppose that having kitted out so many stout fellows in his time, he knew what he was talking about.

The magistrature supported Tartarin. Two or three times, on a full bench, the aged president Ladevèze had said of him "He's quite a character".

Finally, the people supported Tartarin, his stolid appearance, the heroic reputation he had somehow acquired, the distribution of small sums of money and a few clips round the ear to the youngsters who hung around his doorstep, had made him lord of the neighbourhood and king of the Tarascon market-place. On the quay, on Sunday evenings, when Tartarin returned from the hunt, his hat dangling from the end of his gun, the stevedores would nod to him respectfully and eying the arms bulging the sleeves of his tightly buttoned jacket, would murmur to one another, "He's strong he is. He's got double muscles." The possession of double muscles is something you hear about only in Tarascon.

However, in spite of his numerous talents, double muscles, popular favour and the so precious esteem of the gallant Commandant Bravida (Quartermaster. Ret) Tartarin was not happy. This small-town life weighed him down, stifled him. The great man of Tarascon was bored with Tarascon. The fact is that for an heroic nature such as his, for a daring and adventurous spirit which dreamt of battles, explorations, big game hunting, desert sands, hurricanes and typhoons, to go every Sunday hat shooting and for the rest of the time dispense justice at Costecalde the gunsmith's was... well... hardly satisfying. It was enough indeed to send one into a decline.

In vain, in order to widen his horizon and forget for a while the club and the market square, did he surround himself with African plants; in vain did he pile up a collection of weapons; in vain did he pore over tales of daring-do trying to escape by the power of his imagination from the pitiless grip of reality. Alas all that he did to satisfy his lust for adventure seemed only to increase it. The sight of his weapons kept him in a perpetual state of furious agitation. His rifles, his

arrows and his spears rang out war-cries. In the branches of the baobab the wind whispered enticingly of great voyages.

How often on these heavy summer afternoons, when he was alone, reading amongst his weaponry, did Tartarin jump to his feet and throwing down his book rush to the wall to arm himself, then, quite forgetting that he was in his own house at Tarascon, cry, brandishing a gun or a spear, "Let them all come"!!... Them?... What them? Tartarin did not quite know himself, "Them" was everything that attacked, that bit, that clawed. "Them" was the Indian brave dancing round the stake to which his wretched prisoner was tied. It was the grizzly bear, shuffling and swaying, licking bloodstained lips. The Toureg of the desert, the Malay pirate, the Corsican bandit. In a word it was "Them!"

Alas it was fruitless for the fearless Tartarin to challenge them... they never appeared; but though it seemed unlikely that they would come to Tarascon, Tartarin was always ready for them, particularly in the evenings when he went to the club.

Chapter 4.

The knight of the temple preparing for a sortie against the Saracen. The Chinese warrior equipping himself for battle. The Comanche brave taking to the warpath were as nothing compared to Tartarin de Tarascon arming himself to go to the club at nine o'clock on a dark evening, an hour after the bugle had blown the retreat. He was cleared for action as the sailors say.

On his left hand he had a metal knuckleduster. In his right he carried a sword-stick. In his left pocket there was a cosh and in his right a revolver. Stuck into his waistband was a knife. Before setting out, in the privacy of his den, he carried out a few exercises. He made a pass at the wall with his sword-stick, drew his revolver, flexed his muscles and then taking his identity papers he crossed the garden... steadily... unhurriedly... à l'Anglais. That is the mark of true courage.

At the end of the garden he opened the heavy iron gate. He opened it brusquely, violently, so that it banged against the wall. If "They" had been behind it, it would have made a fine mess of them. Unfortunately they were not behind it.

Having opened the gate Tartarin went out, cast a quick look right and left, closed the gate swiftly and double locked it. Then he set off.

On the Avignon road there was not so much as a cat. Doors were shut and curtains drawn across windows. Here and there a street light blinked in the mist rising from the Rhône.

Superb and calm Tartarin de Tarascon strode through the night, his heels striking the road with measured tread and the metal tip of his cane raising sparks from the paving-stones. On boulevards, roads or lanes he was always careful to walk in the middle of the causeway, an excellent precaution which allows one to see approaching danger and moreover to avoid things which at night, in the streets of Tarascon, sometimes fall from windows. Seeing this prudence you should not entertain the notion that Tartarin was afraid. No! He was just being cautious.

The clearest evidence that Tartarin was unafraid is that he went to the club not by the short way but by the longest and darkest way, through a tangle of mean little streets, at the end of which one glimpsed the sinister gleam of the Rhone. He almost hoped that at a bend in one of these alleys "They" would come rushing from the shadows to attack him from behind. They would have had a hot

reception I can promise you; but sadly Tartarin was never fated to encounter any danger... not even a dog... not even a drunk... Nothing.

Sometimes however there was an alarm. The sound of footsteps... Muffled voices. Tartarin comes to a halt, peering into the shadows, sniffing the air, straining his ears. The steps draw nearer, the voices more distinct... there can be no doubt... “They” are here. With heaving breast and eyes ablaze Tartarin is gathering himself like a jaguar and preparing to leap on his foes, when suddenly out of the gloom a good Tarasconais voice calls “Look! There’s Tartarin! Hulloo there Tartarin!” Malediction! It is Bezuquet the chemist and his family who have been singing their ballad at the Costecaldes. “Bon soir, bon soir” growls Tartarin, furious at his mistake, and shouldering his cane he disappears angrily into the night.

Arrived at the club the fearless Tarasconais waits a little longer, walking up and down in front of the door before entering. In the end, tired of waiting for “them” and certain that they will not show themselves, he throws a last look of defiance into the dark and mutters crossly “Nothing... nothing... always nothing” With that our hero goes in to play bezique with the Commandant.

Chapter 5.

With this lust for adventure, this need for excitement, this longing for journeys to Lord knows where, how on earth, you may ask, does it happen that Tartarin had never left Tarascon? For it is a fact that up to the age of forty-five the bold Tarasconais had never slept away from his home town. He had never even made the ritual journey to Marseille which every good Provencal makes when he comes of age. He might, of course, have visited Beaucaire, albeit Beaucaire is not very far from Tarascon, as one has only to cross the bridge over the Rhône. Regrettably, however, this wretched bridge is so often swept by high winds, is so long and so flimsy and the river at that point is so wide that... Ma foi... you will understand...!

At this point I think one has to admit that there were two sides to our hero's character. On the one hand was the spirit of Don Quixote, devoted to chivalry, to heroic ideals, to grandiose romantic folly, but lacking the body of the celebrated hidalgo, that thin, bony apology of a body, careless of material wants, capable of going for twenty nights without unbuckling its breastplate and surviving for twenty-four hours on a handful of rice. Tartarin, on the other hand, had a good solid body, fat, heavy, sybaritic, soft and complaining, full of bourgeois appetites and domestic necessities, the short-legged, full-bellied body of Sancho Panza.

Don Quixote and Sancho Panza in the same man! You may imagine the arguments, the quarrels, the fights. Carried away by some lurid tale of adventure, Tartarin-Quixote would clamour to be off to the fields of glory, to set sail for distant lands, but then Tartarin-Sancho ringing for the maid servant, would say "Jeanette, my chocolate." Upon which Jeanette would return with a fine cup of chocolate, hot, silky and scented, and some succulent grilled snacks, flavoured with anise; greatly pleasing Tartarin-Sancho and silencing the cries of Tartarin-Quixote.

That is how it happens that Tartarin de Tarascon had never left Tarascon.

Chapter 6.

There was one occasion when Tartarin nearly went on a long journey. The three brothers Garcio-Camus, Tarasconais who were in business in Shanghai, offered him the management of one of their establishments. Now this was the sort of life he needed. Important transactions. An office full of clerks to control. Relations with Russia, Persia, Turkey. In short, Big Business, which in Tartarin's eyes was of enormous proportions.

The establishment had another advantage in that it was sometimes attacked by bandits. On these occasions the gates were slammed shut, the staff armed themselves, the consular flag was hoisted and "Pan! Pan!" They fired through the windows at the bandits.

I need hardly tell you with what enthusiasm Tartarin-Quixote greeted this proposal; unfortunately Tartarin-Sancho did not see the matter in the same light, and as his views prevailed the affair came to nothing.

At the time there was a great deal of talk in the town. Was he going or not going? It was a matter for eager discussion.

Although in the end Tartarin did not go, the event brought him a great deal of credit. To have nearly gone to Shanghai and actually to have gone there was for Tarascon much the same thing. As a result of so much talk about Tartarin's journey, people ended by believing that he had just returned, and in the evenings at the club the members would ask him for a description of the life in Shanghai, the customs, the climate, and big business.

Tartarin, who had gathered much information from the brothers was happy to reply to their questions, and before long he was not entirely sure himself whether he had been to Shanghai or not; so much so that when describing for the hundredth time the raid by bandits he got to the point of saying "Then I dished out arms to my staff. Hoisted the consular flag and we fired 'Pan! Pan!' Through the windows at the bandits." On hearing this the members would exchange suitably solemn looks.

Tartarin then, you will say, is just a frightful liar. No!.... A thousand times no! How is that? you may say, he must know very well that he has not been to Shanghai... to be sure he knows... only.... Perhaps the time has come when we should settle the question of the reputation for lying which has been given to the people of the Midi.

There are no liars in the Midi, neither at Marseille, nor Nimes, nor Toulouse, nor Tarascon. The man of the Midi does not lie, he deceives himself. He does not always speak the truth but he believes he speaks it. His untruth, for him, is not a lie, it is a sort of mirage. To understand better you must visit the Midi yourself. You will see a countryside where the sun transfigures everything and makes it larger than life-size. The little hills of Provence, no bigger than the Butte Montmartre will seem to you gigantic. The Maison Carrée at Nimes, a pretty little Roman temple, will seem to you as big as Notre Dame. You will see that the only liar in the Midi, if there is one, is the sun; everything that he touches he exaggerates. Can you be surprised that this sun shining down on Tarascon has been able to make a retired Captain Quartermaster into the gallant Commandant Bravida, to make a thing like a turnip into a baobab and a man who almost went to Shanghai into one who has really been there.

Chapter 7.

Now that we have shown Tartarin as he was in his private life, before fame had crowned his head with laurels. Now that we have recounted the story of his heroic existence in modest surroundings, the story of his joys and sorrows, his dreams and his hopes, let us hurry forward to the important pages of his history and to the event which lent wings to his destiny.

It was one evening at Costecalde the gunsmith's; Tartarin was explaining to some listeners the working of a pin-fire rifle, then something quite new, when suddenly the door was opened and a hat hunter rushed into the room in a great state shouting "A lion! a lion!" General amazement, fright, tumult and confusion. Tartarin grabbed a bayonet, Costecalde ran to close the door. The newcomer was surrounded and questioned nosily. What they learned was that the Menagerie Mitaine, returning from the fair at Beaucaire, had arranged to make a stop of several days at Tarascon, and had just set itself up in the Place du Château with a collection of snakes, seals, crocodiles, and a magnificent African lion.... An African lion at Tarascon!... such a thing had never been seen before, never in living memory.

The brave band of hat hunters gazed proudly at one another. Their manly features glowed with pleasure and, in every corner of the shop, firm handshakes were silently exchanged. The emotion was so overwhelming, so unforeseen that no one could find a word to say. Not even Tartarin. Pale and trembling, with the new rifle clutched in his hands, he stood in a trance at the shop counter. A lion!... an African lion!... nearby... a few paces away... A lion, the ferocious king of the beasts... the quarry of his dreams... one of the leading actors in that imaginary cast which played out such fine dramas in his fantasies. It was too much for Tartarin to bear. Suddenly the blood flooded to his cheeks. His eyes blazed, and with a convulsive gesture he slapped the rifle onto his shoulder, then turning to the brave Commandant Bravida (quartermaster. Ret) he said in a voice of thunder, "Come, Commandant, let us go and see this." "Excuse me. Excuse me. My new rifle." The prudent Costecalde hazarded timidly, but Tartarin was already in the street, and behind him all the hat hunters fell proudly into step.

When they arrived at the menagerie it was already crowded. The brave people of Tarascon, too long deprived of sensational spectacles, had descended on the place and taken it by storm. The big madame Mitaine was in her element;

dressed in an oriental costume, her arms bare to the elbows and with iron bracelets round her ankles, she had a whip in one hand and in the other a live chicken. She welcomed the Tarasconais to the show, and as she too had “Double muscles” she aroused almost as much interest as the animals in her charge.

The arrival of Tartarin with the rifle on his shoulder produced something of a chill, all the bold Tarasconais who had been walking tranquilly before the cages, unarmed, trusting, with no notion of danger, became suddenly alarmed at the sight of the great Tartarin entering the place, carrying this lethal weapon. There must be something to fear if he, their hero.... In the blink of an eye the area in front of the cages was deserted, children were crying with fright and the ladies were eying the doorway. Bezuquet the chemist left hurridly, saying that he was going to fetch a gun.

Little by little, however, the attitude of Tartarin restored their courage. Calm and erect, the intrepid Tarasconais strolled round the menagerie. He passed the seals without stopping. He cast a contemptuous eye on the container full of noise, where the boa was swallowing its chicken, and at last halted in front of the lion’s cage.... A dramatic confrontation.... The lion of Tarascon and the lion of the Atlas mountains face to face.

On one side stood Tartarin, his legs planted firmly apart, his arms resting on his rifle, on the other was the lion, a gigantic lion, sprawling in the straw, blinking its eyes drowsily and resting its enormous yellow-haired muzzle on its front paws... they regarded one another calmly... then something odd happened. Perhaps it was the sight of the rifle, perhaps it recognised an enemy of its kind, but the lion which up until then had looked on the people of Tarascon with sovereign disdain, yawning in their faces, seemed to feel a stirring of anger. First it sniffed and uttered a rumbling growl, it stretched out its forefeet and unsheathed its claws, then it got up, raised its head, shook its mane, opened its huge maw and directed at Tartarin a most ear-splitting roar.

This was greeted by a cry of terror. Tarascon, in panic, rushed for the doors. Everyone, men, women, children, the hat shooters and even the brave Commandant Bravida himself. Only Tartarin did not move... he remained firm and resolute before the cage, a light shining in his eyes, and wearing that grim expression which the town knew so well. After a few moments, the hat shooters, somewhat reassured by his attitude and the solidity of the cage bars, rejoined their chief, to hear him mutter “Now that is something worth hunting.” And that was all that he said.

Chapter 8.

Although at the memagerie he had said nothing more, he had already said too much. The following day all the talk of the town was of the impending departure of Tartarin for Africa, to shoot lions.

You will bear witness that the good fellow had not breathed a word of this, but you know how it is... the mirage.... In short the whole of Tarascon could talk of nothing else.

On the pavement, at the club, at Costecalde's shop, people accosted one another with an air of excitement.

"Et autrement, have you heard the latest, au moins?"

"Et autrement, what now, is Tartarin going, au moins?" For in Tarascon every remark begins with "Et autrement" which is pronounced "autremain" and ends with "au moins" which is pronounced "au mouain" and in these days the sound of "autremain" and "au mouain" was enough to rattle the windows.

The most surprised person in the town to hear that he was leaving for Africa was Tartarin, but now see the effects of vanity. Instead of replying that he was not going and had never intended to go, poor Tartarin, on the first occasion that the subject was broached adopted a somewhat evasive air, "Hé!... Hé!... perhaps... I can't say." On the second occasion, now a little more accustomed to the idea, he replied "Probably" and on the third "Yes, definitely."

Eventually, one evening at the club, carried away by some glasses of egg-nog, the public interest and the plaudits, he declared formally that he was tired of shooting at hats and was going shortly in pursuit of the great lions of Africa.

A loud cheer greeted this declaration, then came more egg-nog, handshakes, embraces and torchlight serenades until midnight before the little house of the baobab.

Tartarin-Sancho, however, was far from pleased. The idea of travelling to Africa and hunting lions scared him stiff and when they went into the house, and while the serenade of honour was still going on outside, he made the most frightful scene with Tartarin-Quixote, calling him a crazy dreamer, a rash triple idiot and detailing one by one the catastrophes which would await him on such an expedition. Shipwreck, fever, dysentery, plague, elephantiasis and so on... it was useless for Tartarin-Quixote to swear that he would be careful, that he would

dress warmly, that he would take with him everything that might be needed, Tartarin-Sancho refused to listen. The poor fellow saw himself already torn to pieces by lions or swallowed up in the sands of the desert, and the other Tartarin could pacify him only a little by pointing out that these were plans for the future, that there was no hurry, that they had not yet actually started.

Obviously one cannot embark on such an expedition without some preparation. One cannot take off like a bird. As a first measure Tartarin set about reading the reports of the great African explorers, the journals of Livingstone, Burton, Caille and the like, there he saw that those intrepid travellers, before they put their boots on for these distant excursions, prepared themselves in advance to undergo hunger, thirst, long treks and privations of all sorts.

Tartarin decided to follow their example and took to a diet of "Eau bouillie". What is called eau bouillie in Tarascon consists of several slices of bread soaked in warm water, with a clove of garlic, a little thyme and a bay leaf. It is not very palatable and you may imagine how Tartarin-Sancho enjoyed it.

Tartarin de Tarascon combined this with several other sensible methods of training. For instance, to habituate himself to long marches he would go round his morning constitutional seven or eight times, sometimes at a brisk walk, sometimes at the trot with two pebbles in his mouth. Then to accustom himself to nocturnal chills and the mists of dawn, he went into the garden and stayed there until ten or eleven at night, alone with his rifle, on watch behind the baobab.

Finally, for as long as the menagerie remained in Tarascon, those hat hunters who had stayed late at Costecalde's could see in the shadows, as they passed the Place du Château, a figure pacing up and down behind the cages... it was Tartarin training himself to listen unmoved to the roaring of lions in the African night.

Chapter 9.

While Tartarin was preparing himself by these strenuous methods, all Tarascon had its eyes on him. Nothing else was of interest. Hat shooting was abandoned, the ballads languished; in Bezuquet the chemist's the piano was silent beneath a green dust cover, with cantharides flies drying, belly up, on the top... Tartarin's expedition had brought everything to a halt.

You should have seen the success of our hero in the drawing-rooms. He was seized, squabbled over, borrowed and stolen. There was no greater triumph for the ladies than to go, on the arm of Tartarin, to the menagerie Mitaine and to have him explain, in front of the lion's cage, how one goes about hunting these great beasts, at what point one aims and at what distance, whether there are many accidents, and so on... through his reading Tartarin had gained almost as much knowledge about lion hunting as if he had actually engaged in it himself, and so he spoke of these matters with much authority.

Where Tartarin really excelled, however, was after dinner at the home of president Ladevèze or the brave Commandant Bravida (quartermaster. Ret) when coffee had been served and the chairs pulled together, then with his elbow on the table, between sips of his coffee, our hero gave a moving description of all the dangers which awaited him "Over there" He spoke of long moonless watches, of pestilential marshes, of rivers poisoned by the leaves of oleanders, of snows, scorching suns, scorpions and clouds of locusts; he also spoke of the habits of the great lions of the Atlas, their phenomenal strength, their ferocity in the mating season.... Then, carried away by his own words, he would rise from the table and bound into the middle of the room, imitating the roar of the lion, the noise of the rifle "Pan! Pan!" The whistle of the bullet. Gesticulating, shouting, knocking over chairs... while at the table faces are grave, the men looking at one another and nodding their heads, the ladies closing their eyes with little cries of alarm. A grandfather brandishes his walking-stick in a bellicose manner and, in the next room, the small children who have been put to bed earlier are startled out of their sleep by the banging and bellowing, and greatly frightened demand lights.

Tartarin, however, showed no sign of leaving for Africa... did he really have any intention of going? That is a delicate question and one to which his biographer would find difficulty in replying. The fact is that the menagerie had

now been gone for three months but the killer of lions had not budged... could it be that our innocent hero, blinded perhaps by a new mirage, honestly believed that he had been to Africa, and by talking so much about his hunting expedition believed that it had actually taken place. Unfortunately, if this was the case and Tartarin had once more fallen victim to the mirage, the people of Tarascon had not. When it was observed that after three months of waiting the hunter had not packed a single bag, people began to talk.

“This will turn out to be another Shanghai.” Said Costecalde, smiling, and this remark spread round the town like wildfire, for people had lost their belief in Tartarin. The ignorant, the chicken-hearted, people like Bezuquet, whom a flea could put to flight, and who could not fire a gun without closing both eyes, these above all were pitiless. At the club, on the esplanade, they accosted poor Tartarin with little mocking remarks, “Et autremain, what about this trip then?” At Costecalde’s shop his opinion was no longer law. The hat hunters had deserted their leader.

Then there were the epigrams. President Ladevèze who in his spare time dabbled in provencal poetry, composed a little song in dialect which was a great success. It concerned a certain hunter named master Gervaise whose redoubtable rifle was to exterminate every last lion in Africa. Sadly this rifle had a singular fault, although always loaded it never went off.... It never went off... you will understand the allusion. This song achieved instant popularity, and when Tartarin was passing, the stevedores on the quay and the grubby urchins hanging round his door would chant this insulting little ditty... only they sang it from a safe distance because of the double muscles.

The great man himself pretended to see nothing, to hear nothing. Although at heart this underhand, venomous campaign hurt him deeply, in spite of his suffering, he continued to go about his life with a smile; but sometimes the mask of cheerful indifference which pride had pinned on his features slipped, then instead of laughter one saw indignation and grief. So it was one morning when some street urchins were chanting their jeers beneath the window of the room where our poor hero was trimming his beard. Suddenly the window was thrown open and Tartarin’s head appeared, his face covered in soapsuds, waving a razor and shaving brush and shouting “Sword-thrusts, gentlemen, sword-thrusts, not pin-pricks!” Fine words but wasted on a bunch of brats about two bricks tall.

Amid the general defection, the army alone stood firmly by Tartarin, the brave Commandant Bravida continued to treat him with esteem. “He’s a stout fellow,” He persisted in saying, and this affirmation was worth a good deal more, I should imagine, than anything said by Bezuquet the chemist.

The gallant Commandant had never uttered a word about the African journey, but at last, when the public clamour became too loud to ignore, he decided to speak.

One evening, the unhappy Tartarin was alone in his study thinking sad thoughts, when the Commandant appeared, somberly dressed and gloved, with every button fastened “Tartarin!” said the former captain, with authority, “Tartarin, you must go!” and he stood, upright and rigid in the doorway, the very embodiment of duty.

All that was implied in that “Tartarin you must go” Tartarin understood. Very pale, he rose to his feet and cast a tender look round his pleasant study, so snug, so warm, so well lit, and at the the large, so comfortable armchair, at his books, his carpet and at the big white blinds of his window, beyond which swayed the slender stems of the little garden. Then advancing to the the brave Commandant, he took his hand, shook it vigorously and in a voice close to tears said stoically, “I shall go, Bravida.” And he did go as he had said he would. Though not before he had gathered the necessary equipment.

First, he ordered from Blompard two large cases lined with copper and with a large plaque inscribed TARTARIN DE TARASCON. FIREARMS. The lining and the engraving took a long time. He ordered from M. Tastevin a magnificent log-book in which to write his journal. Then he sent to Marseille for a whole cargo of preserved food, for pemmican tablets to make soup, for a bivouac tent of the latest design, which could be erected or struck in a few minutes, a pair of sea-boots, two umbrellas, a waterproof and a pair of dark glasses to protect his eyes. Finally, Bezuquet the chemist made up a medicine chest full of sticking plaster, pills and lotions. All these preparations were made in the hope that by these and other delicate attentions he could appease the fury of Tartarin-Sancho, which, since the departure had been decided, had raged unabated by day and by night.

Chapter 10.

At last the great day arrived. From first light the whole of Terascon was afoot, blocking the Avignon road and the approaches to the little house of the baobab. There were people at windows, on roofs, up trees. Bargees from the Rhône, stevedores, boot-blacks, clerks, weavers, the club members, in fact the whole town. Then there were people from Beaucaire who had come across the bridge, market-gardeners from the suburbs, carts with big hoods, vigneron mounted on fine mules ornamented with ribbons, tassels, bows and bells, and even here and there some pretty girls from Arles, with blue kerchiefs round their heads, riding on the crupper behind their sweethearts on the small iron-grey horses of the Camargue. All this crowd pushed and jostled before Tartarin's gate, the gate of this fine M. Tartarin who was going to kill lions in the country of the "Teurs". (In Tarascon: Africa, Greece, Turkey and Mesopotamia formed a vast, vague almost mythical country which was called the Teurs... that is the Turks). Throughout this mob the hat shooters came and went, proud of the triumph of their leader, and leaving in their wake, as it were, little trails of glory.

In front of the house of the baobab there were two large handcarts. From time to time the gate was opened and one could see men walking busily about in the garden. They carried out trunks, cases and carpet-bags which they piled onto the carts. On the arrival of each new package the crowd stirred and a description of the article was shouted out. "That's his tent! There's the preserved foods! The medicine chest! The arms chest!" While the hat shooters gave a running commentary.

Suddenly, at about ten o'clock, there was a great movement in the crowd. The garden gate swung back violently on its hinges.... "It's him!.... Its him!" they cried.

It was indeed him. When he appeared on the threshold, two cries of amazement rose from the crowd:—"He's a Teur!.... He's wearing sunglasses!".... Tartarin, it is true, had believed that as he was going to Algeria he should adopt Algerian costume. Large baggy pantaloons of white cloth, a small tight jacket with metal buttons, a red sash wound round his stomach and on his head a gigantic "Chechia" (a red floppy bonnet) with an immensely long blue tassel dangling from its crown. Added to this, he carried two rifles, one on each shoulder, a hunting knife stuck into the sash round his middle, a cartridge-bag

slung on one side and a revolver in a leather holster on the other. That was it. Ah!... forgive me... I forgot the sun-glasses, a huge pair of blue sun-glasses which were just the very thing to correct any suggestion of extravagance in his turnout.

“Vive Tartarin!... Vive Tartarin!” Yelled the people. The great man smiled but did not wave, partly because of the rifles, which were giving him some trouble and partly because he had learned what little value one can place on popular favour. Perhaps even, in the depths of his soul, he cursed these terrible compatriots who were forcing him to leave, to quit his pretty little house with its green shutters and white walls, but if so he did not show it. Calm and proud, though a little pale, he marched down the pathway, inspected his handcars and seeing that all was in order set off jauntily on the road to the station, without looking back even once at the house of the baobab.

On his arrival at the station he was greeted by the station-master, a former soldier, who shook him warmly by the hand several times. The Paris-Marseille express had not yet arrived, so Tartarin and his general staff went into the waiting-room. To keep back the following crowd the station-master closed the barriers.

For fifteen minutes Tartarin paced back and forward, surrounded by the hat shooters. He spoke to them of his coming expedition, promising to send them skins, and entering their orders in his note-book as if they were a list of groceries. As tranquil as was Socrates at the moment when he drank the hemlock, the bold Tartarin had a word for everyone. He spoke simply and affably, as if before departing he wished to leave behind a legacy of charm, happy memories and regrets. To hear their chief speak thus brought tears to the eyes of the hat shooters, and to some, such as the president Ladevèze and the chemist Bezuquet, even a twinge of remorse. Some of the station staff were dabbing their eyes in corners, while outside the crowd peered through the railings and shouted “Vive Tartarin!”

Then a bell rang. There was a rumbling noise of wheels. A piercing whistle split the heavens... All aboard!... All aboard!... Goodbye Tartarin!... Goodbye Tartarin!. “Goodbye everyone” murmured the great man, and on the cheeks of the brave Commandant Bravida he planted a farewell salute to his beloved Tarascon. Then he hurried along the platform and got into a carriage full of Parisian ladies, who almost died of fright at the appearance of this strange man with his revolver and rifles.

Chapter 11.

On the first day of December 186-, in the clear bright winter sunshine of Provence, the startled inhabitants of Marseille witnessed the arrival of a Teur. Never had they seen one like this before, though God knows there is no shortage of Teurs in Marseille. The Teur, need I tell you, was none other than Tartarin de Tarascon, who was proceeding down the quay followed by his case of arms, his medicine chest and his preserved foods, in search of the embarkation point of the Compagnie Touache and the ferry-boat "Le Zouave" which was to carry him away.

His ears still ringing with the cheers of Tarascon and bemused by the brightness of the sky and the smell of the sea, Tartarin marched along, his rifles slung on his shoulders, gazing around in wonder at this marvellous port of Marseille, which he was seeing for the first time and which quite dazzled him. He almost felt that he was dreaming and that like Sinbad he was wandering in one of the fabulous cities of the Thousand and one Nights.

As far as the eye could see, there stretched a jumble of masts and yards, criss-crossing in all directions. The flags of a multitude of nations fluttering in the wind. The ships level with the quay, their bowsprits projecting over the edge like a row of bayonets, and below them the carved and painted wooden figureheads of nymphs, goddesses and saintly virgins from which the ships took their names. From time to time, between the hulls one could see a patch of sea, like a great sheet of cloth spattered with oil, while in the entanglement of yardarms a host of seagulls made pretty splashes of white against the blue sky. On the quay, amid the streams which trickled from the soapworks, thick, green, streaked with black, full of oil and soda, there was a whole population of customs officers, shipping agents, and stevedores with trollies drawn by little Corsican ponies. There were shops selling strange sweetmeats. Smoke enshrouded huts where seamen were cooking. There were merchants selling monkeys, parrots, rope, sailcloth and fantastic collections of bric-a-brac where, heaped up pell-mell, were old culverins, great gilded lanterns, old blocks and tackle, old rusting anchors, old rigging, old megaphones, old telescopes, dating from the time of Jean Bart.

There were women selling shellfish, crouched bawling beside their wares, sailors passing, some with pots of tar, some with steaming pots of stew, others with baskets full of squid which they were taking to wash in the fresh water of

the fountains. Everywhere prodigious heaps of merchandise of every kind. Silks, minerals, baulks of timber, ingots of lead, carobs, rape-seed, liquorice, sugar cane, great piles of dutch cheeses. East and west hugger-mugger.

Here is the grain berth. Stevedores empty the sacks onto the quay from a scaffold, the grain pours down in a golden torrent raising a cloud of pale dust, and is loaded by men wearing red fezes into carts, which set off followed by a regiment of women and children with brushes and buckets for gleanings.

There is the careening basin. The huge vessels lie over on one side and are flamed with fires of brushwood to rid them of seaweed, while their yardarms soak in the water. There is a smell of pitch and the deafening hammering of shipwrights lining the hulls with sheets of copper.

Sometimes, between the masts, a gap opened and Tartarin could see the harbour mouth and the movement of ships. An English frigate leaving for Malta, spruce and scrubbed, with officers in yellow gloves, or a big Marseilles brig, casting off amid shouting and cursing, with, in the bows, a fat captain in an overcoat and a top hat, supervising the manoeuvre in broad provencal. There were ships outward bound, running before the wind with all sails set, there were others, far out at sea, beating their way in and seeming in the sunshine to be floating on air.

Then, all the time the most fearsome racket. The rumbling of cart wheels, the cries of the sailors, oaths, songs, the sirens of steam-boats, the drums and bugles of Fort St. Jean and Fort St. Nicolas, the bells of nearby churches and, up above, the mistral, which took all of these sounds, rolled them together, shook them up and mingled them with its own voice to make mad, wild, heroic music, like a great fanfare, urging one to set sail for distant lands, to spread one's wings and go. It was to the sound of this fine fanfare that Tartarin embarked for the country of lions.

Chapter 12.

I wish that I was a painter, a really good painter, so that I could present to you a picture of the different positions adopted by Tartarin's chechia during the three days of the passage from France to Algeria.

I would show it to you first at the departure, proud and stately as it was then, crowning that noble Tarascon head. I would show it next when, having left the harbour, the Zouave began to lift on the swell. I would show it fluttering and astonished, as if feeling the first premonitions of distress.

Then, in the gulf of Lion, when the Zouave was further offshore and the sea a little rougher, I would present it at grips with the storm, clutching, bewildered, at the head of our hero, its long blue woollen tassel streaming in the spume and gusting wind.

The fourth position. Six in the evening. Off the coast of Corsica. The wretched chechia is leaning over the rail and sadly contemplating the depths of the ocean.

Fifth and last position. Down in a narrow cabin, in a little bed which has the appearance of a drawer in a commode, something formless and desolate rolls about, moaning, on the pillow. It is the chechia, the heroic chechia, now reduced to the vulgar status of a night-cap, and jammed down to the ears of a pallid and convulsing invalid.

Ah! If the townsfolk of Tarascon could have seen the great Tartarin, lying in his commode drawer, in the pale, dismal light which filtered through the porthole, amongst the stale smell of cooking and wet wood, the depressing odour of the ferry boat. If they had heard him groan at every turn of the propeller, ask for tea every five minutes, and complain to the steward in the weak voice of a child, would they have regretted having forced him to leave? On my word, the poor Tuer deserved pity. Overcome by sea-sickness, he had not the will even to loosen his sash or rid himself of his weapons. The hunting knife with the big handle dug into his ribs. His revolver bruised his leg, and the final straw was the nagging of Tartarin-Sancho, who never ceased whining and carping: —“Imbecile! Va! I warned you didn't I?... But you had to go to Africa!.... Well now you're on your way, how do you like it?”

What was every bit as cruel was that, shut in his cabin, between his groans he could hear the other passengers in the saloon, laughing, eating, singing, playing cards. The society in the Zouave was as cheerful as it was diverse. There were

some officers on their way to rejoin their units, a bevy of tarts from Marseille, a rich Mahommedan merchant, returning from Mecca, some strolling players, a Montenegrin prince, a great joker this, who did impersonations.... Not one of these people was sea-sick and they spent the time drinking champagne with the captain of the Zouave, a fat “Bon viveur” from Marseille, who had an establishment there and another in Algiers, and who rejoiced in the name of Barbassou. Tartarin hated all these people. Their gaily redoubled his misery.

At last, in the afternoon of the third day, there was some unusual activity on board the ship, which roused our hero from his torpor. The bell in the bows rang out... the heavy boots of the sailors could be heard running on the deck... “Engine ahead!... engine astern!.” Shouted the hoarse voice of Captain Barbassou. Then “Stop engine!”

The engine stopped, there was a little tremor and then nothing. The ferry lay rocking gently from side to side, like a balloon in the air. This strange silence horrified Tartarin. “My God! We are sinking!” He cried in a voice of terror, and recovering his strength as if by magic, he rushed up onto the deck.

Chapter 13.

The Zouave was not sinking. She had just dropped her anchor in a fine anchorage of deep, dark water. Opposite, on the hillside, was Algiers, its little matt-white houses running down to the sea, huddled one against the other, like a pile of white washing laid out on a river bank. Up above a great sky of satin blue... but oh!... So blue!

Tartarin, somewhat recovered from his fright, gazed at the landscape, while listening respectfully to the Montenegrin prince, who standing beside him, pointed out the different quarters of the town. The Casbah, the upper town, the Rue Bab-Azoum. Very well educated this prince of Montenegro. What is more he knew Algiers well and spoke Arabic. Tartarin had decided to cultivate his acquaintance when suddenly, along the rail on which they were leaning, he saw a row of big black hands grasping it from below. Almost immediately a curly black head appeared in front of him and before he could open his mouth the deck was invaded from all side by a swarm of pirates; black, yellow, half naked, hideous and terrible. Tartarin knew at once that it was “Them” The fearsome “Them” who he had so often expected at night in the streets of Tarascon. Now they had arrived.

At first surprise glued him to the spot, but when he saw the pirates hurl themselves on the baggage, tear off the tarpaulin covers and begin to pillage the ship, our hero came to life. Drawing his hunting knife and shouting “Aux armes!... Aux armes!” To his fellow passengers, he prepared to lead an assault on the raiders. “Ques aco?... What’s the matter with you?” Said Captain Barbassou as he came off the bridge. “Ah!... There you are Captain.... Quick! Quick! Arm your men!” “Hé!... Do what? Why for God’s sake?” “But don’t you see?” “See what?” “There, in front of you... the pirates!” Captain Barbassou regarded him with astonishment.... At that moment a huge monster of a black man ran past carrying the medicine chest. “Wretch! Wait till I catch you!” Yelled Tartarin, starting forward with his knife held aloft. Barbassou caught him and held him by his sash. “Calm down for Chrissake.” He said, “These are not pirates, there have been no pirates for ages, these are stevedores.” “Stevedores?” “Hé! Yes, stevedores who have come to collect the baggage and take it ashore. Put away your cutlass, give me your ticket and follow that negro, an excellent fellow, who will take you ashore and even to your hotel if you wish.”

Somewhat confused Tartarin surrendered his ticket and following the negro he went down the gangplank into a large boat which was bobbing alongside the ferry. All his baggage was there, his trunks, cases of weapons and preserved food, as they took up all the room in the boat, there was no need to wait for other passengers. The negro climbed onto the baggage and squatted there with his arms wrapped round his knees. Another negro took the oars... the two of them regarded Tartarin, laughing and showing their white teeth.

Standing in the stern, wearing his fiercest expression, Tartarin nervously fingered the handle of his hunting knife, for in spite of what Barbassou had told him, he was only half reassured about the intentions of these ebony-skinned stevedores, who looked so different from honest longshoremen of Tarascon.

Three minutes later the boat reached land and Tartarin set foot on the little Barbary quay, where three hundred years earlier a galley-slave named Michael Cervantes, under the whip of an Algerian galley-master, had begun to plan the wonderful story of Don Quixote.

Chapter 14.

If by any chance the ghost of Micheal Cervantes was abroad on that bit of the Barbary coast, it must have been delighted at the arrival of this splendid specimen of a Frenchman from the Midi, in whom were combined the two heroes of his book, Don Quixote and Sancho Panza.

It was a warm day. On the quay, bathed in sunshine, were five or six customs officers, some settlers awaiting news from France, some squatting Moors, smoking their long pipes, some Maltese fishermen, hauling in a large net, in the meshes of which thousands of sardines glittered like pieces of silver; but scarcely had Tartarin set foot there when the quay sprang into life and changed entirely its appearance.

A band of savages, more hideous even than the pirates of the boat, seemed to rise from the very cobble-stones to hurl themselves on the newcomer. Huge Arabs, naked beneath their long woolen garments, little Moors dressed in rags, Negroes, Tunisians, hotel waiters in white aprons, pushing and shouting, plucking at his clothes, fighting over his luggage; one grabbing his preserves another his medicine chest and, in a screeching babel of noise, throwing at his head the improbable names of hotels.... Deafened by this tumult, Tartarin ran hither and thither, struggling, fuming, and cursing after his baggage, and not knowing how to communicate with these barbarians, harangued them in French, Provençal and even what he could remember of Latin. It was a wasted effort, no one was listening.... Happily, however, a little man dressed in a tunic with a yellow collar and armed with a long cane arrived on the scene and dispersed the rabble with blows from his stick. He was an Algerian policeman. Very politely he arranged for Tartarin to go to the Hotel de l'Europe, and confided him to the care of some locals who led him away with all his baggage loaded on several barrows.

As he took his first steps in Algiers, Tartarin looked about him wide-eyed. He had imagined beforehand a fairylike Arabian city, something between Constantinople and Zanzibar... but here he was back in Tarascon. Some cafés some restaurants, wide streets, houses of four stories, a small tarmac square where a military band played Offenbach polkas, men seated on chairs, drinking beer and nibbling snacks, a few ladies, a sprinkling of tarts and soldiers, more soldiers, everywhere soldiers... and not a single "Teur" in sight except for him...

so he found walking across the square a bit embarrassing. Everyone stared.... The military band stopped playing and the Offenbach polka came to a halt with one foot in the air.

With his two rifles on his shoulders, his revolver by his side, unflinching and stately he passed through the throng, but on reaching the hotel his strength deserted him. The departure from Tarascon. The harbour at Marseille. The crossing. The Montenegrin prince. The pirates, all whirled in confusion round his brain. He had to be taken up to his room, disarmed and undressed... there was even talk of sending for a doctor, but hardly had his head touched the pillow than he began to snore so loudly and vigorously that the hotel manager decided that medical assistance was not required, and everyone discreetly withdrew.

Chapter 15.

The bell of the government clock was sounding three when Tartarin awoke. He had slept all evening, all night, all morning and even a good part of the afternoon. It has, of course, to be admitted that over the preceding three days the chechia had had a pretty rough time.

His first thought on waking was “Here I am, in lion country!” and it must be confessed that this notion that he was surrounded by lions and was about to go in pursuit of them produced a marked chill, and he buried himself safely under the bedclothes.

Soon, however, the gaiety of the scene outside, the sky so blue, the bright sunshine which flooded into his room through the large window which opened towards the sea, and a good meal which he had served in bed, washed down by a carafe of wine, quickly restored his courage. “To the lions! To the lions!” He cried, and throwing off the bed clothes he dressed himself hurriedly.

His plan of action was this. Leave town and go well out into the desert. Wait until nightfall. Lie in hiding, and at the first lion that comes along... Pan! Pan!.... Return in the morning. Lunch at hotel. Receive the congratulations of the Algerians and hire a cart to go and collect the kill.

He armed himself hastily, strapped onto his back the bivouac tent, the pole of which stuck up above his head, and then, held rigid by this contraption, he went down to the street. He turned sharply to the right and walked to the end of the shopping arcade of Bab-Azoum, where a series of Algerian store-keepers watched him pass, concealed in corners of their dark boutiques like spiders. He went through the Place du théâtre, through the suburbs and eventually reached the dusty main road to Mustapha.

Here was a fantastic confusion of traffic. There were coaches, cabs, curricles, military supply wagons, great carts of hay drawn by oxen, some squadrons of Chasseurs d’Afrique, troops of microscopic little donkeys, negresses selling galettes, loads of emigrants from Alsace, some Spahis in red cloaks. All passing in a great cloud of dust, with cries, songs and trumpet calls, between two rows of miserable shacks, where could be seen prostitutes applying their make-up at their doors, tap-rooms full of soldiers and the stalls of butchers and slaughtermen. The tales I have been told about this place are quite untrue, thought Tartarin, there are fewer “Teurs” here than there are in Marseille.

Suddenly he saw striding past him, long-legged and proud as a turkey cock, a magnificent camel. The sight quickened his pulse; where there were camels lions could not be far away, and indeed within five minutes he saw coming towards him with guns on their shoulders, a whole company of lion hunters with their dogs.

A cowardly lot, thought Tartarin, as he came alongside them... hunting lions in a group and with dogs... for it had never occurred to him that In Algeria one could hunt anything but lions. However these hunters looked like comfortably retired businessmen, and Tartarin, curious about this way of hunting lions with dogs and game-bags, took it on himself to address one of them.

“Et autrement, my friend, a good day?”

“Not bad” Replied the other, looking with some surprise at the heavy armament of our Tarascon warrior.

“You have killed some of them?”

“Yes... a few... as you can see.” And the Algerian pointed to his game-bag, bulging with rabbits and woodcock.

“How is that?... you put them in your game-bag?”

“Where would you like me to put them?”

“But then they... they must be very small!”

“Some big, some small.” Said the hunter, and as he was in a hurry to catch up with his companions and go home, he made off at high speed. Tartarin stood, stupefied, in the middle of the road. Then after a moment of thought “Bah!” He said to himself, “These people are trying to have me on, they haven’t shot anything.” And he continued on his way.

Already the houses were becoming more scattered, the passers-by less frequent. Night was falling. Objects becoming less distinct.... He marched on for another half an hour, and then he stopped. It was now completely dark, a moonless night spangled with stars. There was no one on the road, but in spite of that Tartarin reckoned that lions were not like coaches and would not stick to the highway. He set off across country. At every step there were ditches, thorns and bushes. No matter, he walked on until at last he reached a spot he thought suited to his purpose. A likely place for lions.

Chapter 16.

He was in a vast, wild desert, bristling with bizarre plants. African plants, which have the appearance of savage animals. In the faint light from the stars their shadows spread over the ground in all directions. On the right was the confused, looming mass of a mountain, the Atlas perhaps, to the left could be heard the dull surge of the invisible sea. An ideal spot to tempt wild animals!

Placing one rifle on the ground before him and taking the other in his hands, Tartarin settled down and waited... he waited for an hour... two hours.... Then he remembered that in his books the famous lion hunters always used a kid as bait, which they tethered at some distance in front of them and made to bleat by pulling on a string attached to its leg. Lacking a kid, he had the idea of trying an imitation and began to bleat in a goat-like manner, “Mé!... Mé!....” At first very quietly, because, in the depths of his heart he was a little afraid that the lion might hear him... then seeing that nothing happened he bleated more loudly, “Mé!... Mé!... Mé!....” And then louder still, “MÉ!... MÉ!... MÉ!...”

Suddenly, a few paces in front of him, something black and gigantic materialised. He shut up... the thing crouched, sniffed the ground, leapt up, turned and ran off at a gallop... then it came back and stopped short. It was a lion! There could be no doubt. Now one could see quite clearly the four short legs, the formidable forequarters and two huge eyes gleaming in the darkness.... Aim!... Fire!... Pan!... Pan!.... Tartarin backed away, drawing his hunting knife

Following Tartarin’s shot there was a terrible outcry, “I’ve got him!” Cried the good Tarasconais and prepared himself to receive a possible attack, but the creature had had enough and it fled at top speed, bellowing.... He, however, did not budge: he was waiting for the female... as happened in all his books. Unfortunately the female failed to turn up, and after two or three hours of waiting Tartarin became tired. The ground was damp, the night was growing cool, there was a nip in the breeze from the sea... “Perhaps I should have a nap while I wait for daylight” he said to himself, and to provide some shelter he had recourse to the bivouac tent. A difficulty now arose, the bivouac tent was of such an ingenious design that he was quite unable to erect it. He struggled and sweated for a long time, but there was no way in which he could get the thing up, so at last he threw it on the ground and lay on top of it, cursing it in Provencal.

Ta!... Ta!... Ta!... Tarata! “Ques aco?” said Tartarin, waking up with a start. It was the trumpets of the Chasseurs d’Afrique sounding reveille in the barracks at Mustapha. The lion killer rubbed his eyes in amazement. He who had believed that he was in the middle of a desert... do you know where he was?... In a field full of artichokes, between a cauliflower and a swede... his Sahara was a vegetable patch.

Nearby, on the pretty green coast of upper Mustapha, white Algerian villas gleamed in the dawn light, one might have been among the suburban houses in the outskirts of Marseille. The bourgeois appearance of the sleeping countryside greatly astonished Tartarin and put him in a bad humour. “These people are crazy”, he said to himself, “To plant their artichokes in an area infested by lions. For I was not dreaming, there are lions here and there is the proof”.

The proof was a trail of blood which the fleeing beast had left behind it. Following this blood-spoor, with watchful eye and revolver in hand, the valiant Tarasconais went from artichoke to artichoke until he arrived at a small field of oats.... In a patch of flattened grain was a pool of blood and in the middle of the pool, lying on its side with a large wound to its head, was... what?... a lion?... No Parbleu!... A donkey! One of the tiny donkeys so common in Algeria, which there are called “Bourriquots”.

Chapter 17.

Tartarin's first reaction at the sight of his unfortunate victim was one of annoyance. There is after all a considerable difference between a lion and a bourriquot. This was quickly replaced by a feeling of pity. The poor bourriquot was so pretty, so gentle, its warm flanks rising and falling as it breathed. Tartarin knelt down and with the end of his sash he tried to staunch the blood from its wound. The sight of this great man tending the little donkey was the most touching thing you could imagine. At the soothing contact of the sash, the bourriquot, which was already at death's door, opened a big grey eye and twitched once or twice its long ears, as if to say "Thank you!... Thank you!". Then a final tremor shook it from head to tail and it moved no more.

"Noiraud!... Noiraud!" Came a sudden cry from a strident, anxious voice, and the branches of some nearby bushes were thrust aside. Tartarin had barely time to get up and put himself on guard. It was the female!... She arrived, roaring and terrible, in the guise of an elderly Alsation lady in a rabbit-skin coat, armed with a red umbrella and calling for her donkey in a voice which woke all the echoes of Mustapha. Certainly it might have been better for Tartarin to have had to deal with an angry lioness than this infuriated old lady. In vain he tried to explain what had happened... how he had mistaken Noiraud for a lion, she thought he was trying to make fun of her and, uttering loud cries of indignation, she set about our hero with blows from her umbrella. Tartarin, in confusion, defended himself as best he could, parrying the blows with his rifle, sweating, puffing, jumping about and crying "But Madame!... But Madame!". To no avail. Madame was deaf to his pleas and redoubled her efforts.

Happily a third party arrived on the field of battle. It was the husband of the Alsation lady, also an Alsation.... A tavern keeper and a shrewd man of business. When he saw with whom he was dealing and that the assassin was willing to pay for his crime, he disarmed his spouse and took her to one side. Tartarin gave two hundred francs. The donkey was worth at least ten, which is the going price for bourriquots in the Arab market. Then the poor Noiraud was buried beneath a fig tree, and the Alsation, put in a good humour at the sight of so much money, invited our hero to break a crust at his tavern, which was not far away at the edge of the main road. The Algerian hunters went there every Sunday for luncheon; for the countryside was full of game, and for two leagues about the city there

was not a better place for rabbits. “And the lions?” Asked Tartarin. The Alsation looked at him with surprise... “The lions?” “Yes, the lions, do you see them sometimes?” Tartarin replied, with a little less assurance. The tavern-keeper burst out laughing, “Lions!... Lions!... What is all this about lions?” “Are there no lions in Algeria then?” “Moi foi! I have been here for twenty years and I have never seen any.... though I did once hear.. I think there was a report in the newspaper... but it was long ago... somewhere in the south”....

At that moment they reached the tavern, a wayside pot house, the sort of thing one can see by any main road. It had a very faded sign above the door, some billiard cues painted on the wall and the inoffensive name “Au rendezvous des lapins”.

Chapter 18.

This first adventure would have been enough to discourage many people, but seasoned characters such as Tartarin are not so easily disheartened. The lions are in the south, thought our hero, very well I shall go to the south.

As soon as he had swallowed his last morsel, he got up, thanked his host, took leave of the old lady without any ill-feeling, shed a last tear over the unfortunate Noiraud and headed quickly for Algiers, with the firm intention of packing his trunks and departing that same day for the south.

Sadly, the main Mustapha road seemed to have grown longer during the night. There was so much sunshine, so much dust, the bivouac tent was so heavy, that Tartarin could not face the walk back to the town and he hailed the first horse-drawn omnibus which came along and climbed in.... Poor Tartarin! How much better it would have been for his reputation if he had not entered that fateful vehicle, and had continued his journey on foot, even at the risk of collapsing from the heat and the weight of his two double-barreled rifles and the bivouac tent.

With Tartarin aboard, the omnibus was now full. At the far end was an Algerian priest with a big black beard, his nose stuck in his breviary. Opposite was a young Moorish merchant, puffing at a large cigarette, then a Maltese seaman, and four or five Moorish women, with white linen masks, whose eyes alone were visible. These ladies had been on a visit to the cemetery of Abd-el-Kader, but this did not seem to have depressed them. Behind their masks they laughed and chattered among themselves and munched pastries.

It seemed to Tartarin that they cast many glances in his direction, and one in particular, who was seated opposite him, fixed her gaze on him and did not remove it.

Although the lady was veiled, the liveliness of her large dark eyes, emphasised by kohl, a delicate little wrist, encircled by gold bracelets, which one glimpsed from time to time amidst her draperies, the sound of her voice, the graceful movements of her head, all suggested that beneath her garments was someone young, pretty and loveable.

The embarrassed Tartarin did not know which way to turn. The silent caress of these beautiful dark eyes set his heart aflutter. He blushed and paled by turns. Then to complete his downfall he felt on his massive boot the lady's dainty

slipper scurrying about like a little red mouse.... What was he to do?... Reply to these looks, this touch?... Yes... but an amorous intrigue in this part of the world can have terrible consequences. In his imagination Tartarin already saw himself seized by eunuchs, decapitated or even worse, sewn into a sack and tossed into the sea with his head beside him.

This thought cooled his ardour a little, but the little slipper continued to tease and the he eyes opened very wide, like two black velvet flowers which seemed to say “Come and gather us!”

The omnibus stopped. It had arrived at the Place du théâtre, at the entrance to the Rue Bab Azoum. One by one, enveloped in their billowing garments and drawing their veils about them with savage grace, the Moors dismounted. Tartarin’s neighbour was the last to leave and as she rose to go her face was so close to that of our hero that their breaths mingled and he was aware of a bouquet of youth, jasmine, musk and pastries.

He could no longer resist. Drunk with love and ready to face anything, he scrambled after the Moor... At the sound of his clumsy footsteps she turned and put her finger to her lips, as if to say “Hush” and with the other hand she tossed him a little scented garland made of jasmine flowers. Tartarin bent to pick it up, but as he was somewhat overweight and much encumbered by his weapons, the operation took a little time... When he rose, the garland pressed to his heart, the little Moor had disappeared.

Chapter 19.

Sleep, lions of the Atlas! Sleep tranquilly in your lairs amongst the aloes and the cactus! It will be some time before Tartarin de Tarascon comes to slaughter you. At the moment his equipment, his arms, his medicine chest, the preserved food and the bivouac tent are piled up peacefully in a corner of room 36 in the Hotel de l'Europe. Sleep without fear, great tawny lions! The Tarasconais is searching for his Moor.

Since the events in the omnibus, the unhappy man seems to feel constantly on his feet the scurrying of the little red mouse, and the sea breeze which wafts across his face seems somehow perfumed by an amorous odour of patisserie and anise. He must find his Dulcinea; but to find in a city of one hundred thousand inhabitants a person of whom one knows only the scent of their breath, the appearance of their slippers and the colour of their eyes is no light undertaking. Only a lovesick Tarasconais would attempt such a task. To make matters worse, it must be confessed that beneath their masks all Moorish ladies tend to look very much the same; and then they do not go out a great deal, and if one wants to see them one must go to the upper town, the Arab town, the town of the Teurs.

A real cut-throat place that upper town. Little dark alley-ways, very narrow, climbing steeply between two rows of silent, mysterious houses whose roofs touch to make a tunnel. Low doorways and small windows, opaque and barred, and then, to right and left, little shops within whose deep shade fierce "Teurs" with piratical faces, glittering eyes and gleaming teeth, smoke their hookahs and converse in low tones, as if planning some wicked deed.... To say that Tartarin walked through this fearsome township unmoved would be to lie. He was on the contrary moved a good deal, and in those obscure alleys where his large stomach took up almost the entire width, the brave fellow advanced with the greatest caution, his eyes alert, his finger on the trigger of his revolver, just as he used to be at Tarascon on his way to the club. At any moment he expected to be jumped on from behind by a whole gang of janissaries and eunuchs, but his desire to find the lady endowed him with the courage and determination of a giant.

For eight days the intrepid Tartarin did not quit his search. Sometimes he could be seen hanging about the turkish baths, waiting for the women to emerge in chattering groups, scented from the bath. Sometimes he appeared at the entrance of a mosque, puffing and blowing as he removed his heavy boots before

entering the sacred premises. On other occasions, at nightfall, when he was returning to the hotel, downcast at having discovered nothing at the mosque or the baths, he would hear, as he passed one of the Moorish houses, monotonous songs, the muffled sound of guitars, the rattle of tambourines and the light laughter of women, which made his heart beat faster. "Perhaps she is there" He would say to himself, and approaching the house he would lift the heavy knocker and let it fall timidly.

Immediately the song and the laughter stop. Nothing can be heard within but faint vague cluckings as if in a sleeping hen-house. Hold on thinks our hero, something is about to happen, but what happened mostly was a big pot of cold water on his head, or orange peel and fig skins.... Sleep lions!

Chapter 20.

For two long weeks the unhappy Tartarin searched for his Algerian lady-love, and it is likely that he would be searching still, if that providence which looks after lovers had not come to his aid in the guise of a Montenegrin gentleman.

The Théâtre in Algiers, like the “Opera” in Paris, organises every Saturday night during the winter a Bal Masque. This is, however, a provincial version. There are few people in the dance-hall; the occasional drifter from out of town, unemployed stevedores, some rustic tarts, who are in business but who still retain from their more virtuous days a faint aroma of garlic and saffron sauce... the real spectacle is in the foyer, which has been converted for the occasion into a gambling saloon.

A feverish, multicoloured crowd jostles about the long green cloths. Algerian soldiers on leave, gambling their meagre pay. Moorish merchants from the upper town. Negroes. Maltese. Colonists who have come a hundred miles to wager the price of a cart or a pair of oxen on the turn of a card. Pale, tense and anxious as they watch the game.

There are Algerian Jews, gambling en famille. The men in oriental costume, the women in gold coloured bodices. They gather round the table, chatter and and plan, count on their fingers, but play little. From time to time, and only after long consultation, an elderly, bearded patriarch goes to place the family stake. Then as long as play lasts there is a concentration of dark hebraic eyes on the table, which would seem to draw the gold pieces lying there as if by an invisible thread....

Then there are the quarrels. Fights. Oaths in many languages. Knives are drawn. A guard arrives. Money is missing.... In the midst of this saturnalia wandered poor Tartarin, who had come that evening in search of forgetfulness and peace of heart.

As he went about through the crowd, thinking of his Moor, suddenly, at one of the gaming tables, above the cries and the chinking of coins, two angry voices were raised. “I tell you, there are twenty francs of mine missing, m’sieu!” “M’sieu!!!” “Well, what have you to say, m’sieu?” “Do you know to whom you are talking, m’sieu?” “I should be delighted to find out, m’sieu!” “I am prince Gregory of Montenegro, m’sieu!”

At this name, Tartarin, much moved, pushed through the crowd until he

reached the front row, delighted to have found once more his prince, the distinguished Montenegrin nobleman whose acquaintance he had made on the packet-boat.

Unfortunately this title of prince which had so dazzled the worthy Tarasconais, did not produce the least impression on the officer of the Chasseurs with whom the prince was in dispute. "A likely story" said the officer with a sneer, and then turning to the onlookers, "Prince Gregory of Montenegro, who has ever heard of him?... No one!" Tartarin, indignant, took a pace forward. "Pardon... I know the prince." He said firmly in his best Tarrascon accent.

The officer of the Chasseurs stared him in the face for a few moments, then shrugging his shoulders, he said "Well now, isn't that just fine?... Share out the twenty francs between you and we'll leave it at that." So saying he turned on his heel and was lost in the crowd.

Tartarin, furious, wanted to go after him, but the prince prevented him. "Leave it... It's my affair." He said, and taking Tartarin by the arm he led him outside.

When they had reached the square, prince Gregory of Montenegro took off his hat, held out his hand to our hero and vaguely recalling his name began in vibrant tones, "Monsieur Barbarin..." "Tartarin." Breathed the other, timidly. "Tartarin... Barbarin, it makes no difference, we are now friends for life." And the noble Montenegrin shook his hand with ferocious energy. Tartarin was overwhelmed by pride. "Prince.... Prince" He murmured in confusion.

Fifteen minutes later the two gentlemen were seated in the Restaurant des Platanes, an agreeable spot whose terraces sloped down toward the sea, and there before a large Russian salad and a bottle of good wine they renewed their acquaintance.

You cannot imagine anything more beguiling than this Montenegrin prince. Slim, elegant, his hair curled and waved, smooth-shaven and powdered and decked with strange orders, he had a sharp eye an ingratiating manner and spoke with a vaguely Italian accent, faintly suggestive of a renaissance Cardinal. Of ancient aristocratic lineage, his brothers, it seemed, had driven him into exile at the age of ten, because of his liberal opinions; since when he had travelled the world for his instruction and pleasure... a philosopher prince. By a remarkable coincidence the prince had spent three years in Tarascon, but when Tartarin expressed astonishment at never having seen him at the club or on the promenade, "I didn't go out much" Said the prince in a somewhat evasive manner, and Tartarin discretely asked no more questions. Important people, he knew, had diplomatic secrets.

All in all a very fine prince this Gregory. While sipping his wine he listened patiently to Tartarin, who told him of his Moorish love, and as he claimed to have contacts among these ladies, he even undertook to help look for her.

They drank long and deep. They drank to the ladies of Algeria. They drank to free Montenegro. Outside, below the terrace, the sea rolled, the waves slapping wetly on the beach. The air was warm, the sky bright with stars, in the plane trees a nightingale sang... It was Tartarin who paid the bill.

Chapter 21.

The Montenegrin prince was as good as his word. Shortly after the reunion at the Restaurant des Platanes he arrived early one morning at Tartarin's room. "Quick!... quick!... get dressed" he said, "Your Moor has been found... her name is Baia... as pretty as a picture, twenty years old and already a widow." "A widow!.... Well that's a bit of luck" Said Tartarin who was a little uneasy at the thought of Moorish husbands. "Yes, but closely guarded by her brother" "Oh! That's a bit awkward" "A ferocious Moor who sells hookahs in the bazaar" There was a silence, "Good!" Said the prince, "You're not the chap to be put off by a little thing like that, and anyway we can perhaps buy off this villain by purchasing some of his pipes. So come on, get dressed... you lucky dog!"

Pale and excited, his heart full of love, Tartarin jumped out of bed and as he climbed into his ample underwear he asked "What shall I do now?" "Write to the lady quite simply and ask for a meeting" "She understands French then?" Said Tartarin with an air of disappointment. For his dreams had been of an Arabian Houri, uncontaminated by the west. "She doesn't understand a word" Replied the prince imperturbably, "but you will dictate the letter to me and I shall translate it." "Oh prince, how good you are." And Tartarin strode about the room silent and deep in thought.

As you may imagine one does not write to a Moorish lady as one might to a little shop-girl in Beaucaire. Happily our hero was able to cull from his reading many phrases of oriental rhetoric and combining these with some distant memories of the "Song of Songs" he was able to compose the most flowery epistle you could wish for, full of unlikely similes and improbable metaphors. With this romantic missive Tartarin would have liked to combine a bouquet of flowers with emblematic meanings, but prince Gregory thought it would be better to buy some pipes from the brother, which could not fail to soften the savage temperament of the gentleman and would please the lady, who greatly enjoyed smoking. "Let us go quickly then and buy some pipes," Said Tartarin. "No, no." Replied the prince, "Let me go alone, I shall get them at a better price." "Oh prince! How good you are to take such trouble." And the trusting fellow held out his purse to the obliging Montenegrin, exhorting him to neglect nothing which might make the lady happy.

Unfortunately, the affair which had started so well, did not progress as rapidly

as one might have wished. Very touched, it seemed, by Tartarin's eloquence, and already three parts won over, she would have liked nothing better than to have received him, but her brother had scruples, and to lay these to rest it was necessary to buy an astonishing number of pipes. Sometimes Tartarin wondered what on earth the lady did with them all, but he paid up nevertheless, and without stinting.

At last, after the purchase of many pipes and the composing of many sheets of oriental prose, a rendezvous was arranged. I need hardly tell you with what fluttering of heart Tartarin prepared himself; with what care he trimmed, washed and scented his beard, without forgetting—for one must always be prepared—to slip into his pockets a life-preserver and a revolver. The ever-obliging prince attended this first meeting in the role of interpreter

The lady lived in the upper part of the town. Outside her door lounged a young Moor of fourteen or fifteen, smoking a cigarette, it was Ali, her brother. When the two visitors arrived he knocked twice on the postern and retired from the scene. The door was opened and a negress appeared, who, without saying a word, conducted the two gentlemen across a narrow interior courtyard to a small, cool room where the lady awaited them, posed on a divan.

At first glance it seemed to Tartarin that she was smaller and sturdier than the Moor on the omnibus... were they in fact the same? But this suspicion was only momentary: the lady was so pretty, with her bare feet and her plump fingers, rosy and delicate, loaded with rings; while beneath her bodice of gold cloth and the blossoms of her flowered robe was the suggestion of a charming form, a little chubby, dainty and curvaceous. The amber mouthpiece of a narghile was between her lips and she was enveloped in a cloud of pale smoke.

On entering, Tartarin placed his hand on his heart and bowed in the most Moorish manner possible, rolling big, passionate eyes... Baia looked at him for a moment without speaking, then letting go of the amber mouthpiece, she turned her back, hid her face in her hands and one could see only her neck, shaken by uncontrollable laughter.

Chapter 22.

If you go in the evening into some of the coffee-houses of the Algerian upper town, you will hear even today, Moors speak among themselves, with winks and chuckles, of a certain Sidi ben Tart'ri, an amiable, rich European who—it now some years ago—lived in the upper town with a little local girl called Baia.

This Sidi ben Tart'ri was of course none other than Tartarin. Well what could you expect. This sort of thing happens even in the lives of Saints and Heroes. The illustrious Tartarin was, like anyone else, not exempt from these failings and that is why for two whole months, forgetful of lions, forgetful of fame, he wallowed in oriental love, and slumbered, like Hannibal in Capua, amid the delights of Algiers.

He had rented in the heart of the Arab quarter, a pretty little local house with an interior courtyard, banana trees, cool galleries and fountains. He lived there quietly in the company of his Moor, a Moor himself from head to foot. Puffing at his hookah and munching musk-flavoured condiments. Stretched on a divan opposite him, Baia with a guitar in her hands droned monotonous songs, or to amuse her master she perhaps mimed a belly-dance, holding in her hands a small mirror in which she admired her white teeth and made faces at herself.

As the lady did not understand French and Tartarin did not speak a word of Arabic, conversation languished somewhat and the talkative Tarasconais had time to repent of any intemperate loquaciousness of which he might have been guilty at Bezuquet's pharmacy or Costecalde the gunsmith's shop. This penance even had a certain charm. There was something almost voluptuous in going all day without speaking, hearing only the bubble of the hookah, the strumming of the guitar and the gentle splashing of the fountain amid the mosaic tiles of his courtyard.

Smoking, the Turkish bath and "l'amour" occupied his time. They went out little. Sometimes Sidi Tart'ri, with his lady mounted on the crupper, went on mule-back to eat pomegranates in a little garden which he had bought in the neighbourhood... but never on any account did they go down to the European part of the town, which with its drunken Zouaves, its bordellos full of officers and the sound of sabres trailing on the ground beneath the arcade, seemed to him to be insupportably ugly. Altogether our Tartarin was perfectly happy. Tartarin-Sancho in particular, very fond of Turkish pastries, declared himself entirely

satisfied with his new existence. Tartarin-Quixote had perhaps now and then some regrets, when he remembered Tarascon and the promised lion skins... but they did not last for long, and to dispel these moments of sadness all that was needed was a look from Baia or a spoonful of her diabolic confections, scented and bewitching like some brew of Circe's.

In the evenings prince Gregory came, to talk a little about free Montenegro. Of indefatigable complaisance, this agreeable nobleman undertook in the house the function of interpreter and, if need be, even that of steward, and all for nothing. Apart from him, Tartarin had only "Teurs" as visitors. All of those ferocious bandits which in the depths of their dark shops he once found so frightening, turned out to be harmless tradesmen, embroiderers, spice sellers, turners of pipe mouthpieces. Discrete, courteous people, modest, shrewd, and good at cards. Four or five times a week they would spend the evening with Tartarin, winning his money and eating his confitures, and on the stroke of ten leaving politely, giving thanks to the Prophet.

After they had left, Sidi Tart'ri and his faithful spouse would finish the evening on their terrace, a large white-walled terrace which formed the roof of the building and looked out over the town. All about them a thousand other terraces, tranquil in the moonlight, dropped one below the other down to the sea. Suddenly, like a burst of stars, a great clear chant rose heavenward and on the minaret of the nearby mosque a handsome Muezzin appeared, his white outline silhouetted against the deep blue of the night sky. As he invoked the praise of Allah in a splendid voice which filled the horizon, Baia laid aside her guitar and with her eyes fixed on the Muezzin seemed to be rapt in prayer. For as long as the chant lasted she remained ecstatic, like an Arabic St. Theresa. Tartarin watched her and thought that it must be a beautiful and powerful religion which could give rise to such transports of faith. Tarascon hide your face, your Tartarin dreams of becoming apostate.

Chapter 23.

One fine afternoon of blue sky and warm breeze, Sidi Tart'ri, astride his mule, was returning alone from his little garden, his legs spread widely over hay filled bags which were further swollen by citrus and water-melon. Lulled by the creaking of the harness and swaying to the clip-clop of the animal the good man progressed through the delightful countryside, his hands crossed on his stomach, three-quarters asleep from the effect of warmth and wellbeing. Suddenly, as he was entering the town, a loud hail woke him up. "Hé! You, you great lump! You're Monsieur Tartarin aren't you?" At the name of Tartarin and the sound of the Provencal accent Tartarin raised his head and saw, a few feet away, the tanned features of Barbassou, the Captain of the Zouave, who was drinking an absinthe and smoking his pipe at the door of a little café. "Hé! Barbassou by God!" Said Tartarin, pulling up his mule.

Instead of replying Barbassou regarded him wide-eyed for a few moments, and then he began to laugh and laugh, so that Tartarin sat stunned among his water-melons. "What a get-up, my poor monsieur Tartarin. It's true then what people say, that you have become a Teur? And little Baia, does she still sing 'Marco la belle' all the time?" "Marco la belle," said Tartarin indignantly, "I'll have you know Captain, that the person of whom you speak is an honest Moorish girl who doesn't know a word of French!" "Baia?... Not a word of French?... Where have you come from?" And the Captain began to laugh again, more than ever. Then noticing the long face of poor Sidi Tart'ri, he changed tack. "Well perhaps it isn't the same one," He said, "I've probably got her mixed up with someone else... only look here, M. Tartarin, you would be wise not to put too much trust in Algerian Moors, or Montenegrin princes." Tartarin stood up in his stirrups, and made his grimace, "The prince is my friend, Captain!" He said. "All right... all right... Don't let's quarrel... would you like a drink?... no. Any message you would like me to take back?... none. Well that's it then. Bon voyage.... Oh!... While I think of it, I have some good French tobacco here, if you would like a few pipes-full take some, help yourself, it will do you good, it's those blasted local tobaccos that scramble your brain."

With that the Captain returned to his absinthe and Tartarin pensively trotted his mule down the road to his little house. Although in his loyal heart he refused to believe any of the insinuations made by the Captain, they had upset him, and

his rough oaths and country accent had combined to awake in him a vague feeling of remorse. When he reached home, Baia had gone to the baths, the negress seemed to him ugly, the house dismal, and prey to an indefinable melancholy, he went and sat by the fountain and filled his pipe with Barbassou's tobacco. The tobacco had been wrapped in a fragment of paper torn from "The Semaphore" and when he spread it out the name of his home town caught his eye.

"News from Tarascon," He read, "The town is in a state of alarm. Tartarin the lion killer, who went to hunt the big cats in Africa, has not been heard of for several months.... What has happened to our heroic compatriot? One dare hardly ask oneself, knowing as we do his ardent nature, his courage and love of adventure.... Has he, like so many others, been swallowed up in the desert sands, or has he perhaps fallen victim to the murderous teeth of those feline monsters, whose skins he promised to the municipality.... A terrible incertitude! However, some African merchants who came to the fair at Beaucaire, claim to have met, in the heart of the desert, a white man whose description corresponds with his and who was heading for Timbuctoo. May God preserve our Tartarin!"

When he read this, Tartarin blushed and trembled. All Tarascon rose before his eyes. The club. The hat hunters. The green armchair at Costecalde's shop: and soaring above, like the extended wings of an eagle, the formidable moustache of the brave Commandant Bravida. Then to see himself squatting slothfully on his mat, while he was believed to be engaged in slaying lions, filled him with shame. Suddenly he leaped to his feet. "To the lions!... To the lions!" He cried, and hurrying to the dusty corner where lay idle his bivouac tent, his medicine chest, his preserved foods and his weapons, he dragged them into the middle of the courtyard. Tartarin-Sancho had just perished, only Tartarin-Quixote was left.

There was just time enough to inspect his equipment, to don his arms and accoutrements, to put on his big boots, to write a few lines to prince Gregory, confiding Baia to his care, to slip into an envelope some banknotes, wet with tears, and the intrepid Tarasconais was in a stage-coach, rolling down the road to Blidah, leaving the stupefied negress in his house, gazing at the turban, the slippers and all the muslim rig-out of Sidi Tart'ri, hanging discarded on the wall.

Chapter 24.

It was an ancient, old-fashioned stage-coach, upholstered in the old way in heavy blue cloth, very faded, and with enormous pom-poms, which after a few hours on the road dug uncomfortably into one's back. Tartarin had an inside seat, where he installed himself as best he could, and where, instead of the musky scent of the great cats, he could savour the ripe perfume of the coach, compounded of a thousand odours of men, women, horses, leather, food and damp straw.

The other passengers on the coach were a mixed lot. A Trappist monk, some Jewish merchants, two Cocottes, returning to their unit, the third Hussars, and a photographer from Orleansville.

No matter how charming and varied the company, Tartarin did not feel like chatting and remained silent, his arm hooked into the arm-strap and his weaponry between his knees.... His hurried departure, the dark eyes of Baia, the dangerous chase on which he was about to engage, these thoughts troubled his mind, and also there was something about this venerable stage-coach, now domiciled in Africa, which recalled to him vaguely the Tarascon of his youth. Trips to the country. Dinners by the banks of the Rhône, a host of memories.

Little by little it grew dark. The guard lit the lanterns. The old coach swayed and squeaked on its worn springs. The horses trotted, the bells on their harness jingling, and from time to time there sounded the clash of ironmongery from Tartarin's arms chest on the top of the coach.

Sleepily Tartarin contemplated his fellow passengers as they danced before his eyes, shaken by the jolting of the coach, then his eyes closed and he heard no more, except vaguely, the rumble of the axles and the groaning of the coach sides....

Suddenly an ancient female voice, rough, hoarse and cracked, called the Tarasconais by name: "Monsieur Tartarin!... Monsieur Tartarin!" "Who is calling me?" "It is I, Monsieur Tartarin, don't you recognise me?... I am the stage-coach which once ran... it is now twenty years ago... the service from Tarascon to Nimes.... How many times have I carried you and your friends when you went hat shooting over by Joncquières or Bellegarde... I didn't recognise you at first because of your bonnet and the amount of weight you have put on, but as soon as you began to snore, you old rascal, I knew you right away." "Bon!... Bon!"

Replied Tartarin, somewhat vexed, but then softening, he added: "But now, my poor old lady, what are you doing here?" "Ah! My dear M. Tartarin, I did not come here of my own free will I can promise you. Once the railway reached Beaucaire no one could find a use for me so I was shipped off to Africa... and I am not the only one, nearly all the stage-coaches in France have been deported like me; we were found too old fashioned and now here we all are, leading a life of slavery." Here the old coach gave a long sigh, then she went on: "I can't tell you monsieur Tartarin how much I miss my lovely Tarascon. These were good times for me, the time of my youth. You should have seen me leaving in the morning, freshly washed and polished, with new varnish on my wheels, my lamps shining like suns and my tarpaulin newly dressed with oil. How grand it was when the postillion cracked his whip and sang out, 'Lagadigadeou, la Tarasque, la Tarasque' and the guard, with his ticket-punch slung on its bandolier and his braided cap tipped over one ear, chucked his little yapping dog onto the tarpaulin of the coach-roof and scrambled up himself crying 'Let's go!... Let's go!' Then my four horses would start off with a jingle of bells, barking and fanfares. Windows would open and all Tarascon would watch with pride the stage-coach setting off along the king's highway.

"What a fine road it was, Monsieur Tartarin, wide and well kept, with its kilometre markers, its heaps of roadmender's stones at regular intervals, and to right and left vinyards and pretty groves of olive trees. Then inns every few yards, post-houses every five minutes... and my travellers! What fine folk!... Mayors and curés going to Nimes to see their Prefect or Bishop, honest workmen, students on holiday, peasants in embroidered smocks, all freshly shaved that morning, and up on top, all of you hat shooters, who were always in such good form and who sang so well to the stars as we returned home in the evening.

"Now it is a different story... God knows the sort of people I carry. A load of miscreants from goodness knows where, who infest me with vermin. Negroes, Bedouins, rascals and adventurers from every country, colonists who stink me out with their pipes, and all of them talking a language which even our Heavenly Father couldn't understand.... And then you see how they treat me. Never brushed. Never washed. They grudge me the grease for my axles, and instead of the fine big, quiet horses which I used to have, they give me little Arab horses which have the devil in them, fighting, biting, dancing about and running like goats, breaking my shafts with kicks. Aie!... Aie! They are at it again now.... And the roads! It's still all right here, because we are near Government House, but out there, nothing! No road of any sort. One goes as best one can over hill and dale

through dwarf palms and mastic trees. Not a single fixed stop. One pulls up at wherever the guard fancies, sometimes at one farm, sometimes at another. Sometimes this rogue takes me on a detour of two leagues just so that he can go and drink with a friend. After that it's 'Whip up postillion, we must make up for lost time.' The sun burns. The dust chokes... Whip!... Whip! We crash. We tip over. More whip. We swim across rivers, we are cold, soaked and half drowned... Whip!... Whip!... Whip! Then in the evening, dripping wet... that's good for me at my age... I have to bed down in the yard of some caravan halt, exposed to all the winds. At night jackals and hyenas come to sniff at my lockers and creatures which fear the dawn hide in my compartments. That's the life I lead, monsieur Tartarin, and I shall lead until the day when, scorched by sun and rotted by humid nights, I shall fall at some corner of this beastly road, where Arabs will boil their cous-cous on the remains of my old carcase."

"Blidah!... Blidah!" Shouted the guard, opening the coach door.

Chapter 25.

Indistinctly, through the steamed up windows, Tartarin could see the pretty square of a neatly laid out little township, surrounded by arcades and planted with orange trees, in the centre of which a group of soldiers was drilling in the thin, pink haze of early morning. The cafés were taking down their shutters, in one corner a vegetable market was under way. It was charming, but in no way did it suggest lions. “To the south, further to the south.” Murmured Tartarin, settling back in his corner.

At that moment the coach door was opened, letting in a gust of fresh air, which bore on its wings, amongst the scent of orange blossom, a very small gentleman in a brown overcoat. Neat, elderly, thin and wrinkled, with a face no bigger than a fist, a silk cravat five fingers high, a leather brief-case and an umbrella. The perfect image of a village notary. On seeing Tartarin’s weaponry, the little gentleman, who was seated opposite him, looked very surprised, and began to stare at our hero.

The horses were changed and the coach set off... the little gentleman continued to stare. At length Tartarin became offended and staring in his turn at the little gentleman he asked “Do you find this surprising?”

“Not at all, but it does rather get in the way.” Was the reply, and the fact is that with his tent, his revolver, his two rifles and their covers, not to mention his natural corpulence, Tartarin de Tarascon did take up quite a lot of space.

This reply from the little gentleman annoyed Tartarin, “Do you suppose that I would go after lions with an umbrella?” Asked the great man proudly. The little gentleman looked at his umbrella, smiled and asked calmly, “You monsieur are...?” “Tartarin de Tarascon, lion hunter.” And in pronouncing these words the brave Tartarin shook the tassel of his chechia as if it were a mane.

In the coach there was a startled response. The Trappist crossed himself, the Cocottes uttered little squeaks of excitement and the photographer edged closer to the lion killer, thinking that he might be a good subject for a picture. The little gentleman was not in the least disturbed. “Have you killed many lions, Monsieur Tartarin?” He asked quietly. Tartarin adopted a lofty air, “Yes many of them. More than you have hairs on your head.” And all the passengers laughed at the sight of the three or four yellow hairs which sprouted from the little gentleman’s scalp.

The photographer then spoke up, "A terrible profession yours, Monsieur Tartarin, you must have moments of danger sometimes like that brave M. Bombonnel." "Ah!... yes... M. Bombonnel, the man who hunts panthers." Said Tartarin, with some disdain. "Do you know him?" Asked the little gentleman. "Ti!... Pardi!... To be sure I know him, we have hunted together more than twenty times." "You hunt panthers also M. Tartarin?" "Occasionally, as a pastime." Said Tartarin casually, and raising his head with a heroic gesture which went straight to the hearts of the two Cocottes, he added "They cannot be compared to lions." "One could say," Hazarded the photographer, "That a panther is no more than a large pussy-cat." "Quite right." Said Tartarin, who was not reluctant to lower the reputation of this M. Bombonnel, particularly in front of the ladies.

At this moment the coach stopped. The guard came to open the door and he addressed the little old man, "This is where you want to get off Monsieur." He said very respectfully.

The little gentleman got up to leave, but before he closed the door he said "Would you permit me to give you a word of advice M. Tartarin?" "What is that Monsieur?" "Go back quickly to Tarascon, M. Tartarin, you are wasting your time here... There are a few panthers left in Algeria, but, fi donc! They are too small a quarry for you... as for lions, they are finished. There are no more in Algeria, my friend Chassaing has just killed the last one."

On that the little gentleman saluted, closed the door and went off, laughing, with his brief-case and umbrella. "Guard!" Said Tartarin, making his grimace. "Who on earth was that fellow?" "What! Don't you know him?" Said the guard, "That's Monsieur Bombonnel!"

Chapter 26.

When the coach reached Milianah Tartarin got out and left it to continue its journey to the south. Two days of being bumped about and nights spent peering out of the window in the hope of seeing the outline of a lion in the fields lining the road, had earned a little rest; and then it must be admitted that after the misadventure over M. Bombonnel, Tartarin, in spite of his weapons, his terrible grimace and his red chechia, had not felt entirely at ease in the presence of the photographer and the two ladies of the third Hussars.

He made his way along the wide streets of Milianah, full of handsome trees and fountains, but while he looked for a convenient hotel, he could not prevent himself from mulling over the words of M. Bombonnel. What if it were true... what if there were no more lions in Algeria? What then was the point of all this travel and all these discomforts?

Suddenly at a bend in the road our hero was confronted by a remarkable spectacle. He found himself face to face with—believe it or not—a superb lion which was seated regally at the door of a café, Its mane tawny in the sunshine.

“Who says there are no more lions?” Cried Tartarin, jumping back. On hearing this exclamation the lion lowered its head, and taking in its jaws the wooden begging bowl which lay on the pavement before it, extended it humbly in the direction of Tartarin, who was paralyzed by astonishment... a passing Arab tossed in a few coppers. Then Tartarin understood. He saw what his surprise had at first prevented him from seeing, a crowd of people which was gathered round the poor tame lion, which was blind, and the two big negroes, armed with cudgels, who led it about the town.

Tartarin’s blood boiled. “Wretches!” He cried “To debase this noble creature!” And running to the lion he snatched the sordid begging bowl from the royal jaws.... The two negroes, believing they were dealing with a thief, threw themselves on Tartarin with raised cudgels. It was a terrible set-to. Women were screeching children laughing there were calls for the police and the lion in its darkness joined in with a fearsome roar. The unhappy Tartarin after a desperate struggle, rolled on the ground among copper coins and road sweepings.

At this moment a man pushed through the crowd. He dismissed the negroes with a word and the women and children with a gesture. He helped Tartarin to his feet, brushed him down and seated him, out of breath, on a bollard. “Good

heavens... prince... Is it really you?" Said Tartarin, rubbing his ribs. "Indeed yes my valiant friend... it is I. As soon as I received your letter I confided Baia to her brother, hired a post-chaise, came fifty leagues flat out and here I am just in time to save you from the brutality of these louts.... For God's sake what have you been doing to get yourself dragged into a mess like this?" "What could you expect me to do, prince, when I saw this unfortunate lion with the begging bowl in its teeth, humiliated, enslaved, ridiculed, serving as a laughing stock for this unsavoury rabble...?" "But you are mistaken my noble friend." Said the prince, "This lion on the contrary is an object of respect and adoration. It is a sacred beast, a member of a great convent of lions founded three centuries ago by Mahommed-ben-Aouda, a sort of wild fierce monastery where strange monks rear and tame hundreds of lions and send them throughout all north Africa, accompanied by mendicant brothers. The alms which these brothers receive serve to maintain the monastery and its mosque, and if those two negroes were in such a rage just now, it is because they are convinced that if one sou, one single sou, of their takings is lost through any fault of theirs, the lion which that are leading will immediately devour them."

On hearing this unlikely but plausible tale, Tartarin recovered his spirits. "It seems evident after all," He said "That in spite of what M. Bombonnel said, there are still lions in Algeria." "To be sure there are," said the prince, "And tomorrow we shall begin to search the plains by the river Cheliff and you shall see." "What!... prince. Do you mean to join in the hunt yourself?" "Of course" Said the prince "Do you think I would leave you to wander alone in the middle of Africa, among all those savage tribes, of whose language and customs you know nothing? No! No! My dear Tartarin. I shall not leave you again. Wherever you go I shall accompany you." "Oh!... prince!... prince!" And Tartarin clasped the valiant Gregory in a warm embrace.

Chapter 27.

Very early the next morning the intrepid Tartarin and the no less intrepid prince Gregory, followed by half a dozen negro porters, left Milianah and descended towards the plain of the Chetiff by a steep pathway, delightfully shaded by jasmine, carobs and wild olives, between the hedges of little native gardens where a thousand bubbling springs trickled melodiously from rock to rock, a veritable Eden.

Carrying as much in the way of arms as the great Tartarin, the prince was further adorned by a magnificent and colourful kepi, covered with gold braid and decorated with oak leaves embroidered in silver thread, which gave his highness the appearance of a Mexican General, or a Middle-European Station-Master. This fantastic kepi greatly intrigued Tartarin and he asked humbly for an explanation.

“An indispensable form of headgear for the traveller in Africa.” The prince replied gravely; and while polishing the peak on his coat-sleeve he instructed his innocent companion on the important role played by the kepi in colonial administration, and the deference which its appearance inspires. This to such an extent that the government has been obliged to issue kepis to everyone from the canteen worker to the registrar-general. In fact, according to the prince, to govern the country there was no necessity for an elaborate regime. All that was needed was a fine gold-braided kepi glittering on the end of a big stick.

Thus conversing and philosophising, they went there way. The bare-footed porters leapt from rock to rock, shouting and chattering. The armaments rattled in their case. The guns glittered in the sun.. The locals who passed bowed deeply before the magical kepi.... Up on the ramparts of Milianah, the chief of the Arab bureau, who was walking with his lady in the cool of the morning, hearing these unusual noises and seeing between the branches the flash of sunlight on the weapons, feared a surprise attack; whereupon he lowered the portcullis, beat the alarm and put the town in a state of siege.

This was a good start to the expedition. Regrettably, before the end of the day, the situation deteriorated. One of the negroes was taken with the most fearful colic, having eaten the plasters in the medicine chest. Another fell, dead drunk, by the wayside, as a result of swigging spirits of camphor. A third, in charge of the log-book, deceived by the gold lettering on the cover, thought he had hold of

the treasures of Mecca and made off with it at top speed.... Clearly some planning was needed, so the party halted and took council in the shade of an old fig tree. "In my opinion" Said the prince, trying unsuccessfully to dissolve a tablet of pemmican in a cooking pot, "In my opinion, after this evening we should get rid of these negro porters. There is an Arab market near here and our best plan would be to go there and buy some bourriquets." "No!... No!... No bourriquets!" Interrupted Tartarin, who had become very red at the memory of Noiraud, adding hypocritically, "How can these little creatures carry all our equipment?"

The prince smiled, "You are mistaken my illustrious friend," He said, "The bourriquet may seem to you a poor weak creature, but it has a great heart... It needs it to support all it has to bear... ask the Arabs. This is their idea of our administration. On top they say, is the governor with a big stick which he uses to thump his staff. The staff in turn thump the soldiers. The soldiers thump the colonist. The colonist thumps the Arab, the Arab the negro, and the Negro thumps the bourriquet. The poor little bourriquet having no one to thump, bares its back and puts up with it. So you can see it is well able to carry all our gear."

"That's all very well." Replied Tartarin, "But I don't think that donkeys add much colour to the general appearance of our caravan. Now if we could have a camel...!"

"Just as you wish." Said his highness, and they set off for the market.

The market was held some distance away on the bank of the Cheliff. There were five or six thousand Arabs milling around in the sun, trading noisily among piles of olives, pots of honey, sacks of spices and heaps of cigars. There were fires at which whole sheep were roasting, dripping with butter. There were open air butcheries where almost naked negroes, their feet paddling in blood and their arms red to the elbow, were cutting up the carcasses of goats hanging from hooks... In one corner, in a tent repaired in a thousand different colours, was a Moorish official with a big book and spectacles. Over there is a crowd. There are cries of rage. It is a roulette game that has been set up on a corn bin and the tribesmen gathered about it have started fighting with knives. Elsewhere, there are cheers, laughter and stamping of feet, a merchant and his mule have fallen into the river and are in danger of drowning.... There are scorpions, crows, dogs and flies, millions of flies, but no camels.

Eventually a camel was discovered which some nomads were trying to dispose of. This was a real desert camel, with little hair, a sad expression and a hump which through long shortage of fodder hung flaccidly to one side. Tartarin was so taken with it that he wanted the two partners to be mounted. This proved

to be a mistake.

The camel knelt, the trunks were strapped on, the prince installed himself on the creature's neck and Tartarin was hoisted up to the top of the hump, between two cases, from where he proudly saluted the assembled market and gave the signal for departure.... Heavens above!.... If only Tarascon could see him now!

The camel rose, stretched out its long legs and took off. Calamity! The camel pitched and rolled like a frigate in a rough sea and the chechia responded to the motion as it had on the Zouave. "Prince... prince" Murmured Tartarin, ashen-faced, and clutching the scanty hair of the hump, "Prince... let us get down, I feel... I feel I am going to disgrace France." But the camel was in full flight and nothing was going to stop it. Four thousand Arabs were running behind, barefooted, waving, laughing like idiots, six hundred thousand white teeth glistening in the sun.... The great man of Tarascon had to resign himself to the inevitable, and France was disgraced.

Chapter 28.

Despite the picturesque nature of their new mode of transport our lion hunters were forced to dismount, out of regard for the chechia. They continued their journey as before, on foot, and the caravan proceeded tranquilly toward the south with Tartarin in front, the prince in the rear and between them the camel with the baggage.

The expedition lasted for a month. For a whole month, Tartarin, hunting for non-existent lions, wandered from village to village in the immense plain of the Chetiff, across this extraordinary, cock-eyed French Algeria, where the perfumes of ancient Araby are mingled with a powerful stink of Absinthe and barrack-room; Abraham and Zouzou combined, a strange mixture like a page of the Old Testament rewritten by Sergeant Le Ramée or Corporal Pitou.... A curious spectacle for those who would care to look.... A savage and decadent people whom we are civilising by giving them our own vices. The cruel and uncontrolled authority of Pashas, inflated with self-importance in their cordons of the legion of honour, who at their whim have people beaten on the soles of their feet. The so-called justice of bespectacled Cadis, traitors to the koran and to the law, who sell their judgements as did Esau his birthright for a plate of cous-cous. Drunken and libertine headmen, former batmen to General Yussif someone or other, who guzzle champagne in the company of harlots, and indulge in feasts of roast mutton, while before their tents the whole tribe is starving and disputes with the dogs the leavings of the seigniorial banquet.

Then, all around, uncultivated plain. Scorched grass. Bushes bare of leaves. Scrub. Cactus. Mastic trees... The granary of France?... A granary empty of grain and rich only in jackals and bugs. Abandoned villages. Bewildered tribesfolk who run they know not where, fleeing from famine and sowing corpses along the road. Here and there a French settlement, the houses dilapidated, the fields untilled and raging hordes of locusts who eat the very curtains from the windows, while the colonists are all in cafés, drinking absinthe and discussing projects for the reform of the constitution.

That is what Tartarin could have seen, if he had taken the trouble, but obsessed with his fantasy the man from Tarascon marched straight ahead, his vision limited to searching for these monstrous felines, of which there was no trace.

Since the bivouac tent obstinately refused to open and the pemmican tablets to dissolve, the hunting party was compelled to stop daily at tribal villages. Everywhere, thanks to the prince's kepi, they were received with open arms. They were lodged by chieftains in strange palaces, great white buildings without windows, where were piled up hookahs and mahogany commodes, Smyrna carpets and adjustable oil lamps, cedar-wood chests full of Turkish sequins and clocks decorated in the style of Louis Phillipe. Everywhere Tartarin was treated to fêtes and official receptions. In his honour whole villages turned out, firing volleys in the air, their burnous gleaming in the sun: after which the good chieftain would come to present the bill.

Nowhere, however, were there any more lions than there are on the Pont Neuf in Paris: but Tartarin was not discouraged, he pushed bravely on to the south. His days were spent scouring the scrub, rummaging among the dwarf palms with the end of his carbine and going "Frt!... Frt!" At each bush... Then every evening a stand-to of two or three hours... A wasted effort. No lions appeared.

One evening, however, at about six o'clock, as they were going through a wood of mastic trees, where fat quail, made lazy by the heat were jumping up from the grass, Tartarin thought he heard... but so far off... so distorted by the wind... so faint, the wonderful roar which he had heard so many times back home in Tarascon, behind the menagerie Mitaine.

At first he thought he had imagined it, but in a moment, still far distant, but now more distinct, the roaring began again, and this time one could hear, all around, the barking of village dogs; while, stricken by terror and rattling the boxes of arms and preserves, the camel's hump trembled. There could be no more doubt.... It was a lion! Quick!... Quick! Into position! Not a moment to lose!

There was, close by them, an old Marabout (the tomb of a holy man) with a white dome: the big yellow slippers of the deceased lying in a recess above the door, together with a bizarre jumble of votive offerings which hung along the walls: fragments of burnous, some gold thread, a tuft of red hair. There Tartarin installed the prince and the camel, and prepared to look for a hide. He was determined to face the lion single-handed, so he earnestly requested His Highness not to leave the spot, and for safe keeping he handed to him his wallet, a fat wallet stuffed with valuable papers and banknotes. This done our hero sought his post.

About a hundred yards in front of the Marabout, on the banks of an almost dry river, a clump of oleanders stirred in the faint twilight breeze, and it was there that Tartarin concealed himself in ambush, kneeling on one knee, in what he felt

was an appropriate position, his rifle in his hands and his big hunting knife stuck into the sandy soil of the river bank in front of him.

Night was falling. The rosy daylight turned to violet and then to a sombre blue.... Below, amongst the stones of the river bed, there glistened like a hand-mirror a little pool of clear water: a drinking place for the wild animals. On the slope of the opposite bank one could see indistinctly the path which they had made through the trees: a view which Tartarin found a bit unnerving. Add to this the vague noises of the African night, the rustle of branches, the thin yapping of jackals, and in the sky a flock of cranes passing with cries like children being murdered. You must admit that this could be unsettling, and Tartarin was unsettled, he was even very unsettled! His teeth chattered and the rifle shook in his hands; well... there are evenings when one is not at one's best, and where would be the merit if heroes were never afraid?

Tartarin was, admittedly, afraid, but in spite of his fear he held on for an hour... two hours, but heroism has its breaking point. In the dry river bed, close to him, Tartarin heard the sound of footsteps rattling the pebbles. Terror overtook him. He rose to his feet, fired both barrels blindly into the night and ran at top speed to the Marabout, leaving his knife stuck in the ground as a memorial to the most overwhelming panic that ever affected a hero.

"A moi! prince!... A Moi!... The lion!"... There was no answer. "Prince!... prince! Are you there?".... The prince was not there. Against the white wall of the Marabout was only the silhouette of the worthy camel's hump. The prince Gregory had disappeared, taking with him the wallet and the banknotes. His highness had been waiting for a month for such an opportunity.

Chapter 29.

The day after this adventurous yet tragic evening, when at first light our hero awoke and realised that the prince and his money had gone and would not return; when he saw himself alone in this little white tomb, betrayed, robbed and abandoned in the middle of savage Algeria with a one-humped camel and some loose change as his total resources, for the first time some misgivings entered his mind. He began to have doubts about Montenegro, about friendship, fame and even lions. Overcome by misery he shed bitter tears.

While he was sitting disconsolately at the door of the Marabout with his head in his hands, his rifle between his knees and watched over by the camel... behold! The undergrowth opposite was thrust aside and the thunderstruck Tartarin saw not ten paces away a gigantic lion, which advanced towards him uttering roars which shook the ragged offerings on the wall of the Marabout and even the slippers of the holy man in their recess. Only Tartarin remained unshaken. "At last!" He cried, jumping to his feet with his rifle butt to his shoulder... Pan!... Pan!... Pft!... Pft!... The lion had two explosive bullets in its head! Fragments of lion erupted like fireworks into the burning African sky, and as they fell to earth, Tartarin saw two furious negroes, who ran towards him with raised cudgels. The two negroes of Milianah... Oh! Misère!... It was the tame lion, the poor blind lion of the convent of Mahommed that the bullets of the Tarasconais had felled.

This time Tartarin had the narrowest of escapes. Drunk with fanatical fury, the two negro mendicants would surely have had him in pieces had not the God of the Christians sent him a Guardian Angel in the shape of the District Police Officer from Orleansville, who arrived down the pathway, his sabre tucked under his arm, at that very moment. The sight of the municipal kepi had an immediate calming effect on the two negroes. Stern and majestic the representative of the law took down the particulars of the affair, had the remains of the lion loaded onto the camel, and ordered the plaintiff and the accused to follow him to Orleansville, where the whole matter was placed in the hands of the legal authorities.

There then commenced a long and involved process. After the tribal Algeria in which he had been wandering, Tartarin now made the acquaintance of the no less peculiar and cock-eyed Algeria of the towns: litigious and legalistic. He

encountered a sleazy justiciary who stitched up shady deals in the back rooms of cafés. The Bohemian society of the gentlemen of the law; dossiers which stank of absinthe, white cravats speckled with drink and coffee stains. He was embroiled with ushers, solicitors, and business agents, all the locusts of officialdom, thin and ravenous, who strip the colonist down to his boots and leave him shorn leaf by leaf like a stalk of maize.

The first essential point to be decided was whether the lion had been killed on civil or military territory. In the first case Tartarin would come before a civil tribunal, in the second he would be tried by court-martial: at the word court-martial Tartarin imagined himself lying shot at the foot of the ramparts, or crouching in the depths of a dungeon... A major difficulty was that the delimitation of these two areas was extremely vague, but at last, after months of consultation, intrigue, and vigils in the sun outside the offices of the Arab Bureau, it was established that on the one hand the lion was, when killed, on military ground, but on the other hand that Tartarin when he fired the fatal shot was in civilian territory. The affair was therefore a civil matter, and Tartarin was freed on the payment of an indemnity of two thousand five hundred francs, not including costs.

How was this to be paid? The little money left after the prince's defection had long since gone on legal documents and judicial absinthe. The unfortunate lion killer was now reduced to selling off his armament rifle by rifle. He sold the daggers, the knives and coshes. A grocer bought the preserved food, a chemist what was left of the medicine chest. Even the boots went, with the bivouac tent, into the hands of a merchant of bric-a-brac. Once everything had been paid, Tartarin was left with little but the lion-skin and the camel. The lion-skin he packed up carefully and despatched to Tarascon, to the address of the brave Commandant Bravida. As for the camel, he counted on it to get him back to Algiers: not by riding it, but by selling it to raise the fare for the stage-coach, which was at least better than camel-back. Sadly the camel proved a difficult market, and no one offered to buy it at any price.

Tartarin was determined to get back to Algiers, even if it meant walking. He longed to see once more Baia's blue corslet, his house, his fountain and to rest on the white tiles of his little cloister while he awaited money to be sent from France. In these circumstances the camel did not desert him. This strange animal had developed an inexplicable affection for its master, and seeing him set out from Orleansville it followed him faithfully, regulating its pace to his and not quitting him by as much as a footstep.

At first Tartarin found it touching. This fidelity, this unshakable devotion

seemed wholly admirable; besides which the beast was no trouble and was able to find its own food. However, after a few days Tartarin grew tired of having perpetually at his heels this melancholy companion, who reminded him of all his misadventures. He began to be irritated. He took a dislike to its air of sadness to its hump and its haughty bearing. In the end he became so exasperated with it that his only wish was to be rid of it; but the camel would not be dismissed. Tartarin tried to lose it, but the camel always found him. He tried running away, but the camel could run faster. He shouted "Clear off!" and threw stones: the camel stopped and regarded him with a mournful expression, then after a few moments it resumed its pace and caught up with him. Tartarin had to resign himself to its company.

When, after eight days of walking, Tartarin, tired and dusty, saw gleaming in the distance the white terraces of Algiers, when he found himself on the outskirts of the town, on the bustling Mustapha road, amid the crowds who watched him go by with the camel in attendance, his patience snapped, and taking advantage of some traffic congestion he ducked into a field and hid in a ditch. In a few moments he saw above his head, on the causeway, the camel striding along rapidly, its neck anxiously extended. Greatly relieved to be rid of it, Tartarin entered the town by a side road which ran along by the wall of his house.

On his arrival at his Moorish house, Tartarin halted in astonishment. The day was ending, the streets deserted. Through the low arched doorway, which the negress had forgotten to close, could be heard laughter, the clinking of glasses, the popping of a champagne cork and the cheerful voice of a woman singing loud and clear:

"Aimes-tu Marco la belle,

"La danse aux salons en fleurs..."

"Tron de Diou!" Said Tartarin, blenching, and he rushed into the courtyard.

Unhappy Tartarin! What a spectacle awaited him!.... Amid bottles, pastries, scattered cushions, tambourine, guitar, and hookah, Baia stood, without her blue jacket or her corslet, dressed only in a silver gauze blouse and big pink pantaloons, singing "Marco la belle" with a naval officer's hat tipped over one ear... while on a rug at her feet surfeited with love and confitures, was Barbassou, the infamous Barbassou, roaring with laughter as he listened to her.

The arrival of Tartarin, haggard, thin, covered in dust, with blazing eyes and bristling chechia cut short this enjoyable Turco-Marseillaise orgy. Baia uttered a little cry, and like a startled leveret she bolted into the house, but Barbassou was not in the least put out and laughed more than ever: "Hé!... Hé!... Monsieur

Tartarin. What did I tell you? You can hear that she knows French all right.”

Tartarin advanced, furious: “Captain!..” He began; but then, leaning over the balcony with a rather vulgar gesture, Baia threw down a few well-chosen words. Tartarin, deflated, sat down on a drum, his Moor spoke in the argot of the Marseilles back-streets.

“When I warned you not to trust Algerian women,” Said Captain Barbassou sententiously, “The same applied to your Montenegrin prince.” Tartarin looked up, “Do you know where the prince is?” he asked.

“Oh, he is not far away. He will spend the next five years in the fine prison at Mustapha. The clown was foolish enough to be caught stealing... and anyway this is not the first time His Highness has been inside, he has already done three years in gaol somewhere, and... hang on!... I believe it was in Tarascon!

“In Tarascon!” Cried Tartarin, suddenly enlightened, “that is why I never saw him there. All he knew of Tarascon was what he could see from a cell window.”

“Hé!... without a doubt.... Ah! My poor M. Tartarin, you have to keep both eyes wide open in this devilish country if you don’t want to be taken in. Like that business of the Muezzin.”

“What business?... What Muezzin?”

“Ti!... Pardi!” The Muezzin opposite, who was courting Baia; all Algiers knew about it. Not all the prayers he was chanting were addressed to Allah, some were directed to the little one, and he was making propositions under your nose. “It seems that everyone in this beastly country is a crook”, Wailed the unhappy Tartarin. Barbassou shrugged his shoulders, “My dear fellow, you know how it is. All these sort of places are the same. If you take my advice you will go back to Tarascon as quickly as possible.”

“That’s easy to say, but what am I to do for money? Don’t you know how they robbed me out there in the desert?”

“Don’t worry about that,” laughed the Captain, “the Zouave is leaving tomorrow and I’ll take you back if you want... does that suit you, colleague?... All right... Good! There’s only one thing left to do, there is still some champagne and some pastries left. Come, sit down and let bygones be bygones.” After a little delay which his dignity required, our hero accepted the offer. They sat down and poured out a drink. Hearing the clink of glasses, Baia came down and finished singing Marco la Belle, and the party went on until late in the night.

Chapter 30.

It is mid-day. The Zouave has steam up and is ready to depart. Up above on the balcony of the café Valentin, a group of officers aim the telescope, and come one by one, in order of seniority, to look at the lucky little ship which is going to France. It is the principle entertainment of the general staff. Down below, the water of the anchorage sparkles.... The breeches of the old Turkish cannons, mounted along the quay, glisten in the sunshine.... Passengers arrive.... Baggage is loaded onto tenders.

Tartarin does not have any baggage. He comes down from the Rue de la Marine by the little market, full of bananas and water-melons, accompanied by his friend Captain Barbassou.

Tartarin de Tarascon has left on the Moorish shore his arms, his equipment and his illusions, and is preparing to sail back to Tarascon with nothing in his pockets but his hands. Scarcely, however, had he set foot in the captain's launch, when a breathless creature scrambled down from the square above and galloped towards him. It was the camel, the faithful camel, which for twenty-four hours had been searching for its master.

When Tartarin saw it, he changed colour and pretended not to know it; but the camel was insistent. It frisked along the quay. It called to its friend and regarded him with tender looks. "Take me away!" Its sad eyes seemed to say, "Take me away with you, far away from this mock Arabia, this ridiculous Orient, full of locomotives and stage coaches, where I as a second-class dromadary do not know what will become of me. You are the last Teur, I am the last camel, let us never part, Oh my Tartarin!" "Is that your camel?" Asked the Captain.

"No!... No!... Not mine." Replied Tartarin, who trembled at the thought of entering Tarascon with this absurd escort; and shamelessly repudiating the companion of his misfortunes he repelled with his foot the soil of Algeria and pushed the boat out from the shore. The camel sniffed at the water, flexed its joints and leapt headlong in behind the boat, where it swam in convoy toward the Zouave, its hump floating on the water like a gourd and its neck lying on the surface like the ram of a trireme.

The boat and the camel came alongside the Zouave at the same time. "I don't know what I should do about this dromadary." Said the captain, "I think I'll take it on board and present it to the zoo at Marseille, I can't just leave it here." So by means of block and tackle the wet camel was hoisted onto the deck of the Zouave, which then set sail.

Tartarin spent most of the time in his cabin. Not that the sea was rough or that the chechia had to much to suffer, but because whenever he appeared on the deck the camel made such a ridiculous fuss of its master. You never saw a camel so attached to anyone as this.

Hour by hour, when he looked through the porthole, Tartarin could see the Algerian sky turn paler, until one morning, in a silvery mist, he heard to his delight the bells of Marseilles. The Zouave had arrived.

Our man, who had no baggage, disembarked without a word and hurried across Marseilles, fearing all the time that he might be followed by the camel, and he did not breathe easily until he was seated in a third-class railway carriage, on his way to Tarascon... a false sense of security. They had not gone far from Marseilles when heads appeared at windows and there were cries of astonishment, Tartarin looked out in turn and what did he see but the inescapable camel coming down the line behind the train with a remarkable turn of speed.

Tartarin resumed his seat and closed his eyes. After this disastrous expedition he had counted on getting back home unrecognised, but the presence of this confounded camel made it impossible. What a return to make, Bon Dieu!... No money... No lions... Nothing but a camel!.... "Tarascon!... Tarascon!"... It was time to get out.

To Tartarin's utter astonishment, the heroic chechia had barely appeared in the doorway, when it was greeted by a great cry of "Vive Tartarin!... Vive Tartarin!" Which shook the glass vault of the station roof. "Vive Tartarin!... Hurrah for the lion killer!" Then came fanfares and a choir. Tartarin could have died, he thought this was a hoax: but no, all Tarascon was there, tossing their hats in the air and shouting his praises. There stood the brave Commandant Bravida, Costecalde the gunsmith, the President Ladevèze, the chemist and all the noble body of hat shooters, who pressed round their chief and carried him all the way down the steps.

How remarkable are the effects of the "mirage". The skin of the blind lion sent to the Commandant was the cause of all this tumult. At the sight of this modest trophy, displayed at the club, Tarascon and beyond Tarascon the whole of the Midi had worked themselves into a state of excitement. "The Semaphore" had

spoken. A complete scenario had been invented. This was no longer one lion killed by Tartarin, it was ten lions, twenty lions, a whole troop of lions. So Tartarin, when he reached Marseilles was already famous, and an enthusiastic telegram had warned his home town of his imminent arrival.

The excitement of the populace reached its peak when a fantastic animal, covered in dust and sweat, stumbled down the station steps behind our hero. For a moment they thought that the Tarasque had returned.

Tartarin reassured his fellow citizens, "It is my camel" He said, and already under the influence of the Tarascon sun, that fine sun which induces fanciful exaggeration, he stroked the camel's hump and added, "It is a noble creature, it saw me kill all my lions." So saying, he took the arm of the Commandant, who was blushing with pride, and followed by his camel, surrounded by hat shooters and acclaimed by the people, he proceeded peacefully toward the little house of the baobab; and as he walked along he began the story of his great expedition.

"There was one particular evening," He said, "When I was out in the heart of the Sahara..."

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