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Author: Henri de Crignelle

Translator: William Jesse

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Transcriber's Note

The punctuation and spelling from the original text have been faithfully preserved. Only obvious typographical errors have been corrected.



LE MORVAN,

[A DISTRICT OF FRANCE,]
ITS
WILD SPORTS, VINEYARDS AND FORESTS;
WITH
Legends, Antiquities, Rural and Local Sketches.

BY
HENRI DE CRIGNELLE,
ANCIEN OFFICIER DE DRAGONS.

TRANSLATED FROM THE ORIGINAL MANUSCRIPT IN FRENCH,

BY
CAPTAIN JESSE,
AUTHOR OF "NOTES OF A HALFPAY;" "LIFE OF BRUMMELL;"
"MURRAY'S HAND-BOOK FOR RUSSIA," ETC., ETC.

SAUNDERS AND OTLEY, CONDUIT-STREET.
1851.

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BOLT-COURT.

PREFACE.

BORN in one of the most beautiful provinces of France, in a country of noble forests and extensive vineyards; brought up in the open air amidst the blue hills, and ever wandering over the fields and mountains with a gun on my arm—all the hours of my youth, if I may so say, were spent in search of partridges and hares in the dewy stubbles, and in the pursuit of the wild cat and the boar in the shady depths of the woods.

When relating the adventures of these different shooting rambles to a friend, talking over with him our mode of sporting so different from that of England, and when in imagination I carried him along with me into the dells and dark ravines, and described to him the chase and death-struggle of the ferocious wolf, or the odd characters and antediluvian customs of the primitive people amongst whom I passed the days of my happy boyhood, astonished, he could hardly believe that such sports and such singular personages existed within so short a distance of his own country.

"Why not scribble all this?" he would say, "your sketches would make capital light reading."

"But to write is not easy; and, besides, what a poor figure I and my dogs and wolves, woodcocks and vineyards, would cut after the terrible Mr. Gordon Cumming. How could any description of mine interest the public in comparison with those of that famous shot and his three coffee-coloured Hottentots, with his bands of panthers and giraffes, his troops of yellow lions dancing sarabands round the fountains, and his jungles and swamps swarming with elephants and hippopotami?"

"But we might be able to go to Le Morvan," said my friend, "whereas few indeed, if they wished it, can go to the South of Africa to shoot elephants through the small ribs; neither is it probable that many of us would like to pass several years of their valuable lives shut up in a loose, rolling, sea-bathing-machine-like wagon, with their own beloved shadow alone for all Christian company. Let us have a narrative of your exploits?"

"You do not consider what you ask," I replied; "my gossip may have amused you, but the effusions of my pen would to a certainty make you yawn like graves."

"Nonsense," whispered the flatterer, "you will open to us a new country, you will confer a real service upon hundreds of restless Englishmen, who when summer comes know not for the life of them where to go, or where not to go;—write your work, and advise them to turn their steps to Le

Morvan at the time of the vintage."

But now another, a huge difficulty, sprung up. Printers do not lend their types for nothing any more than they give gratis their time and paper. To publish a book is always an expensive affair; misfortune, which had touched me with its wing, which has been the sad guest of my house, deprived me of the power of undertaking it myself: and where to find a person so generous as to take upon himself the responsibility of the undertaking? Happily I was in England, in the land of kind hearts and warm sympathies. A noble lady, the mother of a distinguished English nobleman, who passes her life in doing good, took an interest in my forlorn history, and was pleased to honour me with her patronage. With this mantle of protection thrown around me, and my generous friend having undertaken to bear the responsibilities of publishing, the difficulties were soon swept away, and *Le Morvan* was written.

I had hoped that I should in this Preface be permitted to mention her name, which would have been less a compliment to her than an honour to me; but her modesty has refused this public acknowledgment of my unbounded gratitude,—a veil of respectful reserve shall therefore remain suspended over her name. As for me and mine, we shall treasure it in our thankful hearts—every day shall we pray that the Great Giver of all good may confer upon her His most precious and gracious blessings.

HENRI DE CRIGNELLE.

LONDON, *August*, 1851.

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LE MORVAN.

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CHAPTER I.

English propensity to ramble—Where and how—Le Morvan—Vezelay—Description of the town—Historical associations connected with it—Charles IX.—Persecutions of the Protestants—View from Vezelay—Scenery and wild sports—The Author—Object of the Work.

EVERY nation has its characteristics, and amongst those which are peculiar to the genius of the English people, is their ardent and insatiable love of wandering.

To locomote is absolutely necessary to every Englishman; in his heart is profoundly rooted a passion for long journeys; each and all of them, old and young, healthy and sickly, would if they could take not merely the grand tour, but circulate round the two hemispheres with all the pleasure imaginable. At a certain period of the year, when the weathercock points the right way, the sun burns in the sign of the Lion, and the husbandman bends his weary form to gather in the golden corn, the legs of the rich Englishman begin to be nervously agitated, he feels a sense of suffocation, and pants for change—of air, of place, of everything; he girds up his loins, and without throwing a glance behind him, it is Hey, Presto! begone! and he is off. Where?

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It is autumn, blessed autumn, the season of harvest and sunny days; the English are everywhere—they fly from their own dear island like clouds of chilly swallows, light upon Europe as thick as thrushes in an orchard, and are soon mingled with every nation of the earth, like the blue corn flowers in the ripe barley fields. Yes, from north to south, from east to west, go where you will, you cannot proceed ten miles without meeting a smiling rosy English girl coquettishly concealed under her large green veil, and a grave British gentleman, whistling to the wide world in the sheer enjoyment of having nothing to do but to look at it.

I have seen green veils climbing the Pyramids; I have seen green veils diving down into the dark mines of the Oural; I have seen an English gentleman perched like a chamois on the top of St. Bernard, hat in hand, roaring "God save the Queen." I have seen some sipping Syracusan wine, puffing a comfortable cloud from obese cigars, most irreverently seated in the big nose of St. Carlo Borromeo. One-half of England is gone to China, the other half to Africa; these will speak to you of Kamschatka, those of the mountains of the Moon, just as a London cockney or a Parisian *badaud* would speak to you of Greenwich or of Bagnolet. Some have boxed with the bears of the Pyrenees; others have killed lions and tigers by dozens; one has crossed the Nile on a crocodile, another vows he waltzed with a dying hippopotamus, and several have bagged camelopards and elephants by scores. In short, they have trodden with a bold disdainful step all

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the high-roads and by-roads of our wondrous planet, displaying, in every quarter of the compass, the daring and devil-may-care spirit of their youth and the spleen of their mature age, as well as the yellow guineas from their long and well-filled purses.

Well, then, ask of all this wandering tribe, who boast of having been everywhere, and seen everything; ask those travelling birds who have flown through France and Germany, Spain, Italy, Greece, and Palestine; who have sledged in Russia and fished in Norway; who have lost themselves in the prairies of the far West, or in the Pampas, the gorges of the Andes, or the Alleghanies; who have bronzed their epidermis in the fierce heat of the tropics, or moistened their fair *chevelure* in the diamond spray of Niagara; who have, in fine, journeyed through calm and hurricane, snow-storms, sirocco, and simoom; who have rubbed noses—male noses—of the tattooed savage; mounted donkeys, ostriches, camelopards, lamas, and dromedaries; mules, wild asses, negroes, and elephants; ask them all if once in their lives—one single once—they have seen or even heard of LE MORVAN?

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Not one of these thousands will answer yes. Le Morvan, where is it? what is Le Morvan? Is it a mountain, a church, a river, a star, a flower, a bird? Le Morvan, who knows anything about Le Morvan? Echo answers, "Who knows?" Paddy Blake's replies, "Nobody." And yet all of you roving English, who delight in athletic sports and rural scenes—the forest glade and murmuring streams, a view halloo and the gallant hound; who love the bleak and healthy moors, the cool retreats, the flowery paths, and mountain solitudes, how happy would you be in Le Morvan. Where, then, is Le Morvan?

Le Morvan is a district of France, in which are included portions of the departments of the Nièvre and the Yonne, having on the west the vineyards of Burgundy, and on the east the mountains of the Nivernois. Its ancient and picturesque capital, Vezelay, crowns a hill 2,000 feet in height, and commands a panoramic view of the country for thirty miles round. It has all the characteristics of a town of the feudal times, with high embattled and loopholed walls, numerous towers, and deep and strong gateways, under which are still to be seen the grooves of the portcullis, the warder's guard-room, and the hooks that supported the heavy drawbridge.

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The capital of Le Morvan partially owed its rise to a celebrated nunnery, founded by Gerard de Roussillon, a great hero of romance and chivalry, who lived, loved, and fought under Pepin, the father of the grand Charlemagne. This nunnery, which was sacked and burnt to the ground by the Saracens, those terrible warriors of the East, was restored in the ninth century, and fortified; and as the sainted inmates were believed to have amongst their relics a tress of the golden hair of the beautiful and repentant Magdalen, troops of the faithful—and people were ready to believe a great deal in those days—flocked to Vezelay, when it soon became a large and flourishing town.

In the tenth century, when the people, in their endeavour to shake off a few links of their fetters, refused to bend their bodies in the dust before their lords and their minds before their priests—when the seeds of liberty, till then lying in unprofitable ground, though watered for centuries by the tears of tyranny and oppression, first germinated and rose above the earth, who gave the signal of resistance in France?—the inhabitants of Vezelay. Yes; it is to her citizens that the honour belongs of having first refused to submit to the power, the domineering power, of political and ecclesiastical rule; it was her brave inhabitants who, assembling in secret, thought not of the peril, but, having promised help and protection one to the other, flew to arms. A short and desperate struggle ensued, but the victory remained in the hands of the abbot of Vezelay. Hundreds of brave men were put, without mercy, to the sword, and many, with less mercy, burnt alive or died by the torture in the dark dungeons of the abbatical palace. Vezelay still preserves in its archives the names of twelve of these martyrs.

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Again in the twelfth century, when the cry to the rescue of the Holy Sepulchre shook all Europe, and every nation poured forth her tens of thousands to drive the infidel from that land in which their Redeemer had lived and died an ignominious and cruel death, it was at Vezelay that Pope Eugenius III. assembled a great council of the princes of the church, the great barons, and chivalry of those times. It was in her immense cathedral, one of the oldest and largest in the kingdom, amidst the clang of arms, war cries, and religious chaunts, and in the presence of Louis le Jeune, King of France, that St. Bernard preached, in 1146, the Second Crusade.

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Vezelay is celebrated as having been the birth-place of Beza, the great Protestant Reformer (1519), who succeeded not only to the place but to the influence of Calvin, and was, after that eminent man's death, regarded as the head and leader of the Genevese church.

It was to Vezelay, the only town that dared to offer them the protection of its walls, that the unfortunate Protestants fled after the horrible massacre of St. Bartholomew's—the base political cruelty of the brutal homicide, Charles IX. Tracked and hunted down like wild beasts, and a price set upon their heads, they found staunch and noble hearts in the inhabitants of Vezelay; but, ere long, an army of their insatiable foes arrived and besieged the town, and treachery at a postern one stormy night made them masters of it, when scenes of horror followed under the mask of religion that even at this distance of time make one recoil with terror and disgust at the dogmas of the corrupt faith which dictated them.

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Roasting men alive, and boiling women, dashing out the brains of many a cherub boy and

prattling girl, was the pleasing and satisfactory pastime with which Pope Gregory, Catherine de Medicis, and her congenial son gladdened their Christian hearts. The blood of their victims still cries to us from the ground of their Golgotha; for on the south side of the town there is a large green field, called *Le Champ des Huguenots*. The damning fact, from which this spot received its name, has been handed down to us by the historian. It is as follows:

The Catholics, having instituted a strict search in the woods and caverns of the environs, made so many prisoners that they were puzzled what to do with them—nay, in what manner they should take their lives. Among many ingenious experiments, it was suggested that they should bury them alive up to their necks in the field to which we have alluded; and this was accordingly done with nine of them, whose heads were bowled at with cannon-balls taken from the adjoining rampart, as if they had been blocks of wood instead of live human heads. The shrieks of the miserable beings excited no compassion; on the contrary, it afforded amusement to their executioners: so that games of skittles upon the same principle were played the whole length of this meadow.

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Turning aside from these execrable deeds of man to the works of Nature and of Nature's God, which have always been and always must be lovely and worthy of our deepest admiration, let us dwell for a moment upon the splendid view from the castle-terrace, which forms the principal promenade of Vezeley. Shaded by large and venerable trees, through the lofty branches of which many a storm has howled for nearly four hundred years, the sight from hence is one of the finest panoramic views in France.

All around, whether on the slope of the hills by the river-side, in the middle distance, or near the mountains which form the horizon, are seen hundreds of little villages, and many a white villa scattered among the green vines as daisies on the turf. To the left and right are St. Père and Akin, two hamlets, which seem like faithful dogs sleeping at the foot of the mountain crowned by Vezeley. The province in which this cloud-capped fortress-town is situated is a retired spot out of the beaten track of the tourist, the man of business, or the man of pleasure—lost, as it were, in the very heart of beautiful France, like a wild strawberry in the depth of the forest—encircled by woods, and unknown to the foreigner, who, in his rapid journey to Geneva or to Lyons, almost elbows it without dreaming of its existence.

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Le Morvan rears in its sylvan depths a population of hardy and honest men and lovely women, fresh as roses, and gay as butterflies. There the soft evening breezes are charged with the songs of ten thousand birds, the odours of the eglantine, the lily of the valley, and the violet, which, shaking off its winter slumbers, opens its dark blue eye and combines its perfume with that of its snowy companion.

Le Morvan is a country that would delight an Englishman, for it is full of game; here the sportsman may vary his pleasures as fancy dictates. The forest abounds with deer; the plain with rabbits and the timid hare; and in the vineyards, during the merry season of the vintage, the fat red-stockinged and gray-clad partridges are bagged by bushels. Here the sportsman may watch in the open glades the treacherous wild cat and the bounding roebuck; and, should these sports appear too tame, he may, if foot and heart are sound, plunge into the dark recesses of the forest in pursuit of the savage and grisly boar, or the fierce and prowling wolf.

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When evening comes, bringing with it peace and rest to the industrious peasant, when the moon shall light her bright lamp in the star-spangled heavens, and shed her silvery rays across the plain, the hunter may lead forth the village belle, and foot it merrily on the mossy greensward, to the sound of the bagpipe and the rustic flute, by fountains which never cease their monotonous but soothing plaint, and under the long shadows of the ancient oaks and tall acacias.

Happiness, says Solomon, consists not in the possession of that gold for which men toil so unremittingly and grave deep wrinkles on the heart and brow. Happiness lights not her torch at the crystal lustres in the halls of royalty; she rarely chooses for her home the marble palaces of the wealthy, nor is she often the companion of the great, robed in costly apparel; rarely does she braid her hair with pearls, or wear the rosy lightning of the ruby on her fair bosom.

Happiness is known only to him who, free and contented, lives unknown in his little corner, deaf to the turmoil and insensible to the excitements of the selfish crowd, and ignorant of the sorrows and sufferings of great cities. She is found in the enjoyment of the sunshine and the open air, in the shady groves and flowery fields, by the side of the murmuring brooks, and in the society of the gay, frank, and simple-minded peasant of my own dear country. Oh! my white and pretty *pavillon*, whose walls are clad with fragrant creepers and the luscious vine, whose porch is scented with the woodbine and the rose—oh! lovely valleys, dark forests, deep blue lakes which sleep unruffled in the bosom of the hills, beautiful vine-clad hills, where in the morning of my youth I chased those flying flowers, the bright and painted butterflies—oh! when, when shall I see you all again—like the bird of passage, which, when the winter is over, returns to his sunny home? When shall I see thee again? Oh! my sweet Le Morvan! Oh! my native land! Happy, thrice happy they who cherish in their hearts the love of nature, who prefer her sublime and incomparable beauties to the false and artificial works of man, accumulated with so much cost and care within the walls of her great cities. Happy, too, are those who have not been carried

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away by the fatal flood of misfortune from the paternal hearth, who have always lived in sight of that home which sheltered their merry childhood, and whose lives, pure and peaceful as the noiseless stream of the valley, close in calmness and serenity like the twilight of a bright summer's day.

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CHAPTER II.

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Le Morvan—Forests—Climate—Patriarchs and Damosels—Peasants of the plain and the mountaineer—Jovial Curés—Their love of Burgundy—The Doctor and the Curé.

LE MORVAN, anciently Morvennum, or Pagus Morvinus, as Cæsar calls it in his Commentaries, comprises, as we have before remarked, a portion of the departments of the Nièvre and the Yonne, lying between vine-clad Burgundy and the mountains of the Nivernois. Its productions are various; in the plains are grown wheat, rye, hemp, oats, and flax: on the mountain side the grape is largely cultivated; and in the valleys are rich verdant meadows, where countless droves of oxen, knee-deep in the luxuriant grass, feed and fatten in peace and abundance.

But the real and inexhaustible wealth of Le Morvan is in its forests. In these several thousand trees are felled annually, sawn into logs, branded and thrown by cart-loads into the neighbouring torrent, which, on reaching a more tranquil stream, are lashed into rafts, when they drift onwards to the Seine, and are eventually borne on the waters of that river to the capital. The forests of the Nièvre are some of the most extensive in France; thick and dark, and formed of ancient oaks, maple, and spreading beech, they cover nearly 200,000 acres of ground. Those of the Yonne are larger but of a character far less wild.

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The climate of this part of France is delightful; with the exception of occasional showers, very little rain falls; the sky is serene, and scarcely ever is a vagabond cloud seen in the ethereal blue to throw a shadow upon the lovely landscape beneath. For six months of the year the sun is daily refulgent in the heavens, and sets evening after evening in all his glorious majesty. But in the woods it is not thus; the storms there are sometimes terrible, and, like those of the tropics, arise and terminate with wonderful rapidity. These tempests, which purify the atmosphere, leave behind them a delicious coolness, the trees and shrubs, as they shake from their trembling leaves their sparkling tears, appear so bright—the flowers which raise again their drooping heads, load the air with such delightful odours—the whole forest, in short, seems so refreshed and full of life, that every one hails their approach, the toil-worn peasant breathes without complaint the sultry air, and observes with pleasure the dark and lowering clouds gathering in the far horizon.

From the mountains, those huge ladders of granite that God has planted upon the earth, as if to invite ungrateful man to come nearer to him, descend many a stream and dancing rill of pure and crystal waters. No part of France can be said to be more salubrious. "Centenarians" are by no means uncommon, and a patriarch of that age may be found in several families.

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When Sunday comes, always a *jour de fête* as well as a day of prayer, it is very pleasing to see one of these venerable men, dressed in his best clothes, walking to church at the head of his children, grand-children, and great grand-children. Long and of snowy whiteness is his hair, and glossy white as threads of purest silver is his beard—his hat, of quaker broadness in the brim, is generally encircled, in the early days of Spring, with a wreath of the common primrose, and his dark cloth mantle, of home-spun fabric, hangs gracefully on his shoulders, showing underneath it the dark red sash that girds his still healthy and vigorous frame. Tall and grave, erect and majestic as the oaks of their native forests, these patriarchs bespeak every one's respect, and when looking on them you might imagine they were men of another age, a generation of by-gone years, you might fancy them some ancient Druids that have escaped from their dusty tombs, from centuries of night, to tread once more the pathways of this planet.

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And the women, heaven and earth! how sweetly pretty, how amiable and adorable; and such eyes, dark and lustrous!—full of witchcraft, burning and humid as an April sun after a shower. Some there are, also, of pensive blue, pregnant with promises, soft and almond-shaped, like the divine eyes of the Italian Cenci. Supple as the young and slender branches of willow, are these divinities, fresh as new opened tulips, and brisk and gay as the golden-speckled trout in the sparkling current. In their charms is found a terrestrial paradise, a compound of delicious qualities which intoxicate the senses, hook the heart, and like the bite of the Sicilian tarantella, steep the loved one in delirium.

Yes, the women of Le Morvan are lovely, ardent, and tender-hearted as the dove, especially those who dwell within the forest districts; for nothing contributes so much to bring forth the loving principle of the affections as the silent melancholy of the umbrageous woods, and the soft and perfumed breezes that pervade them. Here, in the dusk and stillness of the summer evenings, these wood-nymphs hear in the lofty branches of the linden, the endearing love songs of the feathered tribe, and when night throws its charitable gloom over their blushing cheeks, they whisper at the trysting place what they have heard and seen to their rustic admirers.

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We have just briefly sketched the two extremes, the old men of Le Morvan and its sprightly

damosels: we must now mention the inhabitants generally, and these vary like its productions according to locality. The peasant of the plains is civil, gentle, and industrious, but cunning and dangerous as an old fox; and if he thinks money may be squeezed from your pocket, be sure there will be no sleep for him till he has taken some out of it. Full of fun, he loves above all the dance, the song, the merry laugh, and good cheer—and the uncorking of a bottle would be for him a supreme delight, if this excellence itself was not superseded, by the far greater blessedness of emptying it.

The inhabitant of the mountain, on the other hand, is sober, severe and roughly barked—clothed with silence and gravity, smiling but once a year—the day he has cheated a good man of the plain; he does not please so much at first sight: but if in any danger, if you are surprised by a hurricane, surrounded with wolves; or you have lost your way, in a night as dark as the grave itself, you call and ask his help, oh! it is then that his sterling qualities shine forth in all their splendour. Always ready, always on the look out, the ear for ever bent to catch the well-known sounds of the forest, the slightest indication of distress awakes his vigilance; it is then he comes, it is then he flies, and his arm, gun, and eyes—his cabin, dog, and lean horse are all at your command.

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Admirable example of courage and of devotedness: money for him is nothing; happy to be useful, he obliges for the mere pleasure of obliging. Many, many times have I seen poachers, cottagers, charcoal-burners, and wood-cutters, poor as Job, hardly breeched, hungry as a whole Irish borough, leave their work, their sport, their field, their tree half down,—abandon in the roads, under the guard of the dogs, their carts and oxen, and go some dozen of miles, through storm and tempest, through rush, rock, and swamp, to set a sportsman in his right way again. Without saying a word, with steps attendant on his weary progress, they trudge on before, making a sign for him to follow; and when they have placed him once more on his road, a nod, a shake of the hand, a smile, a kind word falling from his lips, pays them the full price of all their troubles. Never have I seen one of them accept the least pecuniary reward for such services—they do nothing but their duty, they say; and as they are happy in the firm conviction that the whole forest belongs to them, they think they are only doing the honours of their green drawing-rooms. Thus it always happens, that when, by their good care, you have escaped certain danger, it is with great difficulty, and only after a deluge of rhetoric, that they consent to accept for their daughters or wives a red wool dress, a gold cross, or a row of large blue Pundaram beads; or for themselves a few dozen of iron bullets, a bag of shot, or a flask of powder. This abnegation, this frankness of the heart, this kind sympathy for every stranger, is universal among the mountaineers; these benevolent and kindly feelings are a portion of their holy traditions, and as such are most religiously grafted by every mother into the soft wax-like hearts of her dear little ones.

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But while delighting to describe the virtues of these denizens of the forests, these amiable fauns and jolly satyrs, I must not forget those jovial trencher-men, the *curés* of Le Morvan. Every sportsman possesses, or should possess, the digestion of an ostrich; for his appetite is generally prodigious, and the viands that fall in his way are not always the most savoury. When, however, the venison pasty, the truffled turkey, or the *pain de gibier* is within his reach, no one is so capable of enjoying and doing justice to these delicacies of the table, of knocking off so dexterously the neck of the champagne bottle when the corkscrew is absent, or whose legs are stretched out so gracefully at the sight of brimming glasses and *recherché* viands.

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In these, his fallen moments, and after a good day's sport, a Morvinian would tell you he could drink all the Burgundian cellars dry,—aye, and those of Champagne too; and as to smoking, why, he would smoke a whole crop of tobacco.

To all keen sportsmen, therefore, who love good eating and wine, and intend to pay a visit to Le Morvan, I would give this piece of advice, and I would say to them, place it in the secret drawer of your memory; nay, carry it written, and, if necessary, painted on your knapsack or scratched upon your gun—fail not to make the acquaintance of the *curé* the darling *curés*. Ask who are they that love the best *cuisine*—who dote upon the most delicious morsels—who will have the oldest, purest, and most generous wines?—you will be answered, the *curés*. For whom are destined the largest trout, the fattest capons, and the best parts of the venison?—for whom the softest and most choice liqueurs, wine of the best *bouquet*, the largest truffles, the most luscious honey, the best vegetables, and finest fruits?—for the *curés*. And the most clever men-cooks, the happiest receipts, and latest culinary inventions—for whom are they? the answer is always, for *messieurs les curés*. Forget them not, therefore, for they are really worth remembering; besides, they have excellent hearts and are capital fellows, boon companions, full of *bonhommie* and good-nature: in fact, such *curés* it is impossible to find anywhere else.

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But the great Architect of the universe has said, nothing is perfect—everything human has its weak point. Well, it cannot be helped, and it must be told, the *curés* of Le Morvan have their weak points; trifles, to be sure—mere bagatelles—but still they have them. They are rather *too* fond of old wine and good cheer. These two charming little defects excepted,—you have in the Morvinian *curé* goodness double distilled, and the essence of generosity, and, be it said, abnegation. This love of the bottle they imbibe from their dear colleagues of Burgundy; for it is well known, and has never been disputed, that the Burgundian *curés* are the greatest

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exterminators, uncorkers, and emptiers of wine-bottles in all Christendom. The first thing these jovial clergymen think of when they open their eyes in the morning, is an invocation to Bacchus, somewhat in the following strain: "O Bacchus! son of Semele, divine wine-presser! O vineyards! full of the purple grape! O wine-press! inestimable machine!" &c. Their second movement is to extend the right arm, and clasp within their digits a flask of old Pouilli, the contents of which they swallow without once stopping to take breath. "An infallible remedy," say they, "against the devil and all future indigestions."

Fortified thus with this their first orison, they throw on their cassock, and descend to the cellar, to count the bottles, or tap and taste the barrels of some doubtful vintage. The thoroughbred Burgundian *curé*, particularly one who has lived and got old and fat in the solitude of a retired presbytery,—whose rubicund nose reveals his admiration for the vineyards of his native province, and whose three chins tell you that with pullets, and venison, and clouted cream he has lined his scrip,—is certainly one of the most jovial and best of men.

Ask him for indulgences, absolution, masses and prayers for the living and the dead; he will grant them all. Ask him for his niece in marriage; ask him to marry you, to baptize you, to bury you; he will do it all—yes, all for nothing! It is not in his nature to refuse anything. Ask him for his new cassock, his cane, or his hat, his black silk stockings, or his silver buckles, and they are yours. No one so ready to forgive an insult or forget an injury as he. But, by the blood of the Mirabels, give him not a bottle of bad or sour wine, for he will neither forget nor forgive it; and above all things, never give him a hint that it would be well if he gave up his favourite fluid, for be assured, you would forfeit his friendship for ever. Sooner would he consent to lose a leg or all his teeth, than give up his life-loved Burgundy! Tell him he will have an attack of apoplexy; tell him that he will be taken off suddenly by inflammation, and that water therefore should be his beverage; he will reply with a smack of his lips, and a castanet noise with his fingers. "Nonsense, my boy—stuff and rubbish! Pass the wine, my son; pass it again. Pass the ham, gentlemen. Fill a bumper. Hurrah for old Burgundy! hurrah for her wines! Confound the pale fluid, and a fig for the gout!" Such are the ebullitions of his heart in his jovial moments; and the following lines, which would spoil in the translation, give a lively picture of them:

"Pour trop bien boire un curé de Bourgogne
De son pauvre œil se trouvait défermé,
Un docteur vint:—Voici de la besogne
Dit-il, pour plus d'un jour;—Je patienterai!
Ça vous boirez:—Eh bien! soit, je boirai!
Quatre grands mois:—Plutôt douze, mon maître.
Cette tisane!—A moi? hurla le prêtre,
Vade retro! Guérir par le poison!
Non, par ma soif! perdons une fenêtre,
Puisqu'il le faut, mais—*Sauvons la Maison.*"

CHAPTER III.

Geology—Fossil shells—Antediluvian salmon—The Druids—Chindonax, the High Priest—
Roman antiquities—Julius Cæsar's hunting-box—Lugubrious village—Carré-les-Tombes—
The Inquisitive Andalusian.

LE MORVAN, independently of its hunting and fishing, its lovely climate and fine wines, pretty girls and jolly *curés*, possesses a more important class of beauties and perfections, secrets and enigmas, over which the *savans* would pore and ponder through many a day and many a night: those men who, like Eve, long to grasp the fatal apple—the apple which destroys while it attracts—the apple whose flavour, alas! is so bitter,—the apple of science. Let the geologists, who are ever bending in earnest study over the mysteries of nature, and breaking stones by the road-side,—who are ever seeking to analyse the *matériel* of creation,—who are always contemplating the internal and geognostic constitution of the globe, the red or the blue clay, the yellow gravel, the trappe, the limestone, the granite, or the slate, to satisfy themselves what this poor planet is made of,—let them come and ransack Le Morvan. Let them bring their hammers and chisels, their compasses and barometers, and above all, their passport,—precious document! an hundredfold more useful in France, in these liberty days, than a pair of shoes or a shirt,—let them come, and I promise them endless discoveries, a rich and ample harvest.

In the meadow lands, when, for the purpose of sinking wells, the soil is penetrated to an immense depth, the workmen often come to thick strata of schist, in which they find imbedded trunks and roots of trees, and stalks of plants and ferns, which now grow in tropical climates only.

In the highest and steepest parts of the mountain chain may be found marine petrifications of every variety—the sea-hedgehog, the oyster, the mussel, and the star-fish; and in the beds of trachytic rock, deposited in such order that one might fancy they had been placed there by a careful and tasty housewife, are layers of the most curious shells, univalve, bivalve, subbivalve and multivalve, madrepors, and shapeless remnants of creatures now no longer known, and

petrified fish.

Some few years ago, an engineer, who was carrying a road through a rock in the mountain called the Val d'Arcy, found a salmon in the most perfect condition, even with head and tail, the unhappy wretch enclosed in the heart of a large stone. I should certainly have pronounced this fish to be a cod, had not science decided it was a salmon of a large species—*genus salmo*, sixty vertebræ. It is now to be seen in the Natural History department, section *Salmonidæ*, of the Museum in the Jardin des Plantes, at Paris.

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Poor old salmon! said I, and I took off my hat when I had the honour of being presented to him; Poor old salmon! what wouldst thou have said, some twelve or fifteen thousand years ago, when, free and glorious thou didst pierce the briny waves,—when, perhaps, thou wast gambolling amongst the pointed summits of the Alps, plunging in ecstasy into the emerald depths of oceans now vanished,—what wouldst thou have said, could the thought have crossed thy brain, that one day thou shouldst be *here*? Under a glass! ticketed, numbered, pasted to the wall! forming an item in a collection of things fabulous, and exhibiting thy venerable form, thine antediluvian physiognomy, to thousands of *badauds*, who either pass thee without a glance, or examine thee with unfeeling curiosity, bestowing not a thought upon thy great age or thy cruel fate, or with a whit more respect for thee and thine awful history, than a cockney would show to a whitebait caught but yesterday in the Thames, and served up to him as a fraction of his fishy feast at Blackwall.

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Le Morvan, abounding in forests, was a district most congenial to the gloomy spirit of the religion of the ancient Druids; and therefore, in the earliest days of the history of France, they consecrated its groves of splendid oaks to the performance of their terrible rites. Remains of many of their massive monuments still exist, in the fields, in the deep valleys, and on the tops of the hills. Antique and mysterious all of them—three-pointed stones, three-cornered stones, and massive groups of stones in mystic circle ranged, round which, the peasant will tell you with bated breath, *les Gaurics*—the spirits of the giants—come to weep and bewail on the first night of each new moon. During the last century, a peasant, who was at work in a deep ditch in a beautiful field of this district, came, in the course of his excavations, upon a stone which indicated, that he was not far from one of those monuments with which he was so familiar; and, upon further investigation, it proved to be the black granite tomb of the famous Chindonax, the high-priest of the Druids. It contained many relics—the sickle and the collar of gold, the holy bracelets, the metal girdle, the sacrificial axe, the knife of brass; and, in the midst, was a glass urn, containing a pinch or two of grey powder—human dust! proud dust—sad and last remnant of the Druid Chindonax.

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Tumuli were, a century ago, very numerous in the uncultivated and desert tract of Les Bruyères; but these little artificial hillocks are disappearing very fast, for the peasants throw them down when they wish to clear and level the ground. These tumuli always contain collars in baked clay, arrow-heads, battle-axes of stone, pieces of crystal, and other articles of a similar description.

Even Julius Cæsar, the cruel conqueror of Gaul, the pitiless victor of Vercingetorix—Cæsar, who cut off the hands of the Gauls as the only means of preventing them from fighting—Cæsar admired Le Morvan. He loved that savage country, he delighted in it; in the deep gorges of its mountains he pursued the large wolves and the wild boar, and in it he established the custom of relays of dogs the whole length of the woods.

In this our day, on the summit of a mountain near the one on which is built the town of Chinon, may be seen the thick strong walls of ancient Roman buildings—buildings that have been fortified, bristling with palisades, and surrounded by moats—where Cæsar had his principal kennel, his hunting-box; in short, the spot which, in the third book of his 'Commentaries,' he calls *Castrum Caninum*.

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In the darkest and most sombre part of this forest, the lovers of antiquity will arrest their steps, delighted, at the very curious village of Carré-les-Tombes, so called from the immense number of tombs formerly found in its environs. So very numerous were they, that in 1615 the Count de Chatelux, seigneur of the parish, had some of them sawn up to build and pave the present church and tower of the steeple, and also to roof the choir. They were seven or eight feet in length, and hollowed out like troughs. Tradition says they were all found empty, with the exception of five; in these reposed tall skeletons, blanched by time, each having a helmet on his head, and a Roman sword by his side. The stones of three only of these five tombs bore any inscription, name, mark, or sign. On one was a double cross, very coarsely engraved; on the second, a very large escutcheon, which the antiquaries, in spite of their magnifying glasses, their science, and their patience, could never decipher; and on the other, the most curious of the three, a Latin inscription, in a legible, but very ancient character.

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Having one day had the simplicity to translate this inscription to a young and beautiful Andalusian widow, smart was the rap of the fan that I had for my pains. I had parried her curiosity as long as I could, for her dark and dangerous eyes and clear olive complexion, which betrayed every pulse of her southern blood, combined to put me on my guard. Reader, will you wonder?—here is the inscription:

"Qui Dæmone pejus? Mulier rixosa: fug ..."

"But what does it mean?" said my curious brunette.

"Señora, that you are lovely."

"Stuff, sir! not at all;" and she tossed her graceful head pettishly; "I really wish you to translate it."

"Well—here, then: '*Qui Dæmone pejus*'—dark women; '*mulier rixosa*'—are the loveliest."

"No, no! I say; I am sure that is not it. Say it, word for word, or I shall be angry—I vow I shall."

"Word for word!" What was I to do?

"Word for word," reiterated Dona Inez.

"Indeed, Señora, I don't know ... you would not forgive me."

"It is, then, something dreadful?"

"No, not exactly dreadful, but——"

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"Dios! Dios! worlds of patience!" and she stamped her tiny foot; "will you go on? You kill me with vexation. Translate it, I say, word for word." And here the Dona, with discreet carelessness opening her fan, prepared to blush.

"'*Qui Dæmone pejus*'—who is there worse than the devil? Hum!"—now for the pinch, thought I.

"Go on! go on!—the next words."

"'*Mulier rixosa*'—is—a——"

"Well, go on, will you?"

"Yes—a quarrelsome woman!"

Like lightning the fan closed, fell upon the unlucky index of my left hand, which was thoughtlessly reposing upon the arm of the *causeuse*, and nearly knocked off the first joint, by way of reward for my reluctant compliance with her feminine wishes.

"Excuse me, Señora," I said, after I had recovered my breath, "but you are very unjust. I had nothing to do with writing this ungallant phrase; it was a brutal Roman, no doubt."

"You are making game of me,—I know you are."

"No, indeed; you insisted upon my translating it word for word, and I have done your bidding."

"Then the man was a wretch who wrote them."

"I think so too, Señora."

"A brute—an animal!"

"Certainly, Señora."

"A fool—an old horror!"

"Most probably."

"An ignorant slanderer!"

"Oh! surely."

"A monster!"

"I wager anything you like of it." But it was of no use; unconditional assent failed to pacify her. So she went on for hours; and it cost me untold pains to earn the brunette's permission to offer her an ice, or to win one single smile.

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CHAPTER IV.

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Le Morvan during the Middle Ages—Legendary horrors—Forest of La Goulotte—La Croix Chavannes—La Croix Mordienne—Hôtel de Chanty—Château de Lomervo—A French Bluebeard—Citadel of Lingou.

BUT I must return from my Andalusian belle to the rugged Le Morvan,—a patriotic, but, in spite of the broken finger, by no means so captivating a subject.

In feudal times—indeed, even so late as the last century—the district was a perfect nest of cut-throats, where no one could venture in safety for any honest purpose; without roads, and without police; full of dark caverns and half-demolished castles, affording all kinds of facilities for retreat

and concealment; and thus it became the favourite rendezvous of the worst and most ferocious characters of those lawless times. It is widely different now. The hunter or the traveller—a woman or a child—may ramble through the length and breadth of its forests, equally in vain hoping for the excitement or fearing the danger of any adventure, beyond the common one of seeing a wolf or wild boar threading his way amongst the trees—a matter of no consequence at all. If, however, you love to collect wild and mournful tales—tales, even, of horror, with which to rivet the attention of the family group over the fire in the winter evenings,—stop at every ruined wall over which the lizard is harmlessly creeping; stop at every massive tower in which the owl is screeching—at every large isolated stone under which the serpent is hissing; linger along each tortuous path, and your peasant guide will tell you a tradition for each—for all.

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Thus, for instance: you are perhaps a few paces in front of him, in the forest of La Goulotte; and as the mid-day sun glances through the boughs above you, you see its rays rest upon a cross at a little distance; it was, you think, placed there for the rude worshippers of the province, and you contemplate it with complacent reverence, till Pierre comes up with you. "'Tis La Croix Chavannes, Monsieur, *la croix sinistre*. See! in the narrow pass between the two mountains, its black and moss-covered arms extended; at the end of each is a large knob, resembling a threatening hand." You walk on, and find the cross riddled with ball, chipped and notched, and carved with odd names. By the time you have reached it, Pierre has told you it was set on the spot where, many a long year ago, the Marquis de Chavannes was found, deluged in blood and quite dead; he had been pierced through the heart by a treacherous rival, who had joined his hunting party, and who basely took advantage of a moment when, in ardent pursuit of the grisly boar, De Chavannes was utterly unsuspecting of his evil intentions.

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A little further on is another cross, at the entrance of a deep, dark gorge: What does that cross mean? "That one is called La Croix Mordienne, Monsieur; at its foot our forefathers knelt to recommend their souls to God, before they ventured their lives in the dangers of Les Grand Ravins, where too many had been greeted by the bullet or the dagger." The granite steps of this cross—this cross which was erected for worship—are worn deep by the knees of suppliants for protection against the cruelty of their fellow-men; and it is even a more melancholy monument of the ferocity of those times, than the one which records the assassination of the unsuspecting Marquis de Chavannes.

Pursue your way, and, crossing a wild and marshy heath, you notice a lonely house surrounded by thorny broom, the aspect of which is forbidding, though it is gaily painted. Surely, you think, it can only be the gloomy tales with which my guide has beguiled this morning's walk, that make one suspect there is a history connected with that house; and you ask him its name. "That is Chanty, Monsieur; that was once an inn. The landlord was a frightful character, even for his own times. When the doomed traveller halted at his door to seek shelter from the storm, or to refresh himself and steel the better to encounter the scorching heat, the villain drugged his wine, and, at nightfall, following him into the forest, despatched and robbed his then helpless victim. Or perhaps he would detain him with stirring tales of forest life, till he found himself too late prudently to go further that night; and, on his guard against every person but the right, ordering a bed of his treacherous host, would fall into that slumber from which the miscreant took safe means to prevent his ever awaking. When, after many years of impunity in the commission of these fearful crimes, the officers of justice were at last set upon him, and his house was searched, in the cellar were found fifteen headless skeletons!"

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Such a mass of silent, awful testimony perhaps never was produced to substantiate the allegation of similar villany against any man; and atrocities like these, of the early and middle ages, have given their character to the legends of Le Morvan, which, still carefully related from one generation to another, are so impressed on the minds of the people, that the honest peasant of the present day would rather make a circuit of a dozen or twenty miles, than pass in the deepening twilight near the scenes to which they relate. Not all the gold of Peru—no, nor even of California—would tempt *Les Pastoures* to graze their flocks or herds near the scene of these horrid events, or pass them when the stars are spangling the dark arch of heaven.

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Here also may be seen the solid walls, the array of towers, the high belfry, the iron gates, and the ponderous drawbridges of the Château de Lomervo; and many are the dependent buildings, courts, and gardens, surrounded by the thick copse wood that covers its domain, which extends over three neighbouring hills. Under the principal façade is a large lake, whose blue waves bathe the walls; an immense mirror, ever reflecting the numberless turrets, and the grotesque birds and beasts which decorate the extremity of every waterspout; wherein, too, the tranquil marble giants, who support the broad balcony on their heads, seem to contemplate and admire their own imperturbable countenances—countenances that betrayed no shade of feeling at all that must have passed before their eyes. The gathering of armed knights for war or revelry; the rejoicings for the birth of an heir, or the lamentations for the death of the stern gray-headed lord; the bridal of one lovely daughter of the house of Lomervo, or the solitary departure of the mail-clad lover of another for the Crusades. But, it is said, they saw much more than all this: according to popular rumour, these calm deep waters are the cold and mute depositories of frightfully tragic secrets. One bright spring morning in the very olden time, says the tradition, a Lord of this domain left his castle. It was when the sweet violet first cast its odours on the breeze, when the bright and abundant bloom of the lilac and laburnum gracefully decorated the gardens, and the country was

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reclad in all the charming freshness of the season. After a short absence, he returned, accompanied by a lovely bride;—but ere long she died. He went again, returning with another, and was again received by his vassals with acclamations of joy; but gloomy suspicions at last arose, for in this way, in succeeding years, were brought to the Castle eleven young and beautiful damsels. One by one, they all disappeared. What became of them? No one knew, or, if they did, dared to tell. When, however, the long-dreaded lord was dead, some old women declared, that as he became tired of each wife, he stabbed her at midnight in one of his dungeons, took a sack from a heap which he kept in the corner, and, sewing her up with his own hands, carried her noiselessly to the water-gate, and laid her in the bottom of his boat. Silently and rapidly he rowed to the centre of the lake, and coolly dropped in his hapless victim amongst the sheltering reeds.

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"Ah! Monsieur," the village gossips will still tell you, as they make the sign of the cross, and tremble till you see their very stuff gowns shake again; "'tis all true, Monsieur; twenty times have we seen them in the moonlight—twenty times have we seen the poor souls, in their long white robes, with their pale faces, and the spot of blood on the left side, wandering over the lake." Poor Bluebeard, for whom in childhood we used to feel such awe, was a fool to this baron bold.

There, a little in front of you, is the fortified village of Chamou, which in former years defended the eastern opening of Les Grand Ravins; also Lingou, an old citadel, three stories high, whose walls, now cracked and ivy bound, guarded them on the south. This piece of feudal architecture, full of trap-doors and dungeons, subterranean passages, and secret stairs, is another of the places dreaded and abhorred by the peasantry of Le Morvan; for near the walls, they say, at certain periods, sounds can be distinctly heard under ground, funeral chaunts, and the tolling of bells; and if you have the daring to apply your ear to the sod, you will be able to distinguish sighs and sobs, and the dull rattle of the earth thrown upon the victim's coffin.

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CHAPTER V.

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Castle of Bazoche—Maréchal de Vauban—Relics of the old Marshal—Memorials of Philipsburg—Hôtel de Bazarne—Madame de Pompadour's maître d'hôtel—Proof of the *curés'* grief—Farm of St. Hibaut—Youthful recollections—Monsieur de Cheribalde—Navarre the Four-Pounder—His culverin.

EACH of the Radcliffian horrors narrated in the last chapter, though vastly marvellous, most probably originated in some dreadful deed of blood, on which the vulgar and superstitious admiration of excitement of those days delighted to enlarge. We shall now turn to the castle of Bazoche, where, in former days, dukes, counts and barons assembled every September with their hunting-train, to enjoy the pleasures of *la grande chasse* and all its attendant revelry. The château in later years belonged to the renowned engineer, Sebastian-le-Prêtre, Maréchal de Vauban, who was a native of Le Morvan, and born in 1633 in the village of St. Leger de Foucheret. The humble roof under which this celebrated man first saw the light is now inhabited by a *sabot*-maker.

Brought up, like Henry IV., amongst the peasants of his native province, like him he loved the remembrance of all connected with it and them; and when he died in Paris (1707), he desired that he might be buried at his beloved Château de Bazoche, where he had so often, sauntering under the noble *platanes*, sought and found relaxation from the turmoil and fatigue of a soldier's life, and forgotten the jealousies and injustice of the court. In the southern part of the building is the gallant old veteran's sleeping apartment—there still stands his bed: and his armour, with several swords and other articles which belonged to him, are still preserved. On the rampart, now probably silent for ever, are four pieces of cannon of large calibre, which thundered at the siege of Philipsburg, and were subsequently presented to the Marshal by Monseigneur, the brother of Louis XIV.

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Great were the works accomplished by the genius and perseverance of this famous general—famous, not only in his own profession, but as one of the honest characters of an age when honesty was rare indeed. He improved and perfected the defences of three hundred towns, and entirely constructed the fortifications of thirty-three others; was present at one hundred and forty battles, and conducted fifty-three sieges. The body of this eminent man was, in literal compliance with his orders, interred in a black marble tomb, under the damp flagstones of the castle chapel; but his heart, in melancholy violation of the spirit which dictated them, is enclosed in a monument, surmounted by his bust, in the church of the Hôtel des Invalides. Opposite to it is the tomb of Turenne, and under the same roof at last repose the mortal remains of Napoleon. Could their spirits perambulate this church at the hour when the dead only are said to be awake, and we could muster the courage to listen to their whispered communings, what should we hear? How severely would this tremendous triumvirate judge some of the so-called great men of our own time!

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But there are more modern edifices in Le Morvan, with far more agreeable episodes attached to them: take, for example, the Hôtel de Bazarne, a celebrated hostel, built among the green lanes on the borders of a wood of acacias—a beautiful flowery wood, which, when the merry

month of May has heralded the perfumed pleasures of spring, dispenses them on every breeze over the adjacent country.

Bazarne, in its healthy situation and splendid environs, boasts the best of cookery. The last owner of Bazarne was—Reader, the utmost exercise of your lively imagination will never supply you with the right name—was an *ancien maître d'hôtel* of Madame la Marquise de Pompadour—Madame de Pompadour's steward! What could he have to do in the wilds of Le Morvan? Grand Jean was a curious little man, lively and brisk as a bird or a squirrel, powdered, curled, and smelling of rose and benjamin as if he were still at Versailles or Choisi. Grand Jean decorated the back of his head with a little pigtail, which much resembled a head of asparagus, and was always jumping and frisking from one shoulder to the other. His snuff-box was of rare enamel, his ruffles of point-lace, and his artistic performances in the culinary art were all carried on in vessels of solid silver. He was, from the point of his toe to the tips of his hair, the aristocrat of the saucepan and the stove.

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Grand Jean acquired, in our provincial district, a reputation perfectly monumental for the richness of his venison pasties, the refined flavour, the smoothness and the exquisite finish of his *omelettes aux truffes* and *au sang de chevreuil*. All the world of Le Morvan used to visit him. And the good *curés*? The good *curés*?—ah! they all went to visit him by caravans, as the faithful wend their way across the deserts to Mecca to pray at the tomb of the Prophet. And, when he died, they mourned indeed; the worthy divines, incredible as it may be, drank water for three days, in proof of the sincerity of their woe. Who would have doubted it?

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To the north of Bazarne, and on the road to the best district for sport, is seen at the foot of the gray mountains peeping cheerily, and like a white flower amidst the sombre foliage of the chestnut-trees, St. Hibaut, an immense farm, situated in an isolated spot, and built of the lava from an extinct volcano. Saint Hibaut, ah! the moment the pen traces that dear name my aching heart beats and throbs within my breast—before my eyes pass to and fro the memories of a vanished world—I seem to feel the fresh and odorous breezes from thy flowers, thy mossy banks and scented shrubs, and hear thy murmuring rills and the dash of thy wild torrents. St. Hibaut! lovely spot where flew so swiftly and so sweetly the brightest and gayest hours of my early years—St. Hibaut, the memory of thee burns within my heart: but those within thy walls, do they still think of me?

Alas! in this world of tears and deception, of moral tortures and often of physical suffering—what is there more delightful, more consolatory than to sip, nay plunge the lips, and drink, yes, drink deep from that fresh and blessed spring, the memory of by-gone days. How great the burden of the man who has been the sport of fortune, whose life has been one continued sorrow, who, never satisfied with the present moment, is always hoping for better and happier days, and always regretting those which have been and are now no more. O! Reader—if many griefs have been your portion, if it has been your sad fate to tread with naked feet the thorny paths of life, if the foul passions of envy, rage, and hatred have found a place in your heart, close your eyes, forget your miseries—open, open for a moment that golden casket called the memory, in which are preserved, embalmed and imperishable, all those happy incidents which were the delight of your youth. Yes! open wide that casket, ponder well, and with renewed fondness o'er these treasures of the mind, and believe me after such holy reflections you will feel yourself more able to meet the contumely of the world, and find yourself a happier and a better man.

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Saint Hibaut, situated in a wild country, surrounded by lonely heaths and deep ravines, and water-courses whose sides are covered by almost impenetrable thickets, was at the time I speak of, that is to say, when I was eighteen years of age, the property of Monsieur de Cheribalde, the most intrepid, determined and ardent sportsman, who ever winded a horn, wore a huntsman's knife, or whistled a dog.

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Distant very nearly twenty miles from any human habitation, it was at times, the favourite rendezvous, the head-quarters of a great number of chevreuil, boar and other denizens of the forest. In winter, when the snow covered the earth for several weeks, the famished and furious wolves assembled in the neighbourhood in packs, carrying off in the broad daylight everything they could lay their teeth on; sheep and shepherd, dogs and huntsman, horse and horseman, bones, hair, and skins half-tanned, old hats and shoes—even the corrupt bodies of the dead were torn from their resting-places, and eaten by these horrid animals.

On moonlight nights, these brutes would come fearlessly up to the very walls of the farm, dancing their sarabandes in the snow, howling like so many devils, shrieking and showing their long white teeth, and demanding in unmistakable terms something or somebody to devour; their yells, their cries of rage, of victory, and of love, intermingled with the funereal song of the screech-owl, and the lugubrious melodies which the current from the blast without caused in the large open chimneys,—was the concert, which from December to April lulled the inmates of St. Hibaut to sleep; music that would I doubt not have reduced even the formidable proportions of the inimitable Lablache, and made Mario sing out of tune.

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But these were the good old times, the good old times! Well do I remember, when the shadows of those winter evenings lengthened, when nightfall came, and when at last the moon arose, bringing out in light and shade every object within the court-yard, and at some distance from the

house, then it was that Monsieur de Cheribalde went his rounds. I see him in my mind's eye now, with his gun on his shoulder, followed by his five enormous bloodhounds strong and fierce as lions, and Navarre, surnamed the Four-Pounder, who walked a few paces to the right and left, opening his large saucer eyes, poking and squinting into every bush and corner.

Navarre, for forty years the head gamekeeper of the domain, was his master's right hand, his *alter ego*. He had never in his whole life been beyond his woods,—had never seen the church-steeple of a great town. To him, the dark belt of firs that skirted the horizon, was the limit of the world; and when told that the sun never set, and that when it sank behind the mountains, it was only continuing its course, to beam bright in other skies and on other lands, and to ripen other harvests,—Navarre smiled, and did not believe a word. Happy Navarre! what did it signify to him what was done, or what happened behind those hills? He was thin and dry as a match, and tall as a Norwegian spruce, with a face covered with hair; he smoked, and tossed off glass after glass of brandy, like a Dutchman. In addition to these peculiarities, Navarre was lame of the right leg, a boar having one day kindly applied his tusky lancet to his thigh, and gored him seriously, before, hand to hand, he managed to finish him with his hunting-knife.

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At the first glance, Navarre's aspect appeared strange and forbidding, and savage as the locality in which he lived. The fact was, that, like Robinson Crusoe, he was frequently arrayed in a suit of skins of which he had been the architect, on a fantastic pattern, that his own queer imagination had created.

On great occasions the veteran keeper donned a helmet, or a gray three-cornered hat, of so ridiculous a shape—so royally absurd—that for my life, when he was thus attired, I could not, even in the presence of his master, refrain from laughter; then he would tell you, with a gravity it was impossible to disturb, that it had taken him fifteen days, eight skins of wild cats, and twelve squirrel's tails, to achieve this happy *chef-d'œuvre* of the tailoring art. But I once said to him, "My good Navarre, in the name of heaven tell me, from what Japanese manuscript did you fish out that odious hat? Why, with such a shed, you might very well be mistaken for Chin-ko-fi-ku-o, high-priest of the temple of Twi. Do give me the address of your hatter, my dear friend." Navarre, furious, gave no reply.

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But the time really to admire him—to see the head gamekeeper in all his splendour—was in winter, in a hard frost, when, covered with skins and motionless, he lay in ambush in a black ravine, waiting for a boar. Oh! then, for certain, the sight of him was anything but encouraging; for he looked like some unknown animal, some variety of the species *Bonassus*, a crocodile on end, a crumpled-up elephant, or a great bear on the watch. And when he loaded his rifle—a sort of culverin or wall-piece, which no one but himself knew how to manage—gracious powers! he was something to see. His first movement was to seize the gigantic weapon in the middle, as a policeman would fasten upon a favourite thief; and then he set himself to blow into the barrel with such fury, that had there been an ounce of wadding left, the blast would have blown it all through the enormous touch-hole. Being well assured after this that neither an adder nor a slow-worm had taken up his domicile within the barrel, he began to load. One charge—two charges—then a third, "as a compliment," and after this, a fourth, "for good luck." On this infernal charge—imperial, as he called it—this Vesuvius, this volcano of saltpetre, he threw half-a-dozen balls, or, if he was out of them, a handful of nails; and then he rammed—rammed—rammed away, like a pavior.

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My hair stood on end, and every limb trembled when he fired it off—holy St. Francis!—the very forest bent, and coughed, and sighed; and it made as much flame, smoke, noise, and carnage, as a battery of horse artillery. One might have heard it all over Burgundy, or Provence for what I know; and hence, no doubt, his *sobriquet* of "the Four-Pounder." I always thought his shoulder must be made of heart of oak. On one occasion he did me the incomparable favour of loading my gun in this fashion, but luckily for me, informed me of this piece of civility before we started; and greatly was he chagrined when I declined to fire it. In the common occurrences of life, Navarre was a right good fellow; he had great good sense, could take a joke, was simple and modest in his manners, and very kind-hearted and retiring. But once in the forest, the dogs uncoupled, and the business of the chase commenced, he bounded to the front; his eyes flashed, his nostrils dilated, he took a deep breath, listened, and snuffed the air; he limped no longer; and as his courage was unequalled, and his knowledge of wood-craft profound, the proudest of every rank were content to follow where he led.

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CHAPTER VI.

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Bird's-eye view of the forests—The student's visit to his uncle in the country—Sallies forth in the early morning—Meets a cuckoo—Follows him—The cuckoo too much for him—Gives up the pursuit—Finds he has lost his way—Agreeable vespers—Night in the forest—Wolves—Up a beech tree—A friend in need—The student bids adieu to Le Morvan.

WE have alluded in the opening chapters to the inexhaustible wealth drawn by the inhabitants from the woods of Le Morvan, though we have as yet touched but slightly on their beauties. To

see them at one *coup d'œil*, in all the splendour of their extent, one ought to call for the veteran, Mr. Green, and, safely (?) lodged in his car, with plenty of sandwiches and champagne, fly and soar above these forests of La Belle France. By St. Hubert, gentle reader, your eyes would be feasted with a glorious sight. Beneath your feet you would, in autumn, behold a verdant expanse in every variety of light and shade—a sea of leaves, which, though sometimes in repose, more often moan and murmur, while the giant arms they clothe rock to and fro in the gale, like the restless waves of the troubled deep.

Here Nature displays all her sylvan grandeur; here she has scattered, with a liberal hand, every charm that foliage can give to earth, and many a lovely flower to scent the evening breeze. Descend, and in this immense labyrinth you will find a tangled skein of forest paths, in which it is never prudent to ramble alone; as will be seen by the following adventure, which befell a young student who once went to Le Morvan, anticipating infinite pleasure in spending a few weeks at the house of an old uncle, a rich proprietor and owner of a large farm in the forest of Erveau.

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Residing from his infancy in the department of the Seine, he was quite ignorant of a forest life; and the morning was yet early when he arose from his bed and sallied forth to enjoy the fresh and fragrant air, of which he had a foretaste at his open window, and take a ramble till the hour of breakfast summoned him to his uncle's hospitable fare. All without was life and sweetness; every bush had its little chorister; the sun brilliant, but not as yet high in the heavens, threw his bright rays in chequered light and shade between the trees, and made the pearly tears of night, which hung quivering on each bending blade of grass, sparkle like diamonds of the purest water. The student was in raptures, and after a brief survey of the garden, he cast a longing eye upon the woods which he so much wished to penetrate. On he walked, stopping occasionally to muse on the enchanting scene around him, when all at once he espied, on the lofty branches of an ash, a cuckoo! At the sight of this splendid bird, our Parisian sportsman felt his heart pit-a-pat and jump like a girl's in love; and without stopping any longer to admire the marvels of Nature, he turned hastily back to his uncle's abode, in search of a gun, with which to annihilate the luckless harbinger of spring. He soon found one, ready loaded, in the hall; and, with his heart full of hope and his legs full of precaution, he glided mysteriously from one tree to another, endeavouring, by all possible means, to conceal his approach from the wily cuckoo, which, perched on high, was throwing into space his two dull notes, regular and monotonous as the tick-tick of an old-fashioned clock.

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Warily and stealthily did the student approach; bent nearly double, he scarcely drew his breath, as his distance from the tree grew less; but, says the song of the poacher,—

"If women smell tricks, cuckoos smell powder."

And again,—

"'Tis a difficult thing to catch woman at fault,
More difficult still, an old cuckoo with salt."

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Without appearing to do so, from the height of his leafy turret, the prudent cuckoo kept a wary eye upon the tortuous movements of his enemy; but as he saw at a glance what sort of a customer he had to deal with, he evidently did not feel any particular hurry to shift his quarters: only every time he saw the double barrel moving up to the Parisian's shoulder, and that hostilities on his part were about to be opened, he, as if just for fun, dropped his own dear brown self on the branch below him, flapped his wings, and soon perching himself on a tree a little further off, gravely re-opened his beak and resumed his monotonous chant.

The young student, piqued and mortified at this discreet behaviour of the cuckoo, which, like happiness, was always on the wing, perseveringly followed the provoking bird—one walked, the other flew, the distance increased at every flight, and thus they got over a great deal of ground; the young man still believing his uncle's farm was close behind him—the cuckoo perfectly easy, knowing full well he could find his leafy home whenever he might please to return to it. So, for the fiftieth time, perhaps, the cuckoo was vanishing in the foliage, when a sudden thought cramped the legs and cut short the obstinate pursuit of the young lawyer; he then, for the first time, remembered the wholesome advice his uncle had given him on his arrival.—"Beware, my fine fellow, beware of going alone in the forest, for to those who know not how to read their way, that is, on the bark of the trees, the mossy stones, and dry or broken twigs, the forest is full of snares and danger, of deceitful echos and strange noises that attract and mislead the inexperienced sportsman."

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"By Juno," thought our hero, "as it is most certain that in Paris they are not yet clever enough to teach us geography on the bark of trees, I am an uncommonly lucky fellow to have just remembered the dear old gentleman's warning. Hang the infernal cuckoo! Go to the devil, you hideous cuckoo! Good morning, sir, my compliments at home." And then, with his terrible carbine under his arm, he retraced his steps, expecting every moment to see peeping through the trees in front of him, his uncle's large white house and lofty dove-cote.

But, alas! no such thing met his hungry eyes; still on he walked, trees after trees were passed, glade after glade, and many a long avenue, but neither white farm-house nor gay green shutters greeted his anxious sight. "How odd," thought he, "how very odd; this, I feel confident, is the

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identical spot near which I first noticed that odious cuckoo; here is the self-same little regiment of white daisies that my feet pressed not half an hour ago; see now, this chestnut, this immense chestnut, whose monstrous roots lie twisting about the ground like a black brood of ugly snakes—certainly this was the way I came, surely I saw these roots, and yet no house appears." And thus, from time to time, he reasoned with himself, looking on either side for some object that he could recognize with certainty; at last, grown thoroughly hungry and impatient, he hallooed and shouted, but no voice replied, not the slightest sound was floating in the air. It was then he felt he had lost his way,—that he was alone, yes, alone in the forest of Erveau, in a leafy wilderness stretching many miles.

Many a vow he made and many a blackberry he picked as he walked hither and thither, in every direction. The day wore on, the sun had long passed the meridian, and with the coming evening rose a gentle breeze, which moaned in the dry ferns; and this and the rustling of the giant creepers that reached from tree to tree, and swung between the branches, fell mournfully on the student's ear. A vague fear, a fatal presentiment of evil began to creep over him; again he shouted, the echo from a dark wild ravine alone replied; he fired his gun again and again, the echo alone answered his signal of distress, and nothing could he hear, except at intervals, far, far away in the green depths of the forest, the notes cuckoo—cuckoo.

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Faint and weary, from hunger and fatigue, the young man, no longer able to proceed, fell down at the foot of a spreading beech, and gave way to an agony of grief; drops of cold sweat stood upon his brow; the clammy feeling of fear took possession of his heart, and though, perhaps, he would have had no objection to try the fortune of the pistol or the sword, in any college broil or senseless riot of the populace, the circumstances under which he then stood were so new to him, that he was quite unmanned and incapable of further exertion.

In blood-red streaks sank the setting sun, his large yellow orb glancing through the trees like the dimmed eye of some giant ogre; twilight came, and soon after every valley lay in shadow; the breeze, as if waking from its gentle slumbers, whistled in the highest branches, and, increasing in force, rocked the lower limbs, which moaned mournfully as the night closed in.

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Hungry and alarmed, and now quite worn out with his lengthened walk, the young Parisian lay stretched on the moss, listening with painful anxiety to this melancholy conversation of the woods, when, suddenly, and as night fell, spreading over the earth her sable wings and shaking from the folds of her robe the luminous legions of stars, he heard a prolonged and sonorous howl in the distance—a strolling wolf—

"Cruel as Death! and hungry as the grave!
Burning for blood! bony and gaunt and grim,"

had scented the Parisian and was inviting his good friends with the long teeth, to come and sup on the dainty morsel. Touched as if by a hot iron, up got the terrified youth, and striking his ten nails into the friendly tree near him like an Indian monkey, he was in an instant many feet above its base. Here, astride upon a branch, shivering and shaking, each hair on end, and murmuring many a Pater and Ave Maria, unsaid for years, he passed the most horrific night that any citizen of the department of the Seine had ever been known to spend in the middle of the forest of Erveau.

The following morning, but not until the sun had already run nearly half his course, for he never dared to leave his timber observatory before, *le pauvre diable* dropped down from his perch like an acorn—and, marching off with weary steps, and scarcely a hope that ere another night fell he should gain the shelter of some cottage, he dragged himself along. On he rolled from side to side, torn with the thorns and bitten by the gnats that swarmed around him, sometimes calling upon his mother, sometimes upon the saints—when a wood-cutter happily met, and seeing his exhausted condition, threw the slim student over his shoulders like a bundle of straw, and carried him to a neighbouring village. There, he was put to bed and attended with every care, when he soon recovered—and received the charming intelligence that he was about forty miles from his uncle's house—that he had been wandering for that distance in the most beautiful part of the forest of Erveau, and that if by any chance he had deviated a little more to the right in his unpleasant steeple-chase across the woods, he would have gone, in a straight line, eighty-six miles without meeting house or cottage or human soul until he found himself at the gates of Dijon, chief town of the Côte-d'Or, where he might and would, no doubt, have been able to refresh himself with a bottle of Beaune and inspect the Gothic tombs of the great Dukes of Burgundy.

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Grateful was the unlucky lad to think that he had not taken this road, and truly glad was he when, under the woodcutter's care, he reached his uncle's white house. No sooner, however, was he fairly recovered from his misadventure, than he packed up his superb cambric shirts, his Lyons silk socks, patent leather boots, and white Jouvin gloves; squeezed the hand of his aunt, gave a doubtful shake to that of his uncle, and started in the *malle poste* for the capital. His father's brother and Le Morvan never saw him more.

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Such adventures, however, as these are rare, and you must have, indeed, a double dose of bad fortune to be lost in such a woful way, and spend, without meeting any mortal soul, thirty long hours in the woods: for though the tract of forest is very extensive, there are strewed, here and

there, several merry villages, large farms, and hunting-boxes, snugly hidden, it is true, beneath the trees,—but which an experienced huntsman very soon discovers when he stands in need of assistance or a night's lodging.

CHAPTER VII.

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Charms of a forest life to the sportsman—The Poachers—Le Père Séguin—His knowledge of the woods and of the rivers—The first buck—A bad shot.

HOWEVER dangerous the forests of Le Morvan may be, and certainly are, to the citizen of Paris, whose knowledge of wood-craft, whatever may have been his delightful visions of forest life, of fairy revels, and hair-breadth escapes, is about equal to his proficiency in navigation, they are no labyrinth to the true sportsman of this province; in his mind, they are mapped with an accuracy perfectly astonishing to the uninitiated in the countless indications of nature, of which the eye of man becomes so keenly observant when thrown constantly into her fascinating society. Let a man of a vigorous health, active frame, and contemplative mind once enter, even for a short time, upon the enjoyments of sporting, wild and varied as are those of Le Morvan, it would be difficult to withdraw him from its delights, and persuade him that it is in any way desirable to return to the crowded haunts of men, and condemn himself to resume the harassing struggle for wealth or a competence in his own legitimate sphere.

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No; there scarcely breathes the human being who could be so insensible to the charms of scenery like that of Le Morvan as to do so without a pang. 'Tis a chalice of gold, brimful of real pleasures for those who love the joys of the open air; 'tis alive with fish and game, and has its vineyards and its cornfields too.

But we are thinking of the forests only, of the boar—that potentate of the solitudes—and the wild cat: of the ravines and caves, to which the hardy and venturesome hunter, through bush, brake, or briar, over streamlet or torrent, will chace the ravenous wolf,—who, bearing the iron ball in his lacerated side, ever and anon gnaws the wound in his rage, and slinks on weeping tears of blood. The roebuck and the hare, the feathered and the finny tribe, are ever presenting an endless alternation of amusement more or less exciting; and the sportsman has but to settle with himself, when the rosy morn appears, whether he will bestride his gallant steed, or throw the rod or rifle over his shoulder,—his day's pleasure is safe.

It matters not whether the falling leaf announces that the woods are clearing for him, the deep snow warns him to look to the protection of his flocks from the dangerous intrusion of the wolves, or the genial air and the brilliant flies tell him that the silvery tenants of the many streams and rivers that intersect the forest are ready to provide him sport.

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Arouse thee, sportsman! when the dark clouds of night fly before the rays of Phœbus as a troop of timid antelopes before the leopard,—when the lark abandons his mossy bed, and soaring sends forth his joyous carol,

"—blythe to greet
The purpling East,"

then, O sportsman, up, and to horse! Away! bending over the saddle-bow, follow the wild deer across the heath—inhale the perfume of the trampled thyme. Draw bridle for a moment, and pity the thousands of thy fellow-men to whom the pure air and light are denied, and let thy heartfelt thanksgivings for thy free and happy lot ascend to the azure battlements of heaven. Beneath your gaze lie valleys whence rise the morning mists as do the clouds from the richly-perfumed censer, and float over the bosom of the plain ere they wreath the mountain side; all the bushes sing, every leaf is shining to welcome the glorious sun as he rises majestically over that high dark range, and the bright blue dome of day is revealed in all its purity.

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Plunge onward to the forest—you will perhaps fall in with one of the *braconniers*—must I call them poachers?—of which there are many; all alike, in one sense, yet each having the most whimsical characteristics. The reader knows my friend Navarre, but I must now introduce him to another of the cronies of my youth, the Père Séguin, the thoughts of whom revive all the sweet recollections of my home when my family lived in the ancient and picturesque Vezelay.

Séguin's "form and feature" are as well impressed upon my memory as those even of Navarre. Could any one forget him? I should think not; for he was so fantastic and mysterious, such a determined sportsman and eccentric desperado, that he was known to all Le Morvan.

As well as I remember, he was about fifty-five years of age when I first knew him; from his earliest boyhood he had fancied and loved a forester's life, and for more than forty years had realized his dreams of its wild independence. The woods, the rocks, the streams had no secrets for him; he understood all their murmurs and their silence—he knew the habits of every bird and beast of these forests and the whereabouts of every large trout in his clear cold hole.

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But it is of no use to describe Père Séguin; to know him you must hunt with him, and that

pretty often, too—as I have done from my earliest youth. I am now with him, on one of those joyous mornings of my boyhood, and having threaded the woods for an hour, he has placed me in ambuscade at the corner of a copse. Here, after a short delay, he pulls out his watch, a time-piece weighing about two pounds, and after a mute consultation with the hands, says in a low decided tone:

"Good! Three o'clock. Stop here, youngster, and in an hour I shall send you a buck."

"A buck at four o'clock? How are you to tell that?" And I felt that I opened my eyes as an oyster does his bivalve domicile at high water. "A buck! you are joking."

"I never joke," said the Père Séguin with a hoarse grunt, walking away, and his face did not belie his words.

"Well, then, but how can you possibly—Stop, do, for one moment. Hear me! holla! Père Séguin! I say, you old humbug.—By Socrates, he is off."

But Père Séguin was already striding fast and far through the bending branches, wilfully, if not really out of hearing, and I had nothing to do but to watch for the promised game. I had no watch, and it seemed to me long after the appointed hour, when my reverie was disturbed by a low voice, from I knew not where,—from heaven, from earth, from a murmuring brook, from a tree,—which dropped these words in my ear.

"Silence—four o'clock—the buck."

At that moment I saw the ears of the roebuck, and soon after the animal itself, pausing for a moment in his leisurely course, just where he ought to be for a good shot. But amazement and trepidation seized me. I fired in a hurry, and the deer bounded off unscathed. "How clumsy," said I to the Père Séguin, as he emerged from the thicket, "and how unfortunate, for I have some friends coming to dine with me this week."

"Never mind, never mind," replied the poacher; "I will fill your larder to-morrow."

"Well, you are a good fellow, but remember I require also some fish—a fine dish of trout."

"Very well," growled the Père, "you shall have one;" and without a word more the *braconnier* is off; and soon after I meet him with his rod, a young fir-tree, on his shoulder, a box of worms as large as snakes, and with the most entire confidence in his piscatory powers, proceeding on his way to the stream that will suit his purpose. In the evening he reappears, taking from the fresh grass in which he has carried them, three or four magnificent fish studded with drops of gold. White wine and choice aromatic herbs flavour them, and you rejoice in the pleasure and praises of your friends as they partake of the savoury meal.

And now for a sketch, if possible, of this excellent purveyor. Père Séguin was tall as an obelisk, strong as a Hercules, *vif* as gunpowder, thin and sinewy as any wolf in his beloved forests. His ear large, flat, and full of hair; his teeth long, white, regular, and sharp as those of his favourite and extraordinary dog; his eyes yellow, calm, and piercing as those of a mountain eagle, and his chin had never been desecrated with a razor. A kind of brushwood covered his face, and through it peeped, with the tip of his hooked nose, the features I have described. This immense uncultivated beard, tucked carefully within his waistcoat, reached nearly to his waist. Did I say it had never been shaved? I might add, it had never been combed. Lurking in it you might see leaves, white hairs, red hairs, bits of a butterfly's wing, two or three jay's feathers, a nutshell, some tobacco, a blade or two of grass, the cup of an acorn, or a little moss. Indeed, so strangely was it garnished that, when asleep on the grass under the trees, a robin was once seen to hover over him undecided as to whether she would build her nest in it, or pick out materials to make one elsewhere.

Of uncommon intelligence, peculiarly taciturn, brave, frank, loyal, and incapable of a bad action, his mind was of a gloomy cast; he was always alone, he had no friends, he wanted none, and, if not hunting, reading the Bible or muttering to himself, with his eyes fixed on the ground. He lived like the woodcock, sad and solitary in his hole.

The peasants dreaded him, and never spoke of him but as the *Sorcier*, the *Vieux Diable*; when naughty little children refused to learn their letters or to go to bed, it was only necessary to threaten them with sending for the Père Séguin and his red dog, and the whole of the rosy troop would scamper off to their nursery in an instant.

I need scarcely say that amongst his other perfections he was a perfect shot—the best in the department,—and the moment he touched the trigger death winged his charge at two hundred paces. With a single ball from his rifle would he bring down the wild cat from the highest branches, and cut the poor squirrels in two, stop the howl of the wolf, or shiver the iron frontal bones of the wild boar.

In short, his gun was his joy, his friend, his mistress, his all; he spoke to it, caressed it, rocked it on his knees as a mother would her sick child, and took a thousand times more care of it than he would have bestowed upon the most lovely wife, had he ever done anything so rash as to marry. It was a singular accident that brought us acquainted; and if I had had any respect for

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chronology, I should have related it before.

One day, when rambling over the mountain in search of game, I put up and fired at a hare; she was evidently hit, and I gave chase, yet though puss had but three legs effective I could not overtake her,

"I follow'd fast, but faster did she fly;"

at last, a bank stopped and turned her, and I was on the point of taking possession when a large red brindled dog dashed past and anticipated my purpose, carrying off my hare, without bestowing so much as a glance upon me,—no, not even appearing to see that I was there. Electrified with astonishment, my left leg seemed pinned to the spot, while the right, extended on a level with my shoulder, emulated that of Cerito in "Giselle;" but recovering myself, I followed the thief, who made off with the speed of a greyhound, in the direction of a neighbouring wood, and on arriving at a little green knoll almost as soon as he did, I came suddenly upon a strange and uncouth-looking figure who was reclining comfortably on the grass beneath the shade of a large walnut-tree.

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CHAPTER VIII.

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Le Père Séguin's collation—The young sportsman and the hare—The quarrel—The apology—The reconciliation—The cemetery—Bait for barbel—Le Père Séguin's deceased friends—The return home.

THE extraordinary personage in whose presence I so suddenly found myself was the celebrated Père Séguin, who, tired with his morning's sport, was taking his noontide meal; that is, appeasing his appetite, always enormous, with a loaf of black rye bread, into which he plunged his ivory teeth with hearty rapidity, now and then taking a mouthful out of a turnip he had pulled in a field hard by. The abominable quadruped was there too, planted on his haunches, just in front of his master, looking as innocent as a lamb, though still holding my hare between his teeth, probably not daring to lay it down without permission.

Père Séguin ate, drank, twisted his wiry moustache, dipped his turnip in the coarse salt, and from time to time cast a glance at his vile dog, without deigning to speak a word, or even to acknowledge my presence. Furious at this behaviour, I bowed and said to him, "So, you are the owner of this precious cur?"

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The poacher signified his assent by a slight movement of the head.

"Well, if the dog belongs to you, the hare in his mouth belongs to me."

"Does it?" said the Père Séguin, and he looked at his dog, who winked his eye and shook his paw: "my dog tells me he caught this hare running."

"I know it, the rascally vagabond! and with no great trouble either, seeing that the hare was half dead, and had but three legs to go upon."

Père Séguin threw his yellow eye on the cur again, and, as if he had understood all we said, he once more shook his paw, and gave a sort of sneeze.

"My dog repeats, he coursed the hare well, and has a right to her."

"What do you mean by saying he has a right to her, when I tell you the hare belongs to me?"

"And my dog says the reverse."

"Go to Dijon with your dog!" I exclaimed, "I tell you the hare is mine."

"My dog never told a lie," rejoined the *braconnier*, and he dipped the remnant of his turnip for the twentieth time in the salt. "Never."

"Then I am the liar," said I, beginning to feel hot, "I am the liar, ah! am I? By Jupiter! your dog, you bearded fool—your cur of a dog? I do not care a *sous* for his carcass any more than I do for yours. I'll have my hare."

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"Don't get excited, young man—don't be savage, I beg of you; for, as sure as I am a sinner, you'll have a crop of pimples on your nose to-morrow,—and red pimples on the nose are not pretty."

"Keep your jokes to yourself, old man, or on my honour you shall repent it!"

"Ha! ha! ha!" grinned the Père Séguin, "Ha! ha! ha! capital turnip."

"Houp! houp! houp!" went the dog.

I was bewildered; such a strange adventure had never befallen me before.

"Once, twice—will you give me my hare?"

"Have I any hare of yours?"

"You? No, but your dog."

"Ha! that's another affair. You must settle that with him. Take your hare, and let me eat my turnip in peace."

Enraged at this, I rushed at the carroty dog, but he was off in an instant, jumping first behind the tree, and then behind his master, keeping my hare all the time fast in his mouth till I was fairly out of breath, and aggravated beyond expression.

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I looked towards the poacher. He was quietly plucking the top off a fresh turnip, but under the air of icy indifference which pervaded his whole exterior I detected a sarcastic smile, which fully convinced me that I was the laughing-stock of man and beast. I took my resolution, and Père Séguin, who had followed my movements with his eye, said drily, as I was going to put a cap on, "What are you going to do young man?"

"Oh, nothing! just to kill your dog for taking my hare."

"Bah! you're joking."

"Joking! am I? You shall see;" and I proceeded quietly to raise my gun.

"Gently, my lad," roared the Père Séguin, and he seized the weapon in his iron grasp.

"I may be but a 'lad,' but I'll not give up my rights; the hare is mine, and I'll have her. Let go my gun!"

"No!"

"By—"

"No!"

"Then look out for yourself," said I, and with a rapid movement I attempted to draw my *couteau de chasse*; but long before I could get it out, he had seized me with both hands, and in a twinkling I measured my length upon the turf, and the knife was in his possession.

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"Child of violence!" he said, as he set me again on my legs, and pushed me from him, "Do you then already love to shed blood? Would you kill a man for a hare? Have you not the sense to distinguish a joke from an insult? There," he added, giving me back my knife, which had fallen from its sheath in the struggle, "young man, do your worst!"

But I was now as angry with myself as I had been with the old man, and heartily ashamed of my conduct. I turned on my heel, and walked off, vexed beyond expression at my intemperate folly.

The very next day, as good fortune would have it, I met him again in the forest, and lost not a moment in asking his forgiveness for my brutal conduct of the previous day.

"Ah! you acknowledge your fault, do you?" replied the Père Séguin, "enough, that shows you have a heart. I bear you no ill-will; you are *vif* as the mountain breeze, but that comes of being young. Give me your hand, and when you want a dove or lilies of the valley for your sister, venison or wild boar for your friends, I, my gun, and my dog, are at your service; but"—and he whispered in my ear—"no more knives."

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"See! see!" and I opened my jacket, "it is gone. I threw it into the moat this morning."

"'Tis well! very well! You have had a happy escape, young man. *Au revoir*. Now, Faro, take your leave of Monsieur;" and instantly obeying a sign from his master, the red dog licked my boots. A moment more, and they were both lost to view in the forest.

From that time I was frequently with the Père Séguin, for he seemed to have a fancy—a sort of affection for me, and on my part I had an incomprehensible pleasure in his society, though in the early part of our acquaintance I could not divest myself of an undefined dread of him; and had some difficulty in reconciling myself to the harsh and guttural tones of his voice, and his peculiarly severe physiognomy. Nevertheless, many an evening did I slip away from the paternal hearth, much to the distress of my poor mother, to seat myself on one of his wooden stools, and eat the chestnuts he was roasting in the embers, while he related, by the pale light of his small charcoal fire, which but dimly showed the extent even of his small room, frightful stories of ghosts, suicides, drownings, and fearful murders, with which he delighted to terrify me; and, dear reader, he succeeded to perfection, for all the time I sat listening to them I was cold, and trembled like a leaf in the northern blast.

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Well do I remember—yes, as well as if it had been yesterday—going out with him to fish for barbel, and joining him over-night to go in search of bait. I found him crouched by his fire, eating potatoes out of the same plate with his dog. This frugal meal over, he took up a small lantern, a large box, and a long spade, and beckoned me to follow him.

The moon was rising as we left the hut, but red as blood, lightning streaked the sky at short

intervals, and the wind howled as if a storm was approaching. Père Séguin rubbed his hands, and an expression of satisfaction passed across his extraordinary countenance; for, living as he did a lonely wandering life, he had become superstitious, and firmly believed that worms caught at certain hours of the night, and in a breeze that foretold an approaching tempest, were more likely to attract the fish than those taken in the daylight. To this article of his creed I offered no objection, but I own my heart shrunk within me when I observed that he took the direct road to the burial-ground. "Père Séguin," said I, "we need go no further; the turf in this lane is capital; we shall find all we want here without a longer walk." "Since when," he inquired in a voice that seemed to come from between his shoulders, "since when have young fawns taught the old roebuck the way to the forest-glades?" And he strode on without a word more, still in the direction I so much abhorred.

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Arriving at the cemetery, Père Séguin walked leisurely round it, paying as much attention to me as if I had not been with him, and I followed like a criminal going to the scaffold. After having made a careful examination of the wall, he stopped suddenly, gave me the lantern and the spade, and leaped upon the top, desiring me to do the same. I hesitated, and fell back, for I felt more inclined to throw them down and run away, and Père Séguin saw it.

"Ha! ha!" he exclaimed, fixing his yellow eye upon me. "I thought you were heart of oak, young Sir; are you only a man of straw?"

I gave no answer, but I leaped on to the wall like a rope-dancer.

"Hum!" he muttered; "good legs, but a faint heart." And he begun rapidly to turn up the rank grass, and pick the large red worms from amongst the roots, when, looking up in my face, he said, with infinite coolness, "Why, you are as pale as my mother was on the day of her death! What ails you?"

"Ails me!" I replied, repressing my fears, "why to tell you the truth, I'd just as soon be anywhere else as here."

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"Pooh! pooh! young man; one must accustom one's self to everything in this world. We must learn—be always learning. Remember, for instance, for I'll be bound that you never heard of such a thing before, that worms taken in a burial-ground are the finest possible bait for barbel, do you hear?—taken by moonlight from the roots of the hemlock."

"Good heavens! Père Séguin, I would rather never catch a fish for the rest of my days than touch one of those worms!"

"Nonsense, my lad—nonsense; they are admirable bait—fine fat fellows—sure to take. We shall have a wonderful day to-morrow. You will soon see how the giants and gourmands of the streams will snap at these beauties."

"Hang the barbel, Père Séguin!—let us leave this cold churchyard. I feel sick, and a clammy cold creeping over me already—do let us be gone;" but he would not move.

"Don't feel unwell, pray don't; it is a well-known fact, that any person who feels ill in a churchyard is sure to die within the year."

"Let us leave then, for I do feel very ill;" but the purveyor of worms was now too much occupied to listen to me.

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Hopeless, therefore, of inducing him to leave till he had filled his box, I sat down on a tombstone, and the noise he made with the spade in the silence, the darkness, and the peculiar and sickening odour of the place, filled me with an indescribable sense of fear and horror.

At length the poacher paused, and having disentangled a very long worm from the twisted roots of a large clod, he said, "This makes one hundred and thirteen—a holy number. Now I've done, my lad; let us be off."

"Yes—oh, yes!"—for the minutes seemed hours—"let us go instantly;" and I sprang from the tombstone, while Père Séguin proceeded deliberately to fill up the holes, and replace the turf, whistling through his moustache just as if he had been in the middle of his garden.

"One hundred and thirteen!—I like that number."

"So do I, Père Séguin; but do let us be going. If we remain here, they will think that we have killed and buried some one. Do, pray, be off;" and I made for the wall.

"Stop!" he said suddenly, drawing himself up to his full height, six feet three, "Stop!" and throwing out his long arms, which made his shadow on the stones resemble an immense black cross, "Hold there! Look! Do you see that tomb—that large gray stone?"

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"I see nothing, Père Séguin, I will see nothing. I close my eyes, and only desire to be gone."

"As you please," said the poacher; "but you are wrong. I could have told you a curious history—a most interesting history."

"Thanks for your histories—much obliged to you; but I have had enough of them." Still Père

Séguin would persevere: "A woman, who has appeared to me three times—yes, three following days—spoken to me, pulled me by the fingers and by the beard eight days after her death."

"Yes! yes! I know; but which way are we to get out of this infernal place?"

"Why, what a hurry you are in!—I say stop, and let me say good night to her!"—and Père Séguin approached the tall gray stone, the moon shining full upon it, and struck it with the handle of his spade, calling each time in a solemn voice, "Madeleine! Madeleine! Madeleine!"

Had I been at that frightful moment cut in four quarters, not one drop of blood would have been found in my veins; my teeth chattered with terror, and I would have given every acre of my inheritance for strength enough to run away. "Madeleine! Madeleine!" le Père Séguin continued in a low and churchyard tone, "Madeleine!" he cried, leaning on the gray tomb, "'tis me, Séguin—le Père Séguin; good night, good night, Madeleine!"

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I could not speak, I could not move; and certainly had the lady whispered only one single little word in reply, I should have fainted.

"Well, it is all over; she is dead for certain now!" said the poacher, shaking his head. "Alas! poor Madeleine! Gone in the flower of her age! Dead at two-and-twenty, for having offered me a violet! Dead! Let us begone."

I beg you to understand I did not put him to the necessity of repeating his words, but found my legs in excellent running order in a moment.

"Hold! not so fast!" said my companion, just as I was springing at the wall, and thought myself out of danger, "Hold! Down there, my young gentleman, in that dark corner amongst the brambles. You see that little heap of earth, which one might fancy a dead man alive had pushed up with his knees; well, there also is one of my comrades. Ho! halloo, Jerome!"

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"Père Séguin," said I, "this is unworthy of you; you have no right thus to mock at and disturb the dead; you only want to torment me; and I have already told you, and I repeat it, I feel exceedingly ill."

"Come, come along then—let us go. I shall return here presently to sleep. Good night, Madeleine!—good night, Jerome!—good night, all of you who are sleeping so quietly under the green turf!"—and it seemed to me, as these adieus were uttered, that icy breezes passed from every tomb across my face, whispering in my ears, "Good night!" and that the firs, the yews, the cypress bending across our path seemed to salute us as we left the horrible precincts.

We soon regained the town, and on the road there I would not have turned my head for a crown of rubies; Père Séguin, meanwhile, coolly carrying his box of worms, which I would not have touched for the best place in Paradise.

The next morning, instead of fishing for barbel, I was unable to rise from my bed; and for fifteen nights I never closed my eyes without seeing in my dreams ghosts, and all the horrid details of the churchyard and the charnel-house.

CHAPTER IX.

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Passage of the woodcock in November—Their laziness—Night travelling—Mode of snaring them at night—Numbers taken in this way—This sport adapted rather for the poacher—The *braconnier* of Le Morvan—His mode of life—The poacher's dog—The double poacher.

THE object of this chapter will be to give the reader some little insight into the habits of the woodcock, and the mode of snaring them in the forests of Le Morvan, during the month of November. At the close of this month, Dame Nature's barometer, their instinct, far better than the quicksilver, tells them the December rains are close at hand; and that if they remain in their hiding-places in the low grounds, they will be driven out by the approaching deluge. They at length make up their minds to set forth on their travels. With a long-drawn sigh, therefore, the woodcock bids farewell to the old oaks that have sheltered it all the summer, and taking leave of its friendly comrades, the squirrels, it sets out on the first fine night for a more genial climate, to the delight, no doubt, of the neighbouring worms, who pop their heads out of window to witness its departure; and the moment their enemy is fairly out of sight, perform many a pirouette on the tip of their tails, and dance upon the grass in honour of the joyous event.

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If a woodcock was not a woodcock, that is, one of the laziest birds in the creation, it might easily reach, in a few days' flight, the dry heaths, the hills, and elevated regions, which it loves; but woodcocks abhor all violent exercise, always preferring the use of their feet to that of their wings, which latter they never agitate, except when necessity requires. Well, they have now set out, and after marching all night by slow and easy stages, when morning comes our woodcocks make a halt wherever they happen to be, breakfast as best they may, and then ensconce themselves in some snug spot, where they doze the livelong day, till, refreshed by their twelve hours' rest, they set off again with renewed strength the moment the sun has gone down.

Thus it is that during the middle of November there is no regular flight, but a kind of circulation, of woodcocks, perambulating from the lower to the higher regions, and the *gourmet* and the sportsman fail not to stop them on their way.

As it is necessary in this kind of *chasse* to spend the night under the trees and on the damp moss, those who wish to enjoy it prepare for it accordingly by dressing themselves like Navarre, in a suit of sheepskins, and lay in a good store of cold meat and brandy. [Pg 90]

During their nocturnal peregrinations, instinct leads the woodcock to follow ascending roads and open pathways, especially such as are completely exposed to the mild winds of the south and south-east only; they avoid walking through the woods, where the road is encumbered with brambles and other obstacles, which would oblige them to hop or fly far oftener than they like, occasionally leaving a portion of their feathers behind them. Moreover, their feet are tender, and they in consequence prefer the paths that are overgrown with grass, the open glades, or roads cut through the moss.

It is now that the sportsman who is well versed in the private history of the woodcock prepares his snares; for at this period of the year it is by them that they are taken.

Penetrating, therefore, the depths of the forest, the experienced *chasseur* soon discovers, in some secluded spot, a path well carpeted with verdure, lighted by a few stray moonbeams and sheltered from the wind, where he forthwith begins to lay his snares. Should the path be broad, he proceeds to contract it, strewing it partially with stones, brambles, and thorns; he likewise cuts down some twigs and branches, and sticks them into the ground at intervals, so as to present as many impediments and *chevaux de frise* as he can to thwart the progress of the lazy bird. The middle of the path should be left quite free, and wide enough to allow a couple of woodcocks to walk abreast. Into this narrow passage they all walk without suspicion, and their further progress is prevented by their falling into the trap which is laid to receive them. [Pg 91]

This snare is placed across a hole about the size of a crown piece, and consists of a strong noose made of horsehair, which is fixed to a peg, and so arranged that the slightest touch causes it to rebound and catch them by the leg.

In the hole is laid a fine, fat, red worm, healthy and tempting, and, in order to prevent the poor prisoner's escaping, the sportsman has devised a method of keeping him down in spite of himself, by pinning him to the ground at one end with a long thorn—it is presumed worms do not feel; his miserable contortions attract the attention of the hungry woodcock, who immediately seizes this irresistible tit-bit.

Every preparation completed and the snare baited, the hole, the worm, and the noose are carefully covered over by a withered leaf—a second snare, similarly concealed, is set on the right, a third in the middle, and so on at a distance of three or four feet from each other. All is now in readiness, and twilight finds the sportsman covered up in his skins at some fifty paces from his traps. Here, after having comforted his inward man, and sharpened his sight by swallowing two or three glasses of cognac, addressing between them an invocation to his patron saint, he listens and waits. [Pg 92]

On come the long-bills, looking right and left, pecking the ground, peering at the moon and the stars, and eating all they can find in their way. They now approach the dangerous defile, and some of the younger ones fly over the traps; others, more prudent, turn back; but the main body hold a council of war, when the staff officers having decided that these Thermopylæ must be passed, first one woodcock and then another taking heart proceeds, and the sportsman hugs himself in his success on perceiving the whole troop making towards the baits he has spread for them. Before long one of the birds gets its leg entangled, totters, falls, rises again, but in doing so is made fast by the noose, and in spite of its efforts is unable to advance a step further. Another, hearing the sound of a worm struggling at the bottom of a hole, darts in its beak, with the charitable intention of ending the prisoner's sufferings, and on raising its head is suddenly seized by the neck. The sportsman now steals softly from his hiding-place, and, stooping down, smashes the woodcock's brain with his thumb nail, and so on with the next, after which he retreats to his post, and keeps up the game till dawn. Some persons will in this manner catch from twenty to thirty woodcocks in a single night; but they must be favourably placed, have a great number of snares, and, moreover, possess a considerable degree of skill, and tread lightly, (for the most important point, in this sport, is to make as little noise as possible,) and be very quick at putting the snares in order the moment they have been used—no easy work, in good sooth, seeing that it must be performed by an occasional ray of moonlight. [Pg 93]

If late on the ground, and you have not sufficient time to obstruct and barricade the road as directed above, the earth may be turned up in the middle of the path and the snares placed across it; the woodcocks, in the hope of finding something to eat, will immediately walk on to it—but although this method occasionally succeeds it is far from being as good as the first, for the soil does not offer the same resistance as the turf, the holes get filled up, and the birds escape more easily. [Pg 94]

The sportsman should mind and bag his game as fast as it is snared, or master Reynard, who has been watching the whole affair, will pounce upon his birds and carry them off, with a dozen

nooses into the bargain.

Poachers reap an ample harvest of cash by this mode of taking woodcocks, while other sportsmen generally reap the rheumatism; and, truth to say, the silence and immobility that must be observed all night long, the intense cold, and the damp fogs which cover the forest in the early morning, are not very agreeable, and most gentlemen prefer staying at home, enjoying the innocent diversion of playing the flute, quarrelling with their wives, or emptying the bottle.

To succeed well in snaring woodcocks requires both skill and experience, and a thorough knowledge of the woods, the winds, the colour of the clouds, the age of the moon, the state of the atmosphere; and, in fact, short of being a poacher or a conjuror, how is it possible to know that the woodcocks will pass one spot rather than another in a space of several score of square miles, and amongst so many and such intricate paths. The *braconnier* alone is infallible on these points, and curious specimens of the human biped are these same poachers!

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In the first place it must not be imagined that the poachers of Le Morvan bear the slightest resemblance to those of England. They are as much alike as Thames water and Burgundy wine. The English poacher is a rank vagabond, who invades every one's game-preserves at dead of night, and kills whatever he finds, whether hares, partridges, dogs, pheasants, or gamekeepers,—while ours are men following a legitimate occupation.

In Le Morvan, forests are open to all; there are no palings to get over, and no keepers to fear; the public may hunt, shoot, or snare what they please.

The poacher commences his hard apprenticeship in early childhood. Nature directs him to adopt this course of life, and endows him with a bold heart, a cool head, a sinewy frame, and an iron constitution. The incipient poachers soon leave the inhabited districts to live in the forests, with trees for their roof, and moss for their bed. They study alike the woods and the stars, and know the forest by heart, with its roads and glades, beaten tracks and untrodden paths. From sunrise to sunset they are always-a-foot, walking through the thickets, tramping over heaths, or stooping amongst the brushwood, listening, and looking everywhere, and by night and by day constantly making their observations on the direction of the wind, the habits of the animals that pass them, or the birds that fly over their heads.

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In this way they ferret out every nook and every winding in the forest, and now here and now there build themselves a hut, live upon fruit, chestnuts, and their game, which they roast upon embers; and never come into a town except to purchase powder, shot and ball, or perhaps a pair of shoes, some tobacco, and brandy.

Such is the rough life of the youthful poacher, nor has he any companion during this wild period of his existence, excepting a dog, the faithful partner of his joys and dangers, and who becomes a devoted friend and brother for life. They live together, talk to each other, understand each other, and guess each other's slightest wish. I have seen a poacher talking to his dog by the hour together, the man laughing fit to split at what his canine companion was telling him in his own peculiar way, while the dog, rolling on the grass, barked with delight at what his master answered.

When on their shooting expeditions, a sign from his master, a nod, a wink, an uplifted finger, or the slightest whisper, are either of them sufficient for his guidance; he stops, or dashes onward, takes a leap, or crouches down, as the case may be, and never is he known to be at fault.

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On his part the poacher has only to refer to his dog as to the pages of a book, and he reads at once in his slightest movements what is in the wind, what bird lies hidden in the grass, or what beast is cowering in the thicket. By the position of his head, the manner in which he scratches the ground, pricks his ear, or carries his tail, he understands as plainly as if he spoke whether he announces the proximity of a wolf, a partridge, a woodcock, a roebuck, a hare, or a rabbit.

I have known poachers who have told me half an hour beforehand what we were going to meet. Another would bid his dog bring him a leaf, a branch, a flower, or a mushroom, and off he went, sought, found, and brought back the identical article required. "Now, sing," said the poacher, and the dog began to sing; not, indeed, exactly like Mario, but he produced a kind of melodious growl, a sort of improvised musical lament over his solitary life, which had its charm. Most poachers are exceedingly fond of music, and as they are always singing in their leisure moments, of course their dog joins them; so that when they are both in the humour for it, they execute duets in the depths of the forest that make the very nightingales jealous.

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By the time a poacher has acquired a complete knowledge of wood-craft, and that he knows familiarly every path and every bush in the forest, every hole and every stone in the mountains, together with the habits, character, and favourite haunts of every species of game; has made a reputation, and put by some money; that he is beginning to turn gray, and is verging on forty, his fondness for this savage kind of life begins to diminish, his rough exterior becomes somewhat softened, he purchases a solitary little cottage in some secluded spot, comes oftener into town, and occasionally partakes of its pleasures.

In poaching, as in everything else, there are varieties of taste, and degrees of superiority. Some fish, others hunt only the roebuck and the boar, others shoot squirrels and wild cats, others

again excel in snaring woodcocks, while some are dead hands at scenting and tracking a wolf. Each poacher has his peculiar line, and each line furnishes a livelihood.

But when it happens, once in a way, that there is a man who unites a profound knowledge of the forest to an equally profound knowledge of the waters—who hunts, tracks, and shoots all sorts of game with equal success, and is also an expert fisherman, then he is a superior man of his kind, complete at all points, a sort of Napoleon in his way, and his countrymen bestow on him the title of the "double poacher,"—for thus was called my worthy friend Le Père Séguin.

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CHAPTER X.

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The woodcock—Its habits in the forests of Le Morvan—Aversion of dogs to this bird—Timidity of the woodcock—Its cunning—Shooting in November—The Woodcock mates—The Woodcock fly.

IN the last and preceding chapters, the imaginative and romantic have predominated almost to the entire exclusion of any description of the wild sports of Le Morvan, and I fear that the sporting reader, not generally of a very sentimental taste, will ere this have become impatient, and perhaps a little angry at the delay. I trust, however, that I may be able to soften his indignation, and by the following sketches gratify the expectations naturally raised in his mind by the first words of the title-page. Of boar and wolf-hunting we shall speak further on: my present object will be to give a description, not only of the woodcock-shooting in Burgundy and Le Morvan, but also of the habits, etc., of that bird.

In the forests of which we are writing, the woodcock is not a mere bird of passage, as in other European countries; it does not fly beyond sea, like the swallow and most of the emigrating feathered tribes, nor does it disappear like the quail, at a fixed period, and reappear at a given moment. Here the woodcock seldom if ever deserts the forests which have been its constant abode, and the sportsman is sure to find it nearly all the year round. I have said nearly, for though not seeking other climes, it requires a change of locality to secure a certain temperature.

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For instance, in the months of May, June, July, and August, woodcocks are to be found in elevated spots, such as mountains covered with large trees, or in warm open places on their slopes. At the first approach of cold weather they leave the hills, and come down into the plains, concealing themselves in the underwood, or the fern, or in the high grass, when the snow begins to fall. The woodcock is a melancholy bird, and somewhat misanthropic. Its habits are eminently anti-social; it flies but little, so little indeed that its wings seem scarcely of any use, and with the laziness already alluded to that forms its characteristic feature, it seeks out a solitary spot, and having dug a hole amongst the dry leaves, there it will squat for days together without stirring. It likewise delights to cower under the gnarled roots of an old oak, or to hide itself in a holly-bush, and apparently derives so much satisfaction from its own meditations, and seems to hold all other birds of the forest in such utter contempt, that it never by any chance deigns to join their sports, or mingle in their joyous songs. The woodcock seeks the darkest and most silent thickets, and likes a marly soil, damp meadows, and the neighbourhood of brooks and stagnant water.

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But though motionless and torpid, so long as the sun is above the horizon, woodcocks are always on the alert, and wake and shake their feathers the moment night comes; leaving the shady thickets and grassy spots, they flock to the glades and little paths of the woods, and thrust their long beaks into the soft, damp soil—for this bird, be it remembered, never touches either corn or fruit, but lives entirely upon grubs and earth-worms.

It naturally follows that the woodcock, which finds its food in slimy marshes, with head bent, and eyes fixed upon the ground, possesses none of the gaiety and vivacity of other birds, holds but a very low place in the scale of animal intelligence, and possesses a large share of that stupidity peculiar to the dull species that were formed to live in the mire.

The size of the woodcock varies exceedingly; they are much smaller than the domestic fowl, but heavier and larger than the heath partridge; yet there are some which are as small as a wood-pigeon, and even less. Their plumage is dark, and harmonizes admirably with the trunks of the trees and moss amongst which they dwell. Even in the daylight, and at a distance of only twenty paces, it is impossible to distinguish a woodcock, as it lies motionless, with closed wings, and neck extended on the ground, amongst the withered leaves.

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When walking on the grass, there is a certain elegance in its movements, while the beautiful *chiar' oscuro* tints of its wings, the gray and orange hues on its breast, its long black legs streaked with pink, its large beak, small head, and symmetrical proportions, combine to render it a bird of no ordinary beauty. Though its eyes are piercing and very open, the woodcock only sees distinctly at twilight, and its flight is never so even or so rapid, nor its motions so brisk, or its gait so regular, as at nightfall or at dawn of day.

The flesh is black, firm, and of a game flavour, and, with the wise, is a most dainty morsel, a royal tit-bit. But dogs think differently, and have such an aversion to its smell, that they hunt,

seize, and bring it back much against their will; and, difficult as it may be to account for this antipathy, it seems to be as inherent in canine nature, as the antipathy which all ladies show to contradiction is in the human.

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Far removed from the strife that occasionally rages amidst the feathered tribes of the forest, or the more formidable struggles of its four-footed inhabitants, whose howls occasionally startle the silence of night, and quite indifferent as to whether a fox or a wolf is seated on the sylvan throne, the woodcock, like a true philosopher, in the depths of the thicket, leads a calm and sedentary life, requiring no other elements of happiness than moonlight, rest, and a few worms. Its tastes are so humble, its wants so few; it mixes so little with the world, and is so ignorant of all intrigue, that nothing can exceed its innocence. Like those honest country-folks who can never manage to shake off their native simplicity, its instinct never puts it on its guard against a snare, and consequently it falls into the first that is set for it.

A complete stranger to the fierce emotions that excite the savage nature of those animals that live constantly at war with one another, the peaceful woodcock—the bird of twilight—is startled by the least noise, and stunned by the slightest accident. Many a time, at dawn of day, when lying in wait for the passage of a fox, a roebuck, or a wolf, have I seen two, three, four, even five woodcocks slowly issue from their leafy covert, and advance with measured step towards the open glade, apparently without imagining that by leaving the shade of the trees they were exposing themselves to being seen. On they walked, searching by the way, plunging from time to time their long beaks into the grass, and shaking their heads right and left to enlarge the hole, they breakfasted luxuriously on the worms that crept out of it.

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Concealed behind an oak-tree, I have sometimes been highly amused by watching their motions, nor had I the least wish to disturb them, not caring to rouse the echoes of the forest for such insignificant game. So the woodcocks went on with their manœuvres, holding down their heads, with eyes intent upon the grass, evidently engrossed by their own occupation. In this manner they unconsciously advanced close to me, when suddenly rising from the ground I gave a loud shout, at which the startled birds were so panic-struck that they literally fell down, and fluttering their wings, without having the power to fly, looked at me with rolling eye-balls, while their beaks opened as if to call for help, emitting nothing but inarticulate sounds, that seemed so many prayers for mercy. Somewhat relieved of their worst fears, on perceiving that I had no evil intentions, they rushed away head over heels, and sought refuge under their favourite roots. The recollection of this scene, which only lasted seven or eight seconds, has often made me laugh.

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Yet notwithstanding this general want of presence of mind, the woodcock displays some cunning in extreme danger,—such as when the shot is whistling past its feathers, or when the hawk is wheeling about in the air above its head; its faculties then seem to awaken, its blood circulates more freely, a spark of intelligence seems to flash across its usually obtuse brain, and the magnitude of the peril suggests an excellent means of escaping from its enemies. During the daytime, for instance, when, snugly ensconced in its hole, and with its ear close to the ground, the woodcock hears you approach from afar, instead of rising and taking refuge amongst the trunks of the surrounding trees, it first reflects solemnly whether it is worth while to disturb itself for so slight a noise, and quit its leafy bed, where it lies so warm and comfortable. After all, it may be only a hare running past—or perhaps a roebuck grazing in the neighbourhood—so the woodcock waits, then listens, then stands up and begins to move; on hearing your thick shoes trampling the withered branches, it stands motionless, not daring to stir, nor can it make up its mind to fly until it feels the breath of your dog. Then it rises rapidly enough.

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It flies straight, but its flight is not even, and at the distance of about fifty paces, and just as you are going to fire, the woodcock, well aware that the sportsman's eye is upon it, and shrewdly guessing that thunder and lightning is about to follow, changes his tactics, and lowering its flight, so as to avoid the mortal aim, suddenly plunges down behind a bush. The sportsman, who, not aware of this specious manœuvre, fires at this juncture, thinks the bird has fallen dead, and forthwith runs to pick it up, but no woodcock can he find; for on raising his eyes, lo! and behold, he sees the provoking bird some five hundred paces distant, cleaving the air with sails full set; and as his eyes follow it still further, he perceives it flying with all its might, ever and anon prudently ducking down to avoid the second barrel.

This is one of the woodcock's best stratagems, and it succeeds ten times out of twelve, at least with the tyros among sportsmen.

When fairly tired by its flight, the woodcock drops into the underwood, and is then completely lost to the sportsman; for, once on the ground, it runs with the greatest celerity, its wings working rapidly like a couple of paddles, and vanishing beneath the leaves, falls fainting into some snug corner.

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In Brittany and in Lower Normandy this ornament of the table and delight of the sportsman is found in great numbers at a certain season of the year. In Picardy, and in the neighbourhood of Boulogne, I have sometimes knocked over as many as twenty woodcocks in one day, while on the morrow and the day following I could not flush three. Such is not the case in Le Morvan, where they are, as we have before remarked, to be found all the year round; the proper seasons, however, for shooting them are three. These are, the month of November, before the rains set in;

the month of April, when they mate; and the sultry months of June and July; the period of drought and of the dog-days. In the interim of these epochs they are allowed to enjoy themselves, and suffered to fatten quietly in their dark thickets. I shall, therefore, only notice these three periods.

In foggy or cloudy nights, when the branches of the trees are dripping wet, the woodcock, ensconced in its hole, feels no hunger, moves not, and would not venture abroad for love or money; but should the sky prove clear, and the moon shine forth, lighting up the forest paths, the delighted bird steals from its dwelling, shakes its feathers, and sallies forth on its adventures. For the woodcock, like poets and lovers, is fond of the moonlight and the sweet perfumes of evening. Hence it is that sportsmen in France call the full moon of November "the woodcock's moon," and they hail its appearance with as much rejoicing as do the foxes, wild cats, and poachers, all of whom make sad havoc amongst the long-beaked tribe during this fatal period.

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The woodcock has been described as an idle, heavy, timid, and stupid bird, which passes the greater portion of the day in lethargic slumbers, in gazing at the south, at the growing grass, or the falling leaves; rejoicing only in silence and solitude; and such is the case during nine months of the year. In the spring, however, it is quite otherwise; the woodcock then mates, and, ere April showers have passed away, becomes animated, sociable, and full of life; and, more extraordinary still, its voice, till then mute, may actually be heard.

Yes, at this delightful season the woodcock is no longer silent, its tongue is loosened, it breathes its tale of love, and, with joyful notes, proclaims its happiness morning and night; and yet there are those who would make us believe that the tender passion is useless, that love is tom-foolery, or that it does not exist. To these blind blasphemers, who thus deny its power, I would respectfully say, Come to Le Morvan, and observe the woodcock, and then dare to say that love is an untruth. Why, love is the great magician of the universe, the sun of our minds, a path of fragrant violets, a perfect copsis of *millefleurs*, before which we all bend our hearts, aye, and, with vastly few exceptions, our heads too. Yes, we all, at some period of our lives, taste the delicious draught, and some drink deep of it, either to their life-long happiness or the reverse. Love effects many a miracle, changes everything, bows the neck of the proud, opens the eyes of the blind, and shuts them for those who have very good sight; teaches the dumb to speak, and those who are very loquacious to be silent. When the rosy and naked little boy makes his appearance with his quiver, all is joy and unreflecting happiness; when he is at home with his mamma, alas! the world is all in shadow. The woodcocks, in like manner, are amiable, eloquent, and engaging as long as the fumes of love affect their brain; but when these are dissipated, they are dumb, and ten times more stupid than they were before; and, dear me, how many human woodcocks, robed in satin and balzarine, or sheathed in kerseymere trousers, are the same.

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But, shades of Buffon and Linnæus! we must not thus rattle on, but proceed to describe the nuptial couch of the delicious bird under our consideration. The woodcock, like all those of the feathered tribe that do not perch, makes its nest on the ground, which is composed of leaves, fern, and dry grass, intermixed with little bits of stick, and strengthened by larger pieces placed across it. This nest, made without much art or care, in form like a large brown ball, is generally placed under, and sheltered by the root of some old tree. Four or five eggs, a little larger than those of the common pigeon, of a dirty gray and yellow colour, and marked with little black spots, are the proofs of its maternity. The woodcock, as I have before remarked, has only the gift of talking in the spring season, when soft breezes fan the air, and they educate their young. Nevertheless, it is in this season that woodcock-shooting is the most amusing. Then is the time for gentlemen to shoot; the *braconnier* despises it. From the middle of April to that of May is the important epoch at which the generality of animals marry, and the woodcocks are not behindhand in this respect; they leave their well-concealed retreats, become humanized, solicit the attentions of their feathered ladies, and fly with gay inspirations amongst the neighbouring bushes. But though as much in love as a widow, the woodcock does not on that account forget its habitual prudence; like the usurer who lends his money, and takes every precaution, the woodcock is equally careful, and does not leave its nest till twilight has draped the earth in the gray mantle of evening. When the humid atmosphere descends slowly on the trees, when the cool breezes of night ascend the valleys, when distant objects begin to assume a fantastic shape, when the branches of the oak near you, like the arms of a giant, wave to and fro, and seem to ask you to approach; when the withered tree, devoid of leaves, looks like a brigand on the watch, or your comrade, ensconced against it, seems to form a portion of it at a hundred yards off; when, in short, the sportsman can see only a few yards before him, then is the moment that the circumspect and wily woodcock leaves its abode, and pays a nocturnal visit to his friends; and man, his enemy, and still more cunning, is on the alert. The sport which we are about to describe, and which does not last longer than from thirty to forty minutes, has something particularly taking in it. At the close of day a universal silence reigns in the forest, and every sportsman is at his post with bated breath, and eyes dilated as wide as a woman's listening to a neighbouring gossip's tale, when, all at once—pray note this well, reader—a little fly, which plays a prominent part in all sport *à l'affût* (in ambush)—a little fly, about the size of a pea, regularly makes its appearance, and wheeling round your head, fidgets you for five minutes with its buzzing b-r-r-r-r-r-oo. In this way the little insect informs you the woodcocks have left the underwood, that they are approaching, and that it hears them coming; and odd or marvellous as it may seem, this signal of the little fly, which never misleads you—this signal which falls upon your ear just at the

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proper and precise moment, is as certain as that two and two make four. Be not sceptical, and imagine that this is chance; no such thing. Go when you will to the *chasse à l'affût*, station yourself in whichever part of the forest you like, be assured the fly will be there; it was never otherwise. The question is, who sends the fly? how does it know the sportsman? and by what mysterious chronometer does it regulate with such exactness its movements? *Chi lo sa?* He who doth not let a sparrow fall to the ground without He willeth it. Equally incomprehensible is the departure of this little insect, which, the concert over, and when you are thoroughly on the *qui vive*, ceases its buzz, and is heard no more. At this very moment, the silence in which you have till then remained is suddenly broken by shouts of "They come! they come!" quickly followed by bang, bang, bang along the glade; and here indeed they are, at first by twos and threes, and then a compact flight, whirling along with appealing cries of love, fluttering, and flapping their wings, and pursuing one another from bush to bush. They show now neither fear nor circumspection, and crazy, blind, and deaf, scarcely seem to notice the noise, the flashes, or the cries of the sportsmen. At length all is in complete confusion. They toss and twirl about like great leaves in a hurricane, and finally fly, with their ranks somewhat diminished, to their several homes. This sport lasts but a short half-hour; after which, the woodcocks having said all they had to say, made and accepted their engagements for the following day, vanish as if by magic, like the puff of a cigar, a shadow, or a royal promise, and the same silence that preceded their arrival reigns once more in the forest. No gun is loaded after their departure; the sportsmen assemble, count the dead, never so numerous, as one might suppose, and having bagged them, also retire from the scene. I have known one person kill four couple of woodcocks in this manner, but it was quite an exceptional case; two or three is nearer the usual number. Chance, as in war, in marriage, in everything, is frequently the secret of success; but if you are not cool and collected, and handy with your gun, you will scarce carry a *salmi* home to your expectant friends. To the young sportsman, the novelty, confusion, and hubbub of these evening shooting-parties are perfectly bewildering; Parisian cockneys, above all, are quite beside themselves, shutting first one eye and then the other, firing, of course, without having taken any aim, and eventually beating a retreat without a feather in their game-bags. But to the veteran, this fevered half-hour, this brief *chasse*, is most delightful; everything conspires to make it lively and exciting. The party, ten or twelve jolly dogs, have generally dined together, and the onslaught over, they all return by the pale moonlight, shoulder to shoulder, singing snatches of some old hunting-song, the stars overhead and the woodcocks on their backs. A young Parisian and college friend of mine, Adolphe Gustave de—, very rich and very witty, whom, after many unsuccessful attempts, I induced to leave the capital, and pass six months with me in the deserts, as he called them, of Le Morvan, loved this species of sport intensely, though he never shot anything. His bag, however, was always better filled than that of any of his comrades, for though a wretched shot, he had the wit to stand near a good one, and as he was wonderfully quick with his legs, eyes, and fingers, he was constantly picking up his neighbour's birds, vowing all the time they were his own shooting.

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CHAPTER XI.

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Fine names—Gustavus Adolphus and the cabbages—Gustavus Adolphus! no hero!—The Parisian Sportsman—Partridge-shooting despicable—Wild boar-hunting—Rousing the grisly monster—His approach—The post of honour—Good nerves—The death—The trophy and congratulations.

FEW persons well acquainted with France can have failed to observe how fond the lower orders, indeed all classes, are of giving high-sounding names to their children; and it is sometimes truly amusing to notice the strange upset of associations which in consequence jar the auricular nerve, and illustrate the singularly exalted notions of the godfathers and godmothers. "Gustave Adolphe!" I once heard an old cook vociferate from the kitchen of a small inn to a boy in the yard. "Gustave Adolphe!" shrieked the aged heroine of the sauce-pans, pitching her voice in A alto, "*Coupez donc les choux!*" Cutting cabbages! What an antithesis to the glorious victor of Lutzen. The remark will apply with equal force to the Gustave Adolphe of the last chapter, though on a different point, and the contrast between the great Gustavus and he of Paris, was most diverting. My accomplished friend, a charming dancer, a *beau parleur*, a first-rate singer, who made sad havoc among the fresh and fair gazelles of every ballroom, this tremendous *chasseur-de-salon*, I very soon perceived, was by no means so tremendous in the stubbles;—a covey fairly startled him, and if a hare rose between his legs he turned quite pale.

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"My good fellow," I said to him one day, seeing his extraordinary trepidation, "if you are so staggered by a covey of partridges, what in the world will you do when I set you face to face with a wolf or a wild boar?"

"Oh! that is a very different affair. A wolf or a wild boar? Why, I should kill one and eat the other, of course."

"Not so easy," I should think, "for a novice like you."

"Novice, indeed! me a novice. Oh! you are quite in error. The fact is, these devils of birds and rabbits lie hidden, do you see, under the grass like frogs, one never knows where; so that I never

see them till they are all but in my eyes, or cutting capers like Taglioni's under my feet, and your dogs putting out their tongues, and staring at me."

"Why, of course they do; the intelligent brutes are ready to expire at your awkwardness."

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"Much obliged to you for the compliment. Again, you say, they turn their tails to the right by way of telling me that I am to go to the left; and to the left, when I am to walk to the right. Who, I ask you, is to understand such telegraphs as these? I have not yet learned how to converse with dogs' tails—intelligence, indeed! I believe it is all humbug; for, when my whole soul is absorbed in watching the tips of these very tails, a crowd of partridges jump up just in front of me, making as much noise as if they were drummers beating the retreat. If I am hurried and stupefied"....

"And if," I added, "you are much disposed to throw down your gun as to fire it."

"Well! supposing I am; what is the wonder? 'Tis no fault of mine—I am not used to partridge-shooting! I am not a wild man of the woods, like you! I did not cut my teeth gnawing a cartridge, as you did!"

"Come, come! don't be affronted."

"Affronted? No; but you have no consideration. You're a Robin Hood, an exterminator! if you look at one partridge, you kill four! You sleep with your rifle, turn your game-bag into a nightcap, and shave with a *couteau-de-chasse*!"

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"May be so! but let us have the fact."

"The fact! Then I hate your long-tailed dogs, and your detestable flights of noisy birds! Let me have them one by one, like larks in the plain of St. Denis, and I'll soon clear the province for you."

"Upon my word, Adolphe, we should have something to thank you for!"

"I tell you what, Henri; those partridges, after all, are trumpery things to kill. 'Tis mere hurry that prevents my hitting them. Don't imagine I am frightened! If you wish to give me real pleasure, let us go to India and shoot a lion or a tiger;—give me a chance with an elephant!"

"Willingly; but allow me to suggest, that if we set out for India, we shall not get back in time for dinner."

"We will keep in Europe, then; but, at least, show me some game worthy of me. A serpent—I will cut him in two at a stroke. A bull—I will soon send a brace of balls into him."

"Well done! just like a Parisian."

"Parisian! Pray what do you mean by that?"

"A boaster, if you prefer the word."

"Ha! ha! a boaster, indeed! Do you mean to say that I'm afraid of a bull?"

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"Of course not. However, as there are no bulls here, I will send the head *piqueur* upon the track of a wild boar which was seen near the chateau last night; he will exactly suit you. I consider him as doomed."

"Thank you, Henri; thank you; the moment I am fairly in front of him, I shall fire at his eyes, and no doubt lodge both balls in them. Poor Belisarius! how he will charge me in his agony! but I shall retire, reload, and then, having drawn my hunting-knife, dispatch him without further ceremony."

"Never fear, you shall have the post of honour; and if you do not turn upon your heel, why, my dear friend, you will rise at least a dozen pegs in my estimation."

"Turn on my heel! you little know me; and then, what a sensation I shall create in Paris with my boar's skin. I'll have it stuffed, gild his tusks, and silver-mount his hoofs. I shall be quite the hero of the *salons*."

That very afternoon orders were given to the head-keeper to send the *traqueurs* into the forest on the following day, and on their return, they announced that not only traces of wild boar had been met with, but one had actually been seen. Great were the preparations and cleaning of rifles and *couteaux-de-chasse* when this intelligence was received; but, in spite of his assumed composure, Adolphe's ardour seemed considerably to diminish, and the conversation that evening over the fire was not calculated to inspire him with fresh courage.

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"How very soon they find the boar!" said he to me. "Tell me how the affair commences."

"Why these *traqueurs* are not long in discovering him. They know exactly where to look for one, for they study their habits; the traces of the grisly rascal are seen by them immediately; they mark his favourite paths, the thickets he prefers, the marshy ground in which he delights to wallow, and then as to the times he is likely to be seen, they can tell almost to a minute when he will pass,—for the wild boar is very methodical, and an excellent time-piece. The animal, therefore, having been traced, and his retreat carefully ascertained, a day is fixed, and each

person having been assigned a separate post, remains watching for his appearance on his way to or from his haunt."

"Oh! of course, they merely watch and wait," replied Adolphe, with a hollow, unmeaning laugh. [Pg 123]

"Yes; but you don't suppose that a boar will allow himself to be killed as easily as a squirrel. I fear, in spite of all your professions, you will find it not so agreeable a sport as shooting larks on the plain of St. Denis. The bristly fellow who comes trotting and grunting towards you, showing his teeth, stopping occasionally to sharpen them against the root of some old oak, is not generally in the best of humours; but you can, at any rate, reckon upon the great advantage,—the want of which you deprecate in partridge-shooting. For instance, you cannot fail to see him; you have notice of his coming; you are not taken off your guard, and they very seldom appear but one at a time. It is a combat face to face, and his, with two long prominent teeth, so unfortunate in a woman, and positively hideous in a boar, effectually warns you that it is well you should be prepared to receive him. But the excitement is grand; after the volley every one is at him with his knife, and, with the exception of a few inexperienced dogs, and a Parisian novice like yourself, who, of course, are occasionally put *hors de combat*, the affair ends gloriously. Yes, yes, I am beginning to think you are right, Adolphe; partridge-shooting and knocking over a timid hare is very cowardly sport." [Pg 124]

The *traqueurs* also, whom Adolphe catechised, in the hope of preserving his own skin entire at the same time, though they gave him all sorts of good advice, failed not to add to it, as people of their class generally do, a budget of most fearful histories and hair-breadth escapes—of horses and dogs ripped open, and men killed or gored; but that which put a finishing-stroke to Adolphe's courage, was the entrance of a friend of mine, who had himself been a sad sufferer in one of these adventures. Wounded, but not mortally, the boar had charged him before he could reload, tearing up with his tusk the inside of his thigh; and, as he lay insensible on the ground, gnawing one of his calves off before any one could come to his assistance. During the next two months death shook him by the hand in vain, for he had fortunately an excellent constitution; "And, though the proportions of his left leg," whispered I, "have been restored by a slice out of a friendly cork-tree, he is, as you see, quite recovered."

"True enough!" said the new arrival, who had overheard the concluding remark, "and if you have any doubts, Sir, I will show you my leg;" but Adolphe, thoroughly convinced, declined the offer, and retired to his room for the night. [Pg 125]

The dawn was yet gray, when the court-yard of the Château d'Erveau presented a very animated appearance; horses, dogs, and beaters were walking up and down, neighing, yelping, and conversing,—the huntsman every now and then winding his horn, giving notice to the inmates that all was ready. The morning was superb, and as the party filed out of the yard, doffing their beavers to the ladies, who, screened behind their window-curtains, dared not return their salute, Adolphe was a little reassured. Long, however, before they reached their hunting-ground, his chivalrous feelings had so far forsaken him, that he had serious thoughts of returning, on the plea of indisposition.

"Why do you lag so far behind?" said I, riding up to him at this juncture, "why your nose is quite white. Nay, don't blush; braver men than you have felt far from comfortable the first time they went boar-hunting. You are afraid. Come, don't deny it; but, never mind, I will not quit you for a moment."

"With all my heart; for, though I cannot exactly say I am afraid, yet that infernal cork-leg is continually dancing before my eyes." [Pg 126]

"I have not the least doubt of it; and, by Terpsichore! what a pretty thing it would be to see the handsome Gustave Adolphe de M—— dancing polkas and redowas in the drawing-rooms of the Faubourg St. Germain with a cork-leg or a gutta-percha calf! The very idea gives me the cramp in every toe."

Conversing much in the same strain, the eight *chasseurs* arrived at the rendezvous, where they dismounted. The beaters and *gardes-de-chasse* were all at their posts, and on the alert to the movements of the boar, and as we advanced deeper in the forest, the conversation, which had been so lively on our setting forth, flagged, and at length subsided into an occasional remark on the obstacles which impeded our progress. Nothing renders a man more reserved than his approach to an anticipated danger. I looked askance at Adolphe, and saw that his teeth rattled like castanets; and when the foremost keepers, in doubt as to the track, blew a plaintive note, which, ere it died away, was answered by another in the distance, showing that we were in the right one, Adolphe's breathing became stentorian behind me. And then as the branches and hazel twigs, through which we forced our way more rapidly, flew back and struck him in the face, he supplicated me to stop. [Pg 127]

"Not so fast, my dear friend, not so fast! Have mercy on my Parisian legs! Misericorde! I cannot proceed. Do stop! There, my nose is skinned by that last branch! Good—there, my breeches are breaking! For pity's sake, stop!" But to stop was impossible; and I remained silent, having quite enough to do looking out for myself. At length we arrived at the appointed spot. Adolphe, in a state bordering on the crazy, his clothes in shreds, his face and hands bleeding

from the thorns, anger in his blood, and perspiration on his brow, his furious eyes looked at me as if I had been the author of his misfortunes. And here a scene would most undoubtedly have ensued, but happily the head *piqueur* arrived, informing us that the boar was in a thick patch of underwood, about two miles from thence, in which he was supposed to be taking his mid-day *siesta*, and that a number of peasants having headed him on one side, he could not well escape. Our measures were quickly taken.

"Serpolet," said I to the *piqueur*, "have you seen the animal?"

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"At a distance, Monsieur."

"What is he like?"

"Oh! a tremendous fellow—long legs, enormous head, large tusks, and such a muzzle!—he breaks through everything. A fortunate thing, Monsieur, the dogs were not with us."

"Well!" said I to my father, "of course this gentleman is to have the place of honour."

"The place of honour!" cried Adolphe, "which is the place of honour?"

"Why, the most dangerous to be sure," replied my father, "the third or fourth post from where he breaks cover. The first or second shots seldom kill him; wounded, he continues his course, and, savage and ferocious, generally turns upon the third or fourth *chasseur*, at whom, with lowered head and glaring eye, he charges in full career. Oh! it is then a splendid sight, worth all the journey from Paris! Forward, my lads, forward! Hurrah! for the boar!"

"And thus—" groaned Adolphe, with thickened speech, not at all charmed with this description of his onset.

"And thus," remarked my father, with a bow of the old *régime*, "you shall be fourth, and you will see the sturdy grunter in all his beauty. Come, my boys! a glass of the cognac all round; then silence, and each to his post. Here, Serpolet, forward with them, and remember, gentlemen, the word of command is 'Prudence and coolness!' Off! and may your stout hearts protect you!"

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Then filing out from the glade where we had halted, each of us proceeded to his destination, the valiant Adolphe following Serpolet like a dog going to be drowned.

"Monsieur," said Serpolet, "you don't seem used to this fun; let a graybeard and an old huntsman advise you. I have seen the animal—actually seen him—a terrible boar, I promise you, as black as ink, clean legs, and ears well apart,—all true signs of courage. As sure as my name is Serpolet, he will make mince-meat of us—sure to charge. Take my advice, Monsieur; never mind what the gentlemen say about waiting; don't you let him get nearer to you than five-and-twenty paces; if not, in three bounds he will be at you; and in another second you will be opened like an oyster. Take care, Monsieur!"—and, wishing him success, Serpolet joined the beaters, who were waiting, all ready to advance.

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"What shall we do?" said Adolphe as soon as he was gone.

"Do, why, take a look about us."

We were in a kind of low, open glade, about eighty paces in length, with an immense oak in the centre—a solitary spot, full of thick rushes, tufts of grass, brambles, and matted roots; in short, just the place that a boar would make his head-quarters. Adolphe accompanied me step by step, examined me from head to foot, and looked in my face as if he would read my every thought.

"Well, Adolphe," said I, after I had considered the principal points of our position, "the moment has at length arrived when you must draw your courage from the scabbard; and I hope it will shine like the light, for something tells me you will require it ere long."

"I'll tell you what; I beg you will not commence any of your long orations."

"If I talk to you now, it is because I shall not be able in a few minutes. Pay attention, therefore, to my instructions. Remain, I advise you, behind this oak, then you will have nothing to fear, and be sure not to leave it. I will place myself at the angle down yonder."

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"Down there! Why you said you would not leave me for an instant."

"Come, come, don't be absurd; the moments are precious; you see I shall only be distant an hundred yards."

"An hundred yards! I tell you what—if you go ten yards, I go too."

"What! are you afraid? We are alone; come, be frank."

"No! I am not afraid, but my nerves are shaken; I am thoroughly done up with the scramble we have had through these woods; and then that rascal Serpolet, who prophesied that I shall be opened like an oyster—you shall not go, for I feel sure that when this brute of a boar makes his appearance, I shall be unable to look him in the face."

"My dear friend, I will do as you desire. We have still half an hour to wait; but remember, no

imprudence—and if you should see my finger raised, mind, not a word or a sign."

As I uttered this apostrophe, a long and harmonious note from the head-keeper's horn, vibrating in the distance, came and died away upon our ears; after which, a confused clamour of voices arose, and as suddenly ceased.

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"Hurrah! hurrah!" said I; "the *traqueurs* are on the move, the curtain is raised, the play is about to commence—and, dear friend, be silent as death, for the actor will soon make his appearance on the stage."

During the next ten minutes, a murmur of voices and confused sounds were again borne on the wind to the two sportsmen, announcing that the line of beaters was steadily advancing, and now they could distinctly hear them at intervals, striking the trunks of the trees with their long iron-shod poles, thrusting them in the underwood, and shouting in chorus the song of the boar.

Again the horn is heard; but now its notes are sharp, shrill, jerking and hurried.

"That, my good Adolphe, denotes that the boar has risen, has been driven from his lair, is in view, flying before the beaters, and I am very much mistaken if he does not ere long pay us a visit."

Another blast is heard, but in very different tones to the last, and silence is again spread over the forest.

"There, Adolphe—there's a joyous and melodious note; it tells me that the monster is following his usual paths—we are sure to see him soon. By St. Hubert, what lucky dogs we are!"

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But the Parisian answered not, and leaned against his oak, a perfect picture of despair.

"Adolphe," I reiterated, "he won't be here yet, but speak low, or we may spoil everything. How do you feel? Do you think you can take good aim, and pull the trigger?"

"I feel," whispered Adolphe, "that I am not cut out for boar-hunting."

"Bah! Why, the other day you seemed to think it would be delightful, and now you don't appear to like the sport; keep your heart up, be cool, and all will be well;—it is only on grand occasions—those when real danger presents itself, as you told me the other day—that the proofs of undoubted courage show themselves; and then the ladies of the Faubourg St. Germain that you were to soften with your tales of forest life—'Mademoiselles,' you were to commence, 'when I was in Le Morvan, we had famous wolf and boar-hunting, and on one occasion'...."

"No! no!" groaned the Parisian, "I shall commence thus: On one occasion, nay, ladies, on all occasions, I much prefer being in your delightful society to that of the boars of Le Morvan."

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"Nonsense, good Adolphe, you are laughing; why, you were to have the skin stuffed, the tusks gilt, the feet silver-mounted, and the tail was to be scarlet and curly. What! do you think no more about it?"

"Oh, yes! and of the cork calves also."

"Pooh! have we not two good hunting-knives and four iron bullets in the rifles, and a magnificent oak, a perfect wooden tower, for a breastwork."

"Yes! we have all this."

"And is not courage your father, and an excellent aim your mother, and is not death to the boar in our barrels?"

"Certainly!—death—oh! what a word at such a crisis!"—and on the instant two shots were heard, which made him jump again.

"Ah! ah!—good; that's the old gentleman who has led off the ball; the music of his rifle is not to be mistaken. The grisly vagabond has by this time two bits of iron in his flanks, which will considerably hasten his march. Silence! and be on the *qui vive*. Listen! Hear you not the distant crash in the bushes?" Two fresh shots were now fired, but nearer. "Said I not so? he is running the gauntlet—one more shot. Hush again! there he is, tearing along. Hark! not a whisper; your eye on the open, your ear to the wind, and your finger on the trigger!" But it was not the boar; for at the moment two roebucks and a fox broke near us, bounding along at full speed, when Adolphe, his face as pale as his cambric shirt, muttered, as he nearly fell upon his knees—"Oh! Paris—oh! Chevet—oh! Boulevard des Italiens—I shall never see you more!"

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"Why, Adolphe! what the deuce is the matter with you? in the name of France, be a man. If my time is to be taken up with looking after you, I shall be in a nice situation. No nonsense—no useless fears? Do you, or do you not feel able to take part in the approaching drama?"

"No, I don't—I only just feel able to get up this tree."

"What! are you in such a funk as all that? Why, what a poor creature you must be! You are the very incarnation of fear!"

"Fear? I have no fear. Who says that I have? I don't know how it is, but I certainly do feel something—a sort of qualm, something like sea-sickness—everything seems going round—no doubt a sudden indisposition—such a thing might happen to the bravest man—Napoleon, they say, was bilious at Borodino. We part for a few minutes only, dear friend; I shall ascend the oak—an English king once did the same."

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Another blast of the keeper's horn was now heard on the left.

"What does that mean?" cried Adolphe, one leg in the air.

"That signifies, the boar is making right for us."

"Does it? Then I am up;" and, with the agility of a cat, he was in an instant safely lodged in the branches. "Ah! my friend! how different it feels up here—the sickness is quite gone off, hand me the gun."

"In the name of Fortune," said I, "hold your coward tongue—here's the boar;" for I could now hear his snorting and loud breathing in the copse hard by.

"Do you hear him?" said Adolphe from his perch, his cheeks as green as the leaves which covered him.

"Hear him?" I exclaimed, "yes, I partly see him. What a monster! How he tears the ground!—how he bleeds and gnaws his burning wounds!—every hair of his back stands up, smoke and perspiration flow from his nostrils, and his eyes, glaring with agony and concentrated rage, look as if they would start from their sockets!"

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On came the beaters, and in a few minutes the panting beast burst from his thicket, and rushed across the open; my eye was on every movement, and, firing both barrels, the contents struck him full in front. It was his death-blow, but the vital principle was yet unsubdued; and, summoning up all his dying energies—those which despair alone can give—he came at me with a force that I could never have withstood. Fortunately the Parisian's gun was close to me, and the charge stopped him in full career. This was the *coup de grâce*. He still, however, by one grand effort, stood nobly on his haunches, opened his monstrous mouth, all red with blood, gave out one sharp deep groan of agony from his stifled lungs, and, falling upon his side, after many a wild convulsion, at length stretched his massive and exhausted frame slowly out in death.

"Hurrah! Adolphe! you rascally acorn! shout, you *badaud*! give the death-whoop, and come down!"

"Is he really dead?"

"Dead! Why, don't you see he is? Come down I say—come, descend from your Belvedere—the farce is played out, and your legs are all right. You are a rank coward! however, no one is aware of it but me. Don't let others see it!" and in a minute Adolphe was at my side.

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"Listen, you fire-eater! and I will make you a hero, though you could not manage to make yourself one. There were four shots fired; now, take your gun, and remember that the two first, those ghastly holes in the chest, were your handiwork—do you hear?"

"Yes, but what a horrible morning! what a brute! what a savage country!"

"True, it is not like the Boulevard des Italiens;" and a few minutes after, Adolphe received, with some confusion, attributed to modesty, the congratulations of all the party. This diffidence, as it may be imagined, did not last long; his assurance soon returned, and the hurrahs had scarcely died away, before he had imagined and given a very graphic description of the last moments of the gallant boar. His toilet made, the monstrous carcass was placed upon a litter, hastily constructed with the branches of a tree, and the peasants, hoisting it on their shoulders, bore the deceased monarch of the woods in triumph to the chateau.

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In the evening, Adolphe's self-satisfaction was completed by an ovation from the ladies, who bestowed upon him the most flattering epithets. From the prettiest lips I heard, "What! this Parisian! this pale and slender young man, with such delicate hands and rose-coloured nails, fought face to face with this terrible beast? Admirable! And he was not frightened?"

"Frightened, ladies," said I, "why he was smoking a cigar all the time!" And the secret was so well kept, and Adolphe so bepraised, that I am sure had I felt disposed to throw a doubt upon the circumstances, he would have stoutly contended that he really did kill the animal himself; and, to say the truth, he was to a certain extent authorized to say so, for the head, handsomely decorated, was sent to his mother, the following words having been nicely printed on the tusks:

"Killed by Gustave Adolphe de M. the 15th of August, 18—."

In the course of time Adolphe's nerves improved so much that he could manage to knock down a leash of birds, or roll over a hare; but boars and wolves he declined to have anything further to do with; and when I met him by accident some years after, in the presence of mutual friends, he said, "Ah! de Crignelle, what two famous shots those were I put into that boar! But, gentlemen," he continued, with a sigh which seemed pumped up from his very heels, "what terrible forests

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CHAPTER XII.

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The *Mares*—Manner in which they are formed in the depths of the forest—*Mare* No. 1.—
Description of it—The appearance of the spot—Mode of constructing the hunting-lodge—
Approach of the birds—Animals that frequent the *Mares* in the evening.

OF all the various sports of Europe, that which produces the greatest excitement, that which is, more than any other, full of deep interest, dangerous and difficult, is without doubt hut-shooting at night on the banks of one of our large *Mares*.^[1] Here the sportsman, left to himself, is deprived of all help; concealed in a corner of a wood, or squatting at the foot of a tree, he requires all his courage, all his experience; for he then finds himself engaged in a deadly conflict with the most subtle and ferocious beasts, possibly a mouthful for the largest and most powerful jaws, and at the mercy of the quickest ears of the forest. Motionless in his hut, like a spider in its web, nothing can put him off his guard—neither the view halloo of the passing huntsman, the cheerful notes of his horn, nor the music of the dogs, can distract his attention. All around is calm, solitude and gloom surround him, no voice interrogates him, no eye sees him; he is alone, quite alone, his blood circulates tranquilly through his veins, his faculties are all on the stretch, he waits, he bides his time. The shadows lengthen, twilight arrives, the forest puts on the garb of evening, the silence and solitude are more deeply felt, night is at hand, the moment so ardently desired approaches. Imagination begins to work, phantoms of every description come across his brain, and glide before his eyes, he hears, and fancies he sees the sylvan spirits dancing before him; his ears are full of mysterious and unearthly sounds, plaintive and melancholy, celestial harmonies, fairy melodies of another world, interrupted conversations between the winds, the trees, the herbage and the earth, as if they were offering homage to the great Creator of the universe.

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Firm at his post, and uninfluenced by this phantasmagoria of the brain, without movement and almost without breath, the sportsman waits hopefully; for the greatest virtue in this kind of sport is patience, the second courage, first-rate—his heart should be of marble, his flesh of steel, and his members should possess a power of immobility as great as that of a sphynx in an Egyptian temple. Yes! the sport *aux mares* is the most stirring, the roughest that I am acquainted with, not so much on account of the real danger attending it, but in consequence of those fictitious, unknown, and imaginary, produced by the silence and loneliness of the forest. It is my intention, therefore, in describing this kind of sport, to enter into the most ample details, in order that I may make myself thoroughly understood. I shall take, as representing very nearly all the pieces of water to be met with in the forest, three kinds of *Mares* of different dimensions. I shall explain their position, the relative value they possess in the eyes of the sportsman, the game, large and small, to be found on their banks, and the most propitious time for approaching them, and I shall endeavour, if possible, to impress my readers with the pleasures and adventures which have on several occasions agitated me.

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If the woods and forests of Le Morvan, which, by the clouds they attract, the thunder-storms that continually fall over them, and the moisture that generally prevails, feed a great many streams, the district is not the less deprived, by its elevated position, of large rivers and extensive sheets of water; for the rains, falling down the sides of the trees, and penetrating the thick mossy grass at their roots, do not remain for any length of time on the surface of the earth. The whole forest may, in fact, be described as a large sponge, through which the water filters, descending to the inferior strata, where it finds the secret drains of Nature, and is by them conducted into the plains. The roots being thus continually watered, the trees are fresh and vigorous in their growth, and produce a most luxuriant foliage; the ground itself, however, is generally dry under foot, and in some places rocky.

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It is therefore very rare, quite an exceptional case, to find on the elevated heaths, or in our forests, any lakes or large pieces of water; nevertheless they are to be seen here and there, and then the cottage of the peasant, or the hut of the wood-cutter is sure to raise its modest head on their banks; in time these humble edifices are augmented in number till they sometimes become a considerable village. If the spring, once a silvery thread, and now a brawling rivulet, changes its character to a deep and considerable stream, farm-houses, a chateau, or a hunting-box are soon erected near it. If it is merely a tiny source rising from the earth, or springing from some isolated rock, and soon lost in the moss, without even a murmur, calm and silent, as the life of the lowly peasant, which is slowly consumed in the scarcely varying path of labour,—then no one takes the least notice of it.

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Sometimes, however, the tears which the earth thus sheds, this crystal thread, scorned by the unobserving passer-by, is arrested in its timid course by some trifling obstacle—a rising path, a fallen branch or tree. This little streamlet swells, frets the immediate spot of ground, imperceptibly increases in size, and becomes after many efforts, the patient work of months and years, something like the basin of a large *jet d'eau*, a liquid cup lost in the recesses of the woods, reflecting only a very small portion of the blue heavens above; unknown to man, but always

frequented by thousands of delighted and happy insects, and little birds that come there in the great heats of summer to refresh themselves, to skim across the surface, and sip, with head uplifted towards heaven, its pellucid waters. These little springs, lost in the thickness of the mossy turf and the dead leaves, like a gray hair in the dark tresses of some village beauty, which accident or a lover could alone discover, when thus interrupted and formed into a bowl of water, such as I have described, is called a *Mare*.

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If, therefore, the sportsman in traversing the depths of the forest should chance to discover one of these mirrors of the passing butterfly, of the flower which inclines its slender form towards it, or of the bird that sings and plays in the branches that overspread its surface, he must not look contemptuously upon it, for this little liquid pearl, thus concealed in the shade, which the hot rays of the sun would dry up like an Arabian well, if they could reach it, may prove to him a mine of varied reflections—a page of nature's great book, and in it he may possibly find, if he have an observing eye and an understanding heart, a type of this lower world, with all its hateful passions, its follies and virtues, its wars, rivalries, injustice and oppression.

One day, when out shooting, and following by tortuous paths, to me unknown, the bleeding traces of a roebuck which I had wounded, I had the good fortune to meet with one of these *Mares*. The piece of water of which I thus became what I may term the proprietor, was from fifty to sixty feet in circumference, though at the first glance I fancied it was only half the size, so completely was it covered near the side by thorns and briars, and in the centre by lilies, flags, and other aquatic plants. By certain other signs, also, the gigantic creepers, and the barkless and headless trees, bending and falling with age; by the deep thickets that surrounded it, and by the solitary aspect of the pool, I felt convinced that mine was the first footstep that had trodden its precincts,—that I was the Christopher Columbus of the place.

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Enchanted with my discovery, I determined to mark the spot, for I thought it a *Mare* of peculiar beauty. It was almost surrounded by wild fruit trees, which grow in great numbers in our forests: here were the sorb, or service tree, and the medlar, bending to the ground under the weight of their luxuriant fruit; intermingled with these waved the lofty and slender branches of the wild cherry, the berries of which, now ripe, and sweet as drops of honey, and black as polished jet, offered a delicious repast to clouds of little birds, that hopped chirruping from twig to twig: and lastly, I may mention a fine arbutus, which in its turn presented a tempting collation to the notice of many a hungry bullfinch. The soft turf around was strewed with the shining black and bright red berries, which the last breeze had shaken from the verdant branches.

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To describe the crystal notes, the liquid cadences, the merry songs of the feathered inhabitants of this hive, that pursued one another rejoicing amongst the leaves, is impossible. Besides, my unexpected appearance threw them into perfect consternation; and this greatly increased when, drawing from my side my hunting-knife, I began to cut down, in all directions, the bushes which intercepted a nearer approach to the miniature lake.

The storm of helpless anger, menaces, and complaints from these little creatures was quite curious. "Oh! the wretch!" a cuckoo seemed to say; "what does he mean by coming here, showing us his ugly face?"—"Oh! the horror," cried a coquette of a tomtit, holding up her little claw.—"Hélas! hélas! our poor trees, our beautiful leaves, and our lovely greensward—see how he is cutting away—Oh! the wicked man! the destructive rascal!" they all piped in chorus. But I paid no attention to them, and went on hacking away, and whistling like one of the blackbirds. This indeed I continued to do for several days, working like a woodman, and all alone, for I did not wish to associate myself with any person, lest he should claim a share in my discovery; but it was long before I began to enjoy the fruits of my hard labour. The trunks were sawn, the branches lopped, and after considerable trouble I at last cleared my piece of water from the bushes and parasitic plants which blocked it up. The evening breeze now circulated rapidly over it, and the sun could look in upon it for at least two hours of the day.

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My friends who saw me leave the house every morning with a basket of tools at my back and a hatchet at my side, like Robinson Crusoe, and who witnessed my return each evening heartily tired, with torn clothes, scratched hands, and dust and perspiration on my face, without a single head of game in my bag, could not comprehend why I went out thus alone into the forest, and remained there the livelong day. Often did they persecute me with questions, and try in every way to penetrate the mystery; all in vain, my whereabouts remained hidden like a hedgehog in his prickly coat, and I managed matters so well that during two successive years I was the unknown proprietor and Grand Sultan of my much-loved *Mare*.

But when my task was finished, a task that hundreds of birds, perched in the oaks, the elms, and the adjoining thickets, viewed with mingled feelings of approbation, disapprobation, curiosity, or interest,—when the last stroke of my hatchet was given, I said to myself, while looking on the result of my unremitting toil, "'Tis well, and what a change has taken place in this little corner of the forest. In truth, it looks superb."

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The little lake was now a perfect oval, and the water, not very deep, but limpid as crystal, was full of green and coloured rushes—the surface being partly covered by the white and rose-tinted flowers of the water-lilies, which reposing delicately on their large flat green leaves, looked like velvet camellias placed upon a plate of sea-green porcelain. In the mossy turf which bordered it,

beds of violets, pink daisies, and lilies of the valley, sent forth a cloud of perfume, and on the large forest trees hung festoons and garlands of the honeysuckle and the clematis; so that the *Mare* and the surrounding foliage, would, seen from above, have appeared like a large well with leafy walls, or an immense emerald, which some spirit of the air, returning from a marriage of the gods, had inadvertently dropped on his way home.

Having given a description of the lake, I must describe my picturesque and sylvan hut. This, constructed of trunks of trees, branches and osiers, was placed about twenty paces from the water, completely concealed by the bushes that encircled it; the inside was fitted up in rustic taste with seats of wood, the whole carpeted with turf, and the entrance planted with every kind of odoriferous flower.

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This *Mare*, approached by marks known only to myself, became thenceforward the source of all my pleasures. At that period very young, and equally careless, I would not have parted with my large liquid *tazza*, my little lake, my leafy castle, for all the vulgar comfortable *chateaux* in the neighbourhood.

If I have lingered too much over this subject, the reader must forgive me for elaborating this picture—this portrait I may call it of my *Mare*. He has before him a type of all the others, and this again must be my excuse, it is so dear to the unfortunate to stir the still warm embers of by-gone memories,—so dear to rouse from their slumbers the treasured recollections of early days,—to wake those sweet spirits of the mind, those phantoms robed in azure blue, and decked with the pearls, the joys which never can glide again across the dreamer's path—the joys of youth.

Oh *souvenirs* of childhood!—of happy hours so quickly gone,—bright visions that gild, yes, light the darkest clouds of after years, blessed, blessed are ye! Alone, friendless, far from those I love, with the heart steeped, drowned in sorrow, a sombre sky before my eyes, wintry clouds, that distil but melancholy thoughts all around me,—well, I, the poor sparrow, who has been cast from his nest by the raging storm,—I hush my griefs to rest in tracing the picture of past delights. Yes, memory comes to my relief; I build again in the casket of the mind my sylvan hut, careless and full of youthful fancies. I am again seated in the depths of my native woods, speaking to the light-hearted thrush, and whistling to the breeze.

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Once more I bathe myself in the golden rays of the mid-day sun; I tread again the forest paths, and am intoxicated with the delicious perfume of its wild flowers. Hark! again I hear the cooing of the amorous doves, and in the distance the notes of the dull cuckoo, bewailing his solitary life.—But no more....

The *Mares*, very different from one another, and having each of them very different admirers, are of three kinds; they are either small or large, near or distant from the village or neighbouring hamlet; and according as they are circumstanced in one or other of these respects they are more or less valuable. The largest, the deepest, the least known, those in short that are situated in the recesses of the forest, are the best and most frequented by game; to balance this advantage they are the most fatiguing and the most difficult to approach.

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In the violent heats of July and August, when the sun burns up the herbage, when the wind as it passes parches the skin, and the sultry air scarcely allows the lungs to play—when the earth is quite dried up—the hot-blooded animals, whose circulation is rapid, remain completely overpowered with the heat in their retreats all day, either stretched panting on the leaves, or lurking in the shade of some rock; but the moment the sun, in amber clouds, sinks below the horizon, and twilight brings in his train the dark hours of night, and its humid vapours, the beasts of the forest are again in movement, again their ravenous appetite returns, and they lose no time in ranging the woods, seeking how and where they may gratify it. Then it is these large *Mares*, silent as a woman that listens at a keyhole—silent as a catacomb, is all at once endowed with life,—is filled with strange noises, like an aviary, and becomes, as night falls, a common centre to which the hungry and thirsty cavalcade direct their steps.

The first arrivals are hundreds of birds, of every size and colour, who come to gossip, to bathe, to drink, and splash the water with their wings. Next come troops of hares and rabbits, who come to nibble the fresh grass that grows there in great luxuriance. As the shades grow deeper, groups of the graceful roebuck, timid and listening for anticipated danger, their large open eyes gazing at each tree, giving an inquiring look at every shadow, are seen approaching with noiseless footsteps; when reassured by their careful *reconnaissance*, they steal forward, cropping the dewy rich flowers as they come, and at last slake their thirst in the refreshing waters.

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At this instant you may, if you are fatigued, and so desire it, finish your day's sport. You may bring down the nearest buck; and then as the troop, wild with affright, make for the forest, the second barrel will add a fellow to your first victim.

But, no! pull not the trigger; stop, if only to witness what follows. See the roebuck prick their ears; they turn to the wind; they appear uneasy; call one to the other, assemble; danger is near, they feel it, hear it coming; they would fly, but find it is too late; terrified, they are chained to the spot. For the last half hour the wolves and wolverines, which followed gently, and at a distance, their own more rapid movements, have closed in upon them from behind, have formed the fatal circle, have noiselessly decreased it as much as possible, and at length come swiftly down upon

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the helpless creatures; each seizes his victim by the throat, the tranquil spot is ere long full of blood and carnage, and the echoes of the forest are awakened to the hellish yells of the savage brutes that thus devour their prey.

The cries of agony, of death and victory, sometimes last for a quarter of an hour; and during the fifteen minutes that you are watching the scene from your hut, you may fancy the teeth of these brutes are meeting in your own flesh, and feel a cold paw with claws of steel deep in your back or head.

The slaughter over, these monsters pass like a flight of demons across the turf, vanish,—and again all is silent. And when the tenth chime of the distant village clock is floating on the breeze, though it reaches not your cabin—when the falling dew, now almost a shower, has bathed the leaves, with rain chilling their fibres—when the bluebells and the foxgloves and all the wood-flowers rest upon their stems—when the songsters of the grove, with heads comfortably tucked under their warm wings, sleep soundly in their nests, or in the angles of the branches—when the young fawns, lost in some wild ravine, bleat for their mothers whom they never will see more; and the gorged wolves, their muzzles red with blood, are stretched snoring in their dens and lurking-places—then it is the heavy boars, shaking off their laziness, leave their sombre retreats—take to the open country, and trotting, grunting, and with hesitating footsteps, come and plunge their awkward and heavy bodies in the marshy waters, and wallow in the soft mud.

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[1] Query,—fox-hunting and stag-hunting.—TRANSLATOR.

CHAPTER XIII.

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Appearance of the *Mare* in the morning—Forest etiquette—Mode of obtaining possession of the best *Mare*—Every subterfuge fair—The jocose sportsman—The quarrel—Reveries in the hut—Comparison between meeting a lady and watching for a wolf.

THE *Mares* on the borders of which these scenes of strife and carnage take place, are found by the morning sun surrounded by a crimson circle, and all the horrid details of the battle-field—proof that the weak have been slaughtered and overcome by the strong; a humiliating sight! for the desolation created by the bad passions of man is far too like it. Sometimes these *Mares* are from two to three hundred feet in circumference, and these may be truly termed the diamonds of the forest. The *Mare* No. 1., fed by small but always flowing springs, is full, when others are dried up, and is frequented by troops of animals, savage and meek, which thirst and heat drive there from all points of the compass. These *Mares*, but little known, few in number, much sought after—become, more especially at the period of the dog-days, very difficult to find. Considered always as the property of the first comer, the poacher, who is better acquainted than any other sportsman with the localities in which they are to be found, generally takes up his quarters near them late at night, and installs himself; sleeps there, sups there, and, determined not to leave it under any pretext, laughs in the face of the unfortunate wight who arrives after him, in the happy delusion that he has anticipated every one else. For it is a forest law, and acknowledged by all, that two sportsmen cannot, without disturbing one another, sit down at the same *Mare*; possession is in this not only nine but ten points of the law; and, if a mere lad, with a fowling-piece, happens to place himself first on its banks, no giant seven feet high would think of using his superior strength to expel him.

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Such is the law—such is the custom—to act in defiance of it would expose the culprit to the chance of receiving a charge of No. 3 in his jacket; and as each *Mare* has its wooden hut, in successive summers, constructed by you, embellished by me, knocked in, cut about, injured by some one else, and repaired by all—the first man who puts the stock of his gun on the floor of the cabin becomes immediately and incontestibly the lucky proprietor of it for that night.

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And how shall I explain to you the thousand cunning tricks, the diabolical, the ingenious finesses, the Philipistic and Machiavellian diplomacy, which sportsmen employ one towards the other to obtain possession? Two friends, for instance, meet by accident on the same road; with what perfect and impudent lies do they entertain each other!—with what gusto do they try and take one another in!—what cheating doubts do they not mutually endeavour to raise, in their desire to induce each other to take the wrong road! With the effrontery of a *diplomate*, with the assurance of a secretary of legation,—one affirms, his hand on his heart, and looking towards heaven, that he is going to the left, when it is his positive intention, well-considered beforehand, to go to the right. No, France and England, Bresson and Bulwer, playing their game of chess of the Spanish marriages on the green cloth of political rascality,—never said anything comparable to the devices of these lying chevaliers of the forest.

Everything is permitted—every stratagem is fair, so long as either is endeavouring to triumph over his adversary; and then, when they have gone so far as to be able to wish one another good afternoon, and each has convinced himself that he has put the other on the wrong road—that,

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thank the stars, his rival is off, that he is far off, that he cannot see him—what haste! what strides and leaps to get speedily to the spot, and make himself safe! The running of the celebrated Greek, who, with his breast laid open by a ghastly wound, ran eighty miles in ten hours to announce to the impatient Athenians the victory of Marathon, was the pace of a tortoise compared with the demon-racing of these *chasseurs*.

And, after all this anxiety and rapid locomotion,—after turning and winding in and out of the wood, and round the wood to avoid the open—across the brook to avoid the bridge—through the brambles and thick underwood to avoid the open path—when you think you have cheated, or, at any rate, distanced your enemy,—when you perceive in front of you the object of your hopes,—the well-known and much-desired hut which seems to invite you to repose after your long day's walk—why, at that interesting moment, even your own, your very own brother would be a veritable Bedouin in your eyes, a man to be put out of the way any how, if he attempted to stop you.

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At such a crisis, if a real sportsman were to hear that his house was on fire, that his banker was off to America, taking with him his wife and his money, he would not, I say, in such a moment turn his head round to see which way they went;—Imagine, then, when in order to succeed you have made yourself out a cheat of the first water, and employed every possible subterfuge,—conceive what would be the extent of your anger and indignation, what your disgust,—when on arriving at your coveted *Mare*, at your oasis, at your paradise, at the spot for which you have toiled and invented such lies, to find the hut—occupied!

Sometimes you may find in the possessor a *chasseur*, who likes to amuse himself at your expense,—a jocose fellow, who, hearing you at a distance working your way through the underwood, and seeing you through the leaves advancing with eager and rapid steps to the spot, conceals himself behind the entrance, and as you are just on the point of entering the hut, your foot just on the step, the droll sportsman puts his ugly head out of the window, as a yellow tortoise would his out of his shell, asking you, in most polite terms, what o'clock it is; or if it should chance to be raining a deluge at the time, remark in compassionate accents, "Why, sir, you seem rather damp!"

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Job was never so unfortunate as to arrive at a *Mare* already occupied; had he done so, it is not by any means clear to me that he would have been able to contain his wrath. For my own part, I have frequently been beside myself with vexation, and on one occasion was very nearly having a quarrel to the death with my best friend. We had accidentally met in the forest, as described, and had deceived each other, as two Greeks of Pera would, when making a bargain. After our *rencontre*, my friend went to the right, I to the left; he on the sly, turning and twisting by footpath and wood to conceal himself from observation; I, on the contrary, went directly to the spot, and striding away as fast as I could go, arrived at the *Mare* about three minutes before him, scarlet and streaming with exertion, and quite out of breath. My friend who was equally heated, but, in addition, disappointed and in a furious rage, addressed me in most insulting language, declaring between the hiccup, which his want of breath and want of coolness had produced, that I was a Jesuit, a hypocrite; and many other affectionate epithets did he apply to me with the utmost volubility.

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If I had not been the fortunate occupant of the hut, which gratifying fact was as honey to my lips and oil to my bones, and had a most soothing influence on my temper, I should naturally have revolted at such conduct; but this constrained me, and I remained perfectly quiet, determined to allow my lungs to regain their composure before I replied. Seeing this, his rage increased tenfold, and he proposed a duel with our fowling-pieces, hunting-knives, or two large sticks; he offered me, also, an aquatic duel of a most novel character,—namely, for both of us to undress and endeavour to drown each other in the *Mare*! In short, he continued for at least a quarter of an hour to rave and rail without ceasing.

But of all this abuse I took not the slightest notice, remaining perfectly calm, sitting in my hut like Solomon on his throne, and fanning my heated countenance with the brim of my broad hat, as if I had been in a glass-house. It is true I laughed in my sleeve, looked vacantly at the blue heavens, and whistled the chorus or snatches of a hunting song. Finding therefore, it was impossible to move me, my adversary finished by getting tired of roaring and abusing; and having rubbed the perspiration from his distorted face with a force which seemed as if he would rub his nose off, he turned on his heel with the grace of a wild boar that had received a brace of balls in his haunches,—looking me fiercely in the face, and pouring forth as a last broadside, a dozen of oaths in the true *argot* style, which seemed to dry up the very plants near him, and silenced the frogs that were croaking in the *Mare*.

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Such, however, is the force of habit and of this rule; and so truly does every one feel that on the strict observance of it depends the tranquillity of all, that the law of first possession is never violated; although it is but simply acknowledged by the justice and good sense of every sportsman, it is quite as well established in their manners and customs as if it were written on tables of iron. The consequence is, that however enraged a person may be, he sees, and generally at the outset, that his best course is to give way; he may fume and strut, look big and villify, but he bows his head and is off with as embarrassed a face as yours, gentle reader, would certainly be, if a friend whom you knew to be ruined came and asked you to lend him twenty thousand

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francs.

But also, by St. Hubert, if you remain the lord and master of this *Mare*, how your heart leaps, how all fatigue is forgotten! and when the twilight approaches, what a fever there is in your veins!—what anxiety! I have heard of the delirious and suffocating emotions of a lover waiting for his mistress at the rendezvous. Fiddlesticks! I say, gruel and iced-water. The most volcanic Romeo that ever penned a letter or scaled a wall, is to the sportsman waiting amidst the howling storm on a dark night for the wolves, what a cup of cream is to a bottle of vitriol. As for myself, I would give,—yes, ladies, I am wolf enough to say,—that I would willingly give up the delightful emotions of ninety rendezvous, with the loveliest women in the world, black or white, for twelve with a boar or a wolf. In return for this bad taste, I shall probably be devoured some day or other,—a fate no doubt duly merited.

I will suppose, therefore, that the sportsman is squatting quietly in his hut, like a serpent in a bush. With what ardour and nervous anxiety does he not await the propitious and long-expected hour! He throws open the ivory doors of his castle in the air,—his hopes are multiplied a thousandfold. What shall I shoot?—what shall I not shoot? Will it be a she-wolf, or a roebuck? No, I prefer a boar. Will he be a large one? But if by chance I should kill a sow?—what a capital affair that would be; the young ones never leave their mother; perhaps I should bag three or four,—perhaps the whole fare. But then, how shall I carry them off? Perhaps the wolves will save me the difficulty of contriving that, and dispute my title to them,—perhaps they will attack me, eat me, the sow, the pigs, and my sealskin cap.

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How, I beseech you, is the following *monologue* to stand comparison with the fierce excitement of such anticipations? Will she come this evening, the darling—will my sweetest be able to come?—shall I be blessed with one kiss?—shall it be on the left cheek or the right, or shall I press her lips to mine? Bah! there can be no comparison in the hunter's mind; and then you barricade yourself in your hut as evening approaches, strengthen the weak points, study the best positions, look to your arms; the day seems as if it would never close,—nothing is left for you to do but to muse in the interval, and think of the poor maudlin lovers, who at this very hour are squatting under a wall like so many young apes; or of him who, half concealed, stands on the watch at the angle of a dirty street, waiting with a fluttering heart the arrival of some sentimental little chit of a girl, who is nevertheless coquette enough to keep him waiting for half an hour. And again, with what disdain and contempt you regard such birds as pigeons, turtle-doves, buzzards, wild duck, and teal; hares and foxes, too, which make their appearance from time to time,—to kill these never enters your head.

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What, not the fox, with his splendid bushy tail?

Why what do you take me for, good reader?—what can I possibly want with that?—I, who am about to knock over two roebucks and three wolves? Peace, peace, my friends; skip and skuttle about, young rabbits; nibble away, middle-aged hares,—don't put yourselves the least out of the way, you won't have any of my powder. Besides, to fire would be very imprudent, and to a great extent compromise the sport; for at this period the sun is sinking, the shadows are slowly lengthening, the roebuck are on their way, and the she wolf in the neighbouring thicket is raising her head and listening for the sounds which indicate that her prey is not far off. And you listen also to catch the slightest noise that comes on the wind,—for each and all are a vocabulary to the huntsman,—a gust of wind, the note of a bird disturbed, a weasel running across the path, a squirrel gnawing the bark, a breaking branch, startles you, circulates your blood, and puts you anxiously alive to what may follow. Everything that surrounds you at this still tour of twilight courts your attention,—the waving branches speak to you,—the hazel thicket, bending to the weight of some advancing animal, puts you on your guard; the heart beats, not for the rustling of a silk gown, nor for the hurried footfall of woman treading with fairy lightness on the fallen leaves. The syren voice is not about to whisper softly in your ear, "Are you there, violet of my heart!" nor are you about to reply, "Angelic being, moss-rose of my soul, let me press your sweet lips?" What you are waiting for are the wild beasts of the forest,—you are listening for their distant and subdued tones, their bounding spring, their near approach, their bodies as a mark for your rifle, their yells, and cries, and death agony for your triumph.

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Then the inexplicable charms of danger excite the sportsman's feelings; his physical faculties, like those of the Indian, are doubled; he grasps his rifle with a firmer clutch, and looks down the blade of his hunting-knife with anxiety and yet with satisfaction. It grows dark, but his eyes pierce the gloom—his life is at stake, but he forgets that it is so; for the love of the chase, the wild pleasures of the huntsman, have taken possession of his soul. Breathless, his heart thumping against his chest, as if it would break its bounds, he listens, the cloudy curtain rises, and with it the moon; the roebucks are heard in the distance, then the stealthy steps of the wolves, afterwards the rush of the boar: and now, gentlemen, the tragedy is about to commence—choose your victims.

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Mare No. 2.—Description of it—Not sought after by the sportsman—The sick banker—The doctor's prescription—The patient's disgust at it—Is at length obliged to yield—Leaves Paris for Le Morvan—Consequences to the inmates of the château—The banker convalescent.

If the great *Mares* No. 1, situated in the dark and silent depths of the forest, far from every habitation, and where you find you are left as much to yourself as the poor shipwrecked sailor supporting his exhausted frame upon a single plank on the angry billows, are so attractive, and so much coveted, though dangerous and difficult to secure, the same cannot be said of those which lie in the vicinity of a village, and which I shall call *Mare* No. 2.

These last are to be met with easily enough; but being so very readily discovered, it is therefore rare to find near them the larger descriptions of game,—though the sportsman may see a few thrushes, some dozen of water-wagtails, and flocks of little impudent chaffinches, greenfinches, &c., which come there to imbibe, hopping from stone to stone, and singing in the willows; beyond these he will see nothing worth the cap on the nipple of his gun. Nevertheless to him who is without experience,—to the hunter who cannot read the language of the forest on the bark of the trees, on the freshly trodden ground, or the bent grass and broken flowers,—these pieces of water seem quite as beautiful and well situated, indeed quite as desirable, as the others.

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Perhaps such an ignoramus might prefer them; for they are always more open, more free from weeds, rushes and flags, and less dark; and at the hour of *la chasse au poste*, the hour of twilight, they are as solitary as the *Mare* No. 1. But the savage beasts of the forest are not to be deceived; their instinct tells them that at a quarter, or perhaps half a mile from them, there is, though unseen and hidden in the thickness of the trees, a farm, or two or three houses; and when they are not pressed onward by the winter snows, or by maddening hunger, they stop,—for the smell of man is not pleasant to their nostrils, the neighbourhood is not agreeable to them, and they immediately withdraw from the spot.

It is thus that these *Mares* are always at any person's disposal; the passing sportsman rarely makes more than a circuit round them; and if one is occasionally found on their banks, he may at once be set down as a beginner, who, having found the *Mares* No. 1 in the vicinity all occupied, has here installed himself for the evening in sheer vexation and despair. Over these pools of troubled water, frequented during the whole day by the inhabitants of the adjoining cottages, that eternal stillness and imposing solitude, which are the delight of the wolf and the boar, never reigns.

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The day has scarcely dawned ere the wood-cutters' wives, in their red petticoats, with brown jugs on their heads, come to fill them there, or to wash their vegetables; the cows to drink, the children to play at ducks and drakes, or the men to water the horses. But a little before nightfall all this going and coming, this trampling of heavy *sabots*, the bellows, oaths, and cracking of whips subside, and cease, as if by magic, when the sun is down. The poultry and the peasants are equally silent, their huts are closed, their beds are gained, and their dogs, stretched motionless behind the door, snore and sleep soundly with open ear, and every leaf without is still.

The *chasseur à l'affût*, if inexperienced or not acquainted with the country, while reconnoitring the spot during the last few minutes of the twilight that remain, would never imagine that he was near an inhabited spot; not a bark, not a sound, not one twinkling light in a cottage window, not one wreath of ascending smoke is to be heard or seen. Thinking therefore that he has made a grand discovery, he rubs his hands with no little satisfaction, squats down at the foot of some tree, or in the temporary shed on the bank, and believes he is going to kill a dozen wolves at least.

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But, alas! it is in vain for him to open his eyes and his ears; nothing is to be seen but one or two hideous bats, which flap their wings in his face, and frighten him in the midst of a reverie. Nothing is on the move; no newt or tadpole is playing in the water, and nothing can be descried there but the rays of the moon, as she moves slowly o'er its surface; nor is anything to be heard except the wind whistling through the trees, or an occasional shot from the rifle of a brother sportsman, who, more happy, more clever, and better placed than himself, may be heard in the distance. I should not have thought of mentioning the *Mares* No. 2, so little do they deserve attention, if one of them had not been the scene of a very strange adventure of which I was witness; and as the description of it will give me an opportunity of speaking of the *Mares* No. 3, and of the third mode of taking woodcocks, I shall profit by the circumstance to relate it.

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One day a *millionnaire*, a Lucullus, a rich banker of Paris, found himself dreadfully ill: his body grew larger every twenty-four hours; his neck sunk into his shoulders, his breathing became difficult, and three or four times in the course of a week he was within a little of being suffocated; as many times in the course of a month the gout, which in the morning had been tearing his toes and his heels as if with hot pincers, in the evening twisted his calves and his knees as if they were being made into ropes. What was to be done under these circumstances? The best physicians consulted together, and recommended him to order a pair of hob-nailed shoes from a country shoemaker, and instantly leave the capital.

"Hob-nailed shoes, with donkey heels!" cried the banker, all amazed; "and for what, in the

name of goodness?"

"Why, to run with in search of health over the wild moors and heaths, and improve your figure by long walks in the mountains," was the reply.

And as the only hope of health was obedience, he prepared his mind to set off. It is true the doctors permitted him to carry with him his cane, his flute, and his eye-glass; but he was obliged to leave behind his carriages, his horses, his luxurious arm-chairs and his cooks; in short, he was informed that, under the penalty of being quickly placed under ground, and obliged to shake hands with his respectable ancestors, and enjoy with them the nice white marble monuments under which they reposed, he must, for the next year at least, make use of his own legs, forget there were such things as *Rentes*, eat only when he felt hungry, and drink when he was thirsty.

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What a sentence for a rich Parisian banker! to leave his splendid hotel and his apartments, redolent with delicious perfumes, and play the pedestrian up and down the footpaths in the woods, the mossy glades and highway of the forest, or sit on a large stone at the top of a hill under the mid-day sun, and inhale from the valleys the soft breezes, laden with the odours of the new-mown hay, or the clover-fields in full blossom. His box at the grand opera, lined with velvet, must too be left behind, and many an adieu be given to the gauze-clad sylphides and painted nightingales of that gay establishment.

Yes, all these were to be exchanged for morning walks to the summit of some mountain; to make his bow to Aurora, and listen to the joyous carol of the larks chanting high in the air their hymns of praise, or listening to their blithe little brothers of song, awakening in the bushes, and fluttering, amidst a shower of pearls and rubies—those dewy gems which hang in the sunny rays upon every branch. "Ah, it is all over with me!" wheezed the plethoric banker, when the junior doctor of the consultation of three informed him of their unanimous opinion.

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"It is all over with me, gentlemen; in the name of mercy what will become of me, if I am put on the peasant's daily fare of buck-wheat and roasted beans? Consider again, gentlemen."

"It is a matter of necessity, sir," replied the trio; "your life is at stake."

"Dear doctors, withdraw these unwholesome words; open the consultation afresh; pass once more in review all your scientific acquirements, your great knowledge of chemistry, your hospital experience. Press, dear gentlemen, between both your hands the pharmacopean sponge, and in the name of mercy squeeze out for me some more agreeable remedy."

"There is no other," replied the funereal-looking physicians.

"What, is the house then really in danger?"

"Danger! sir, why it is nearly on fire. Your heart is getting diseased, your lungs are touched, your blood is actually scented and coloured with the truffles you have eaten. Why, your very nose (pray excuse the freedom of our remark), your roseate nose bears testimony to what we say."

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"Alas, alas! this is I fear the truth; but, gentlemen, if I leave Paris, what on earth will become of the Great Northern and the Orleans Railways, and the funds,—my dividends, rents, and bad debts?"

"And your feverish pulse, sir, your wrinkled liver, and your digestion, which scarcely ever allows you to close your eyes?"

"Yes! yes,—but my Spanish fives and Mexican bonds?"

"And your bilious eyes and eyelids full of crows' feet, and the gout and the rheumatism which excruciate you?—those horrid spiders which are weaving their threads in the muscles of your calves?"

"But my carrier-pigeons, gentlemen, source of my tenderest care; the brokerage, the speculation for the account, and my good friend, the Minister of the Interior, and of the *Travaux Publics*; and the snowball of my fortune, which must stop unproductive till I recover;—how can I leave all these to fate?"

"Think of your respiration, which is disorganized, and the vital principle, the torch of life, which flickers up and down in the socket, and ere many weeks will be extinguished, unless you at once take our advice."

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"What!" continued the votary of wealth,— "what! cannot gold purchase health, most sapient doctors?"

"No, sir; doctors are paid, that's all, and people cure themselves."

"You persist, then, in saying that I am not even to take my head cook with me?"

"On no account whatever."

"Then I am defunct already."

"That you will be so, sir, in two months, if you remain here, there cannot be a doubt."

"Then, good heavens! where can I go? What am I to do without carriages, without opera nightingales, and, above all things, without a head cook?"

The night succeeding the consultation, the banker felt as if twenty cork-screws had been driven into his calves, and he made, ere dawn, a vow that he would leave the capital. This determination taken, the next point to be decided was in what direction to go,—for it was not a journey of pleasure he was about to take, but one of health; and for once his riches were of no further use to him than to provide the means of transit. His physicians, fashionable men, strange to say, were sincere, and did not order him to Nice or Lucca, hot-baths, or mineral waters, or even to the orange-groves of Hyères, to which, when a rich man cannot recover, they send him, in order that he may die comfortably under Nature's warm blanket, the sun, inhaling with his last inspirations the delicious scent of her flowers. To Spain, where, said the invalid, they talk so loud and drink water, he would not go; nor to Germany, the land of meerschaums and sour crout. Which direction therefore was he to take? to which point of the compass was he to turn the vessel's prow?

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Several times did the unhappy banker pass his geography in review, but his knowledge of this science was indeed finite, and the Landes, Picardy, and such like spots, alone presented themselves to his imagination. In this predicament the light of friendship suddenly threw a ray over his thinking faculties; he remembered my father, the companion of his boyhood, with whom he had been brought up,—his great friend, without doubt, but of whom he had not thought for the last ten years.

"By all the blue devils that dance in my brain!" said the unhappy *millionnaire*, starting up on his bed of pain, as if he had a spring in his back, and throwing at the nose of his astonished apothecary, who was watching him, the draught presented to him,—"by the wig of my respected grandfather,—by the beard of Æsculapius, I have found the real friend who will pour over my head the oil of health."

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"My good sir," said his attendant, "pray calm yourself, and take this pill" ...

"Yes, that dear friend, he will set me all to rights—he will bring to my heavy eyelids those peaceful slumbers which now, alas! I never enjoy."

"But, Sir," repeated the apothecary, "pray be so good as to lay down and swallow this."

"Back, felon of hell! horse-leech, son of a poultice! go, doctor of the devil, and join your friend in black below."

"But *Monsieur le Banquier*"——

"Off I say, off!—sinister raven, cease your croaking! Silence—take the abominable drugs yourself—poison yourself, you wretch. Give me my trousers, and let me dress myself. Hey, Bilboquet!—bring my hot water, razors, and shaving soap. Hurrah! Phœbus, light the sun and put out the stars; arise day! Into the saddle, postillions,—here, bring some cigars. Hurrah! the wind is up; now, my stout boatmen, down to your oars." "Halloo! halloo!" shouted his attendant, "help! help!" and he got at both bells and rang away with might and main; but before any one came the banker was out of bed, struck his attendant a blow in the eye, which made him see one hundred and forty-six suns, and laid him upon the floor, after which he commenced waltzing *en chemise* in his delirium, all round the room with a chair, dragging after him the unfortunate hero of the pestle and mortar, and roaring at the top of his voice these lines of Racine:

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Peut-être on t'a conté la fameuse disgrâce
De l'altière Vasthi dont j'occupe la place,
Lorsque le Roi, centre elle enflammé de dépit,—

followed by—

Quel profâne en ces lieux ose porter ses pas?
Holà, gardes!—

At this moment a reinforcement most luckily arrived; but as in this access of fever he defended himself against all comers like a bear, and boxed away like an Englishman, they had no little difficulty in securing him; at length, in spite of his violence, he was replaced in his bed, like a sword into its sheath. There, however, he would not lay quiet; first he tore the satin curtains, then he hugged his richly-worked pillow to his breast, calling it his best and dearest friend, and performed fifty other such antics. He obtained, in short, no repose, until his secretary, who entered at his bidding half-dressed and with one eye half shut, had written the following note to my father, under his dictation,—a letter evidently written in a paroxysm of high fever:

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"Friend of my heart, jessamine of my soul, bright party-coloured tulip of my *souvenirs*, may the Creator pour upon your gray and venerable head a stream from his flower-pot of blessings!

"Dear Friend,—Several atrocious doctors, with pale noses, the very sight of which gives one the cholic, and with black searching eyes, that make one tremble, say that I am very ill,—that I shall die. They say too that there is only one mode of cure, and that is to take my valuable body into your beautiful province. It is the east wind they say, and blue-bottles, corn-flowers, field-

poppies, and the green turf; the song of the nightingale and the beautiful moonlight nights; the hum of bees and the bleating of sheep, which will effect this marvellous cure. It is amongst the rocks and streams of your mountains, in long walks in your forests, and in your valleys; in the innocent candour of your pretty peasant girls, the pure water of your fountains, and the cream cheeses of your dairies that I am told resides the power to retain here below my soul, just ready to fly away. Alas! yes, I am forced to admit the fact; I must say I am very ill, and it is my own fault;—yes, my own undoubted fault. I have drank too deeply of voluptuous ease; I have tasted too often the luscious grapes of forbidden pleasures. I am no longer virtuous enough to wish to see the sun rise, and hence it is that I am suffering intensely in the capacity of a human pincushion, in which, one after the other, the sharpest and most pointed pins have stuck themselves, namely, every infirmity and every disease that mortal man is heir to.

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"In this delicate and distressing position, dear friend, I thought of you: yes, to you, to you only, shall I owe my restoration to health. Do not therefore be surprised if, in the course of a few days, you should see my shadow approach your hospitable door; and prepare for it, I beg you, a small room and a bed of dried leaves, coarse bread, and a jug of water. It seems that in order to regenerate my blood I shall want all these; and I shall be fortunate if, in seeking a perfect restoration to health, I am not obliged to be a swine-herd or keep sheep, to dig, cut, and saw wood, pick spinach, or weed the flower-beds! Quick, my friend; light with all convenient haste the altar on which we will burn again the incense and benjamin of friendship. Blow again the sparks now so nearly extinguished of our happy boyish days; revive again the holy flames of our youthful affections; and, above all things, have the scissors ready which are to cut the Gordian knot of my complicated diseases. Soon, in shaking you by the hand, my shadow shall say much more."

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Yours, &c.,

Fifteen days after the receipt of this extraordinary composition, the banker, escorted by a lean and cadaverous-looking doctor, arrived at our *château*, half strangled with a churchyard cough, and in a state of apparently hopeless debility. He was evidently very, very ill; and if it had not been for the sincere friendship my father had for him, I really do not know how we could have supported the dark cloud which his presence seemed to throw upon our house for nearly nine mortal weeks.

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No one dared either to move or speak: if you wished to laugh, it could only be on the terrace; if to blow your nose, it was to be done in the cellar; and as to sneezing, one was obliged to go to the bottom of the garden. The horses' feet were wrapped up in hay-bands, so that no sound should be heard in the court-yard; the servants went about the house in list shoes, and all the approaches to it were knee-deep in straw. There was an end to the *fanfares* of the huntsman's horn, and the rollicking chorus; guns, shot and powder, were all placed under lock and key; the kennel was mute, and the muzzled dogs looked piteously at one another, and hung their heads, as if they had given themselves up to the certain prospect of being drowned. The very hares knew how matters were, and passed to and fro before the garden-windows; and a stray wolf, which came one evening into the court-yard, sat on his hind-quarters and looked us impudently in the face; as to the birds, they ate up very nearly every peach and apricot we had. The silence of the grave reigned everywhere—the house seemed a very sepulchre, in which nothing could be heard but the monotonous liquid bubblings of the fountains, the ticking of the clocks, and the sighing breezes that whistled through the casements.

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Fairly worn out with this state of things, I was thinking seriously of leaving for the gay swamps of Holland, when a crisis occurred in the banker's disorder, and after a severe struggle, in which every bone of his body seemed to twist itself round, he was declared by his pallid doctor out of danger—saved. Surrounding his bed, we drank with no little joy to his perfect recovery, and during one entire week we suspended on the walls of his bed-room, according to the custom in Le Morvan, garlands of lilies and *vervenia*, interwoven with green foliage and wild thyme. From this time he improved daily, and three months after no one would have recognized the sick man; his face became quite rosy, and his eyes looked full of returning health. With a gun on his shoulder, he followed us nimbly through the vineyards, never flinched from his bottle, sang barcarolles with the ladies, made declarations of love to all the young girls, promised to marry each, once at least, and danced away in the evening under the acacias with the nymphs of the village, to whom he had always some secret to tell behind the trees, or in some snug little corner. The woodcock season having arrived during his stay, which was now nearly over, we determined that he should be introduced to *la chasse aux Mares*.

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Pardon me, kind reader, for all this gossip by the way, but this is the point at which I wished to arrive.

CHAPTER XV.

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Summer months in the Forest—*Mare* No. 3—Description of it—The Woodcock fly—The Banker has a day's sport—Arrives at the *Mare*—Difficult to please in his choice of a hut—Proceeds to a larger *Mare*—His friends retire—The Banker on the alert for a Wolf or a

DURING the months of June, July, and August, the great heats in our forests are suffocating, and the woodcock, which during the livelong day has been squatting under some mossy root, is impressed with the idea that a bathe in a clear pool of cold fresh water would be very conducive to its health. Thus directly the sun, red as a shot which leaves the furnace, falls below the horizon, and that the clouds surrounding the spot where it disappears, at first lurid and bright like fire, then yellow like a sea of gold, become cool, pale, and at length sink into more sober hues, the woodcock,—which waits only for this moment to open its wings and promenade the neighbourhood,—comes forth and commences a study of the winds. Guided by instinct, and by the fresh currents of air that float unseen in the atmosphere, she follows the sweet upland breezes, and soon arrives at the spring or piece of water of which she is in search.

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The *Mares* No. 3, in which the woodcock more especially loves to take a bath, are almost as difficult to find as the one that I discovered, for they are hidden in the depths of the forest; like it, also, they are for the most part small, encircled by the thick foliage of the surrounding trees, and consequently very dark; and the more this is the case, the more solitary they are, and therefore the more sought after by this bird. A woodcock never bathes in the *Mare* No. 1; for to them resort one after another all the large game, or those No. 2, as these are too open. The woodcocks are discreet and bashful, and, like the wives of the Sultan, love a retired bath-room, where they may disport themselves on banks ever fresh and green, perfumed with wild flowers, and immerse their fair persons in pellucid waters that have never been tainted with a drop of blood, or covered with feathers torn from the victim of the sportsman's gun. Thus it is therefore that the *Mares* frequented by the woodcock are so entirely hidden by the thick and falling branches, so enveloped in deep shade, that you must have eyes made on purpose to be able to discover their large brown bodies plunging in the crystal water and wading amongst the flags. In aid of the sportsman, now as in the spring, a little fly comes buzzing and wheeling about in the air to warn the sportsman of the arrival of the birds, which, directly the moon's white horn is seen glancing between the trees, arrive flapping their wings in small parties of two and three at a time. One afternoon, when the wind blew soft, and the sun was refulgent in the azure above, we proposed an excursion in the forest to our friend the banker, who was now quite convalescent.

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"What! do you wish to give me up to the beasts?" cried he, jumping up from his seat.

"Not at all, dear sir, pray don't be alarmed; we are merely desirous of making you acquainted with the most innocent, the least dangerous sport of the *chasse à l'affût*," and having convinced him, we started. Everything went well as far as the entrance to the forest; but there the *millionnaire*, little accustomed to walk over the stumps of underwood and amongst the thorns, he began to drop into the rear, stopping every now and then to rest against some tree, or disentangle his legs from some yards of bramble, puffing and blowing, and ejaculating Oh's! and Ha's! by dozens.

"Courage! sir," we said, "courage! we shall arrive too late; one brisk half-hour's walk, and we are at our posts."

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"Upon my word, gentlemen, you are really considerate; I walk, I suspect, quite as fast as you. But"—and how was he delighted to find an excuse for a halt—"you spoke of a *chasse à l'affût*, hiding for what I should like to know—for bears, panthers, or crocodiles? is it this kind of game we are to watch for?"

"Oh! no—for woodcocks."

"Woodcocks!—what, have you made me walk since the morning through perfect beds of briars and over miles of large stones, escalate the mountains, descend precipices, and brought me through water-courses and dark ravines, to kill a few woodcocks?"

"Would you prefer confronting a wild boar?"

"Certainly," said the puffing convalescent; "if there was no chance of danger, I should infinitely prefer killing a boar."

"For to-day this is impossible."

"Why so?"

"Why, in the first place, there are no boars in this wood, and it is too late to take you to those which they frequent."

"Then we shall find only woodcocks in the place we are going to?"

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"Nothing else; at least during the half-hour we shall remain."

"And if we were to remain more than half an hour?"

"Oh! then we might perhaps by accident see a roebuck—perhaps a hungry wolf."

"A hungry wolf!—the deuce! And if there should come by chance a wolf to the *Mare* when I

shall be all alone, what must I do?"

"Why kill it, to be sure."

"To be sure, why of course I should kill the ferocious animal,"—and the banker, though smacking his fingers and whistling as if quite unconcerned, looked very grave. Continuing our walk, we arrived at the *Mares*.

"Goodness," said my companion, "how dark it is here,"—looking into each hut that was shown him. "Misericorde! if I were to ensconce myself in this leafy cabin, this gloomy sombre hole, I should fancy myself seated at the bottom of a blacking-bottle—I respectfully decline the honour of occupying the hut."

"Very well, let us proceed to another," we exclaimed. But the second was pronounced more lugubrious and melancholy-looking than the first, and the third not more agreeable than the preceding one. [Pg 193]

"It is no longer a matter of doubt," said the Parisian; "you are a family of owls. What! place myself in these holes, these mouse-traps, in these tumuli of leaves, where the archfiend himself, habituated to every kind of darkness, could not distinguish anything?—thank you, gentlemen. As to you, you can see clear; but by the great telescope of the observatory, if I were to get into one of these rustic ovens, I should not in five minutes be able to distinguish the end of my nose—I should not be able to find my way to my breeches-pocket."

"But, my dear sir," said I to him, when alone, for my two friends were now snugly seated in the rejected huts, "you are very difficult to please, and it becomes embarrassing, for these cabins are all alike; when you have seen one you have seen a dozen. Now this, believe me, is a capital one; come, seat yourself here."

"I am much obliged to you, not that one; for this pool of water in particular has something very sinister about it; the spot feels raw, and has an unpleasant wolfish air."

What was to be done? While debating thus, I remembered that at some little distance from the place where we then were, stood two large farms, Les Fermes des Amandiers, and that, at a distance of half a mile beyond them, there was a magnificent *Mare*, in the style, it is true, of *Mare* No. 2, large and open, and yet it would be as useless to wait for woodcocks there as it would be to hope to catch a trout in the basins of Trafalgar-square. Such a spot seemed to me admirably calculated for the banker; I resolved, therefore, to conduct him to it. [Pg 194]

"If this hut does not please you," said I, "follow me, and quickly."

"Where are you going to take me?"

"Oh! do not alarm yourself, I have just thought of a place that will suit you exactly: a charming spot, delightfully scented by a thicket of honeysuckles; but you must be on the alert. See, the sun is nearly below the summit of the tallest oaks—we shall not have more than one hour of daylight; and I must return here."

When we arrived at the *Mare* of which I was in search, the immediate neighbourhood of it was already silent and deserted. "Heavens!" said the enchanted banker, "what a delightful spot! Quick!—where shall I place myself? Let us look for the hut—ha! here it is, but half in ruins;" for it had not, in all probability, been occupied three times in the last three years; we were obliged therefore to cut some branches, and roughly repair it; and the banker, having crept into the interior, like a sweep up a chimney, requested to have his last instructions. [Pg 195]

"Well, when night has nearly closed in," said I, laughing under my moustache, "be on the *qui vive*. The woodcocks will be here, but move not; be like a statue for a few minutes; let them approach—let them come, fly and whirl, and look about them; then, when reassured by your silence, they will fall into the shallow water, paddle in the grass, and plunging throw their legs into the air. At that moment they are yours. Take your time and a deliberate aim, and miss them not. The sport over, remain where you are, and on our return we will join you."

"All you say is very clear and very pretty," replied the banker; "but I feel already a horrid cramp in my left leg; and if I am to remain crumpled up in this hut, like a Turk taking his coffee, or like a monkey gnawing an apple, when you come for me I shall have lost the use of my limbs."

"Oh! if that is likely to be your fate, walk about—stretch your legs; you have yet twenty minutes before dark. Adieu, sir, adieu; and good luck attend you; for myself, I must be off to my post." But I had gone scarcely thirty yards when he shouted after me, "Oh! Henri—my dear young friend—come back. Here! see, a pack of wolves! What do I say? no; a whole family of bears has passed this way! Look! the border of the *Mare* is ploughed up by the feet of these savage brutes." [Pg 196]

"Bears, sir! those marks are merely the trampling of the shepherds' dogs."

"Shepherds' dogs! Stoop down—look closer; do you mean to tell me that the shepherds' dogs have made these prints of cloven feet in the mud?"

"No! those are holes made by the young calves from some neighbouring farm, that came to

drink here," I replied, repressing a laugh.

"Nonsense! Henri; calves, indeed! they are the marks of buffaloes and wild boars. You cannot deceive me; for I know something about such things. Why, this *Mare* is, I have no doubt, the rendezvous of all the beasts of the forest for ten miles round. Thank you, I don't intend to remain here."

"Not remain! why you will, if you are correct, have far better fun than we shall. Come, get into the hut."

"Remain with me, and divide the honour of the sport."

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"Me? no: I thank you,—adieu! and keep your eyes about you."

"Halloo! Henri, come back. By the spectacles of my grandmother, what will become of me? I am a fool! I have lost my sight—I have forgot my eye-glass."

"Try to do without it."

"Impossible! it is useless—without an eye-glass I cannot see a yard before me; I shall most certainly leave this *Mare*. I shall be off with you."

"My dear sir," said I to him, "you must know and feel that if I thought there was the most remote chance of danger, I would not leave you alone; you really have nothing to fear—if you come with me, you will be dreadfully in the way, and without doing the least possible good. The huts are so very small, that there is only sufficient room for one: we shall kill nothing, and be laughed at into the bargain."

"But these terrible quadrupeds; what if they should come and devour me when you are gone?"

"I tell you you have nothing to fear."

"Very well, then I will believe you; after all, I am not a coward, but a man: a royal tiger would not frighten me, and in spite of these sombre looking trees waving to and fro, this silence, and the solitary look of the place, I remain; yes, by Jupiter, I remain; only barricade me in the rear, cut some thick branches, palisade me well round—there, now I think you may leave me, I require nothing more—and yet one word; if I were in danger, do you think you would hear me if I called?"

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"Certainly, a whisper may almost be heard in the forest at night—the trees conduct the slightest sound."

"Well, then, give me a shake of your hand. Adieu."

"Adieu, sir; be patient, and, above all, wait for our return."

"Let me alone for that; never fear my leaving this hut alone."

"And cover your head well, for nothing is so likely to give one cold as the night air rushing into the ears."

"And mind, now, don't pray forget me. If you are not here in three-quarters of an hour, I shall fire signals of distress, and make the forest ring again with my maledictions."

But without waiting to hear anything further, I was off, and soon reached my post. The sport, as usual, was pretty good; my friends and myself killed four couple of woodcocks, and the *affût* over, we turned our steps towards the banker's cabin. No report of a gun had yet been heard in his direction, but suddenly, and when we were scarcely five hundred paces from the hut, and I was on the point of announcing our arrival by a shrill whistle—two barrels were discharged one after the other—then followed a long and heavy groan, and after that a cry of distress. In a few seconds we bounded to the spot, and found our friend stretched on the grass outside his hut, without his hat, his eyes staring wildly about him, and his hair in disorder. He was trembling with emotion, and pointed to a black animal, half hid in the water and the rushes, which seemed very large, and was rolling from side to side in the agonies of approaching death. Fright, downright fright, had tied the banker's tongue; and while he is collecting his senses, allow me to tell you, good reader, what had occurred in our absence.

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Dumb and motionless, as directed, he had, during half an hour, waited anxiously for the woodcocks; but the woodcocks had for a very long time forgotten the road to this *Mare*; not one came—there was no sport for him. He had already fancied he heard us returning in the distance, and that his cramped legs would be set at liberty, and his twisted body again assume the perpendicular, when all at once a cold perspiration stood upon his brow, terror seized him; for behind, nay, almost close to him, he heard advancing the heavy tramp and loud breathing of a wild beast, and before he had time to observe what kind of an animal it was, the brute passed so close to the hut that he pressed it down, and rushed on to the *Mare*. More dead than alive, the banker lay half-squeezed in a corner of his cabin, and panting for breath, dared scarcely move. After a few minutes, however, he hazarded a careful glance outside, and not twenty paces from him saw the immense quadruped bathing, and rolling himself quietly in the water.

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"It is a gigantic boar," said he to himself, "as large as a horse, and as old as Methuselah—no

doubt the patriarch of the forest—what tusks he must have! Let us observe." And with a courage which did him credit, he, after some time, suppressed his fear, and felt in the pocket of his game-bag for two balls, which, with trembling hands, he slipped into his gun. After this he again looked out, and reconnoitred the movements of the enemy; but so great was the obscurity, that he could discover nothing—unless, indeed, it was a dark mass which walked and jumped hither and thither, rolled, frolicked, and rejoiced in his refreshing bath. The heart of the Parisian was greatly agitated, and beat as if it would split his flannel waistcoat; nevertheless, he took good and deliberate aim at the black object in front, and though exceedingly terrified, he cocked his gun, and in a perfect fever of excitement let fly both barrels, falling immediately backwards in a corner of his hut, perfectly bewildered with his own courage. A deep groan followed, and at the end of a few minutes of agony and suspense, our friend, seeing no tiger in the act of springing upon him, hazarded another look, when he still heard the creature moaning, and groaning, and floundering in the water.

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The fact was, he had by a miracle, and without seeing, done that which he never could have done at mid-day,—his two balls had perforated the animal's head and neck. Observing the monster raising itself with difficulty, and endeavouring to withdraw its legs from the sticky mud in which they were fixed, the courage of despair rushed into his heart—he left the hut, upsetting everything in his way, and precipitated himself upon his adversary with a view of despatching him with the butt end of his gun, or making him retreat further into the *Mare*, when imagine his consternation and fear,—at the very moment his uplifted arm was stretched out, like Jupiter's in the act of hurling a thunderbolt, the animal raised himself on his haunches, looked him full in the face, opened two enormous jaws, put up two very long ears, and instead of a roar full of rage and ferocity, sent forth the most agonizing and dolorous bray that was ever heard from the throat of any ass, French, English, or Spanish! Yes! it was an ass the banker had mortally wounded; an unfortunate ass, which, driven by thirst and the heat of the weather, had left his shed at the neighbouring farm-house, to quench it and refresh himself with a bath.

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Surprise, shame, horror, and confusion began to dance a polka in the banker's brain, and made him utter the hoarse cry which we had heard. While we were yet gazing at each other the poor creature, by a last effort, raised his bleeding head once more above the water, and collecting all the strength he had left, scrambled from the *Mare*, gave a half-suffocating and plaintive bray, and casting a look full of reproach upon the gasping banker, which seemed to say, "I die, but I forgive you," fell dead at our feet.

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A convulsion of laughter from the party, now all assembled, followed; even the birds, awakened from their slumbers, began to sing and partake of the general hilarity.

"Halloo! Mr. Three per Cent.," said one, "this is what you call sporting, is it—killing starved woodcocks? Fie! sir."

"You are three infamous vagabonds," replied the Parisian, catching his breath, and picking up his hat.

"What! sir."

"Why, you are a trinity of rascals, I repeat."

"Why, what's the matter?"

"Abominable hypocrites, I say; this is a piece of acting, a trick which you have kindly put upon me—this ass was driven here by you, or by some one at your suggestion; I see clearly how it is."

"See clearly, do you? it is a pity, then, you did not a few minutes ago."

"It is an infernal plot, I say; think you that I came into this wretched country of forests to kill donkeys?"

"Well! but whose fault is it, sir; why did you not bring your eye-glass?"

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"My eye-glass; I don't require one, gentlemen, to enable me to see that you have made a fool of me."

"My dear sir, reflect for a moment."

"No, gentlemen, I feel indignant at the paltry joke you have played upon me—you knew that my sight was weak, and on that infirmity you have practised a very shameful trick; you have said to yourselves, 'Send an ass to this Parisian, he will no doubt take it for a wild boar.' Be off, gentlemen, depart; let me have a clear horizon, or I shall proceed to extremity."

"Monsieur le Banquier, if you do not become a little more reasonable, we shall leave you to your reflections and to yourself, and pretty pickings you will be for the wolves."

"So much the better; I wish to remain, I desire it; and after the gross insult you have offered me, I shall certainly not be beholden to you as a guide, or return to the town in your company." And he kicked the dead carcass before him in his rage.

"But, Monsieur le Banquier, the night is getting chilly and damp, and remember you are only

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just convalescent; come, let us be off."

"Gentlemen, I have already told you I shall not accompany you."

"Why, this is madness, sir."

"Anything you please; but thus it shall be. I will not leave this wood until I have killed a wolf; yes, I must have a wolf; it is only in the blood of a wolf that I can wash out the insult I have received; and I will remain in the forest eight days, fifteen, three months, if necessary. I will live on acorns, ants, toad's eggs, and roots, but by the soul of that stupid brute that lays there," and he gave the deceased ass a second kick, "I will not budge until I have killed a wolf: enable me to slaughter a wolf, and I will follow you; nay, what is more, forgive you."

"Monsieur le Banquier, let us in the first place tie a stone round the neck of this unfortunate animal, and throw his body into the *Mare*, and then, as we are the only witnesses of this adventure, we swear that we will never divulge it to any one, or make the slightest allusion to it; and, as we are men of honour, you will of course believe us;—the secret shall be kept inviolable. On the other hand, as we are to a certain extent responsible for your health, and as your remaining here any longer in this cold wind will seriously endanger it, do not feel discomposed if we defer to another day the pleasure of seeing you kill a wolf, and request you will accompany us back to the *château*."

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With various flattering speeches and consoling words, to heal his mortification, we at length succeeded in bringing him away with us; many a laugh had we on our road home, and many were the promises given that we would never reveal the events of the evening. But, alas! the secret came out on the following day, for before twelve o'clock had struck, a peasant came knocking at the door, howling, crying, bawling like a blind beggar, and demanding who had killed his ass. His importunity succeeded; the murderer was brought to light, the banker cheerfully paid for his shot, and laughed heartily at the adventure; but in spite of his apparent philosophy, I remarked that from that moment he never met an ass that he did not turn away his head; and this is the kind of game that one finds in *Mare* No. 2.

CHAPTER XVI.

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The *Curé* of the Mountain—Toby Gold Button—Hospitality—The *Curé's* pig—His hard fate and reflections—The *Curé* of the plain—His worth and influence—The agent of the Government—Landed Proprietors—Their influence—The Orator—Dialogue with a Peasant.

IF the Burgundian curates dwelling in the richest parts of the province are fat, sleek, and jovial members of the Establishment,—if in their cellars are to be found the best and most generous wines, and on their tables the most exquisite dishes,—the *curés* of that portion of Le Morvan which is immediately adjacent to Burgundy enjoy the same abundance, and appreciate the advantages of good living equally with them. But this is not the case with their *confrères* who reside in the uplands, amongst the arid and volcanic mountains, without roads, and the thickly timbered hill-district which joins the Nivernais. There the village pastors are poor, thin, and badly fed; fairly buried in the forest, and surrounded by a population more wretched and squalid than the rats of their own churches;—they seem as it were abandoned by everybody. That which I am about to relate will prove this, and show what a deplorable existence theirs is, and the ingenious methods to which they are obliged to have recourse to keep up a fair outside.

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One of them thus exiled to a most deserted part of our forests, and who, the whole year, except on a few rare occasions, lived only on fruit and vegetables, hit upon a most admirable expedient for providing an animal repast to set before the *curés* of the neighbourhood, when one or the other, two or three times during the year, ventured into these dreadful solitudes, with a view of assuring himself with his own eyes that his unfortunate colleague had not yet died of hunger. The *curé* in question possessed a pig, his whole fortune: and you will see, gentle reader, the manner in which he used it.

Immediately the bell of his presbytery announced a visitor, (the bell was red with rust, and its iron tongue never spoke unless to announce a formal visit,) and that his cook had shown his clerical friend into the parlour, the master of the house, drawing himself up majestically, said to his housekeeper (*curés* fortunately always have, cousins, nieces, or house-keepers), as Louis XIV. might have said to Vatal, "Brigitte, let there be a good dinner for myself and my friend." Brigitte, although she knew there were only stale crusts and dried peas in her larder, seemed in no degree embarrassed by this order; she summoned to her assistance "Toby, the Carrot," so called because his hair was as red as that of a native of West Galloway, and leaving the house together, they both went in search of the pig.

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Toby the Carrot, a youth of seventeen, was the presbyter's page, a poor half-starved devil that the *curé* had taken into his service, who lodged him badly, boarded him worse, and gave him no clothes at all; but who, nevertheless, in his moments of good-humour—they were rare—and no doubt to recompense him for so many drawbacks, would call him "Toby Gold-button." At this

innocent little pleasantry, this touch of affability, Toby grinned from ear to ear, made a deep reverence, and put the compliment carefully into his pocket, regretting however, no doubt, that he had nothing more substantial and savoury than this to eat with his coarse dry bread. Toby was a very useful servitor to the *curé*; he was always on the alert; fat did not check his rapid movements, and from the time the Angelus rang in the morning to Vespers in the evening, his long skinny legs were constantly going. He drew the water, peeled and washed the onions, blacked the shoes—and how *curé's* shoes do shine!—rang the chapel-bell, gathered the acorns for the pig, intoned the Amen when his master said mass, swept and weeded the garden, snared the thrushes—which he cooked and eat in secret—and, dressed in a white surplice, carried the cross and the Viaticum, and accompanied the *curé* at night when on his way to offer the last consolations of religion to some dying poacher in the forest. These expeditions were sometimes across the mountains, and along the dry bed of some torrent, in which, according to Toby's notion, they would have certainly perished had not the *Bon Dieu* been with them.

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But we must return to our parson's pig, which after a short skirmish was caught by Brigitte and her carrotty assistant; and notwithstanding his cries, his grunts, his gestures of despair and supplication, the inhuman cook, seizing his head, opened a large vein in his throat, and relieved him of two pounds of blood; this, with the addition of garlic, shallots, mint, wild thyme and parsley, was converted into a most savoury and delicious black-pudding for the *curé*, and his friend, and being served to their reverences smoking hot on the summit of a pyramid of yellow cabbage, figured admirably as a small Vesuvius and a centre dish. The surgical operation over, Brigitte, whose qualifications as a sempstress were superior, darned up the hole in the neck of the unfortunate animal, and he was then turned loose until a fresh supply of black-puddings should be required for a similar occasion. This wretched pig was never happy: how could he be so? Like Damocles of Syracuse, he lived in a state of perpetual fever; terror seized him directly he heard the *curé's* bell, and seeing in imagination the uplifted knife already about to glide into his bacon, he invariably took to his heels before Brigitte was half way to the door to answer it.

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If, as usual, the peal announced a diner-out, Brigitte and Gold-button were soon on his track, calling him by the most tender epithets, and promising that he should have something nice for his supper, skim-milk, &c.; but the pig, with his painful experience, was not such a fool as to believe them; hidden behind an old cask, some faggots, or lying in a deep ditch, he remained silent as the grave, and kept himself close as long as possible.

Discovered, however, he was sure to be at last, when he would rush into the garden, and running up and down it like a mad creature, upset everything in his way; for several minutes it was a regular steeple-chase—across the beds, now over the turnips, then through the gooseberry-bushes; in short, he was here, there, and everywhere; but in spite of all his various stratagems to escape the fatal incision, the poor pig always finished by being seized, tied, thrown on the ground, and bled: the vein was then once more cleverly sewn up, and the inhuman operators quietly retired from the scene to make the *curé's* far-famed black-pudding. Half dead upon the spot where he was phlebotomized, the wretched animal was left to reflect under the shade of a tulip-tree on the cruelty of man, on their barbarous appetites; cursing with all his heart the poverty of Morvinian curates, their conceited hospitality, of which he was the victim, and their brutal affection for pig's blood.

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I shall now endeavour to give the reader a description of the curate of the plain; but he should clearly understand that I do not present this character to him as the general standard of ecclesiastical excellence,—quite the contrary; I am sorry to say I think it an exception. My sketch, therefore, applies only to those *curés*, who reside in a remote rural district like that of Le Morvan; I advance nothing that I have not seen myself, and if I should ever have the pleasure of meeting any of my English friends in Le Morvan, I could introduce them to ten *curés* one and all similar in every respect to the ecclesiastic I am about to pourtray.

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In the interior of this district, that is to say in the midst of her rich plains, and in the hilly but not mountainous parts of it, the *curés* are quite of another stamp; less poor than the herbivorous gentleman we have just described, but not so well to do as those of Burgundy; living under a state of things altogether peculiar to themselves, far from the great cities, and yet in direct communication with them, they are obliged by a common interest to identify themselves with the events of the day. Every curate of the plain possesses an immense influence in his parish and neighbourhood, and as at a moment their support may be of great use in a political point of view, the government, which is alive to everything, caresses, smiles on, and cajoles them.

In the moorland districts, also, and in the little villages which border the great forests, the *curés* are everything, and do everything. They perform the part of judge, doctor and apothecary, banker and architect, carpenter and schoolmaster; they give the designs for the cottages, mark the boundaries of estates, receive and put out the savings of their flocks, marry, baptize, and bury, offer consolation to the afflicted, encourage the unfortunate, purchase the crops, and sell a neighbour's vineyard. They represent the sun, by the influence of whose rays everything germinates and lives; it is their hand—the hand of justice—that arrests and heals all quarrels; the unselfish source from whence good counsels flow—the moral charter from which the peasant reads and learns the duties of a citizen.

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Ask not the population of our plains and forests, and secluded agricultural districts, to which

political party they belong; if they are republicans, royalists, socialists or communists, reds or blues, whites or tricolor,—they know nothing of all this. Their opinions—their religion—are those of *Monsieur le Curé*. They know his prudence, his charity, his good sense; they know he loves them like a father; that he would not leave them for a bishopric—no, not for a cardinal's scarlet hat;—that as he has lived, so will he die with them: that is enough for them. Thus they consult him when they wish to form an opinion for themselves, much in the same way as a sportsman, anxious to take the field, looks up at the chancicleer on some village-steeple to know what he ought to think of the cloudy sky above; and when they see the good man sauntering past their cottages, with head erect and animated step, smiling, and evidently full of cheerful, charitable thoughts, and on good deeds intent, kissing the little children, giving a rosy apple to one, and a playful tap to another; offering a sly word of hope to the young girls, and a few kind ones to the aged and infirm,—all the village is elated; and the old maids fail not to present him with a fat fowl, or some such substantial expression of their respect. But if, alas! the good *curé* should appear walking with a slow and solemn step, his hands behind his back, his eyes fixed upon the ground, and an anxious and thoughtful look upon his brow, his flock gaze at one another, and whisper in an under tone that something is amiss.

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At the epoch of political convulsions and revolutions, when systems and governments, men and ideas, arise and disappear, as if they went by steam,—when the authorities in the great towns wish to interfere with the police regulations and customs that govern the agricultural classes,—when they attempt to force them to gallop at full speed on the high road of progress as they call it, and that to attain this desirable end, handsome young men arrive from Paris in black coats and white neckcloths, furnished with a marvellous flow of eloquent sophisms, pretending to prove to the simple and honest peasants that in order to be more free, happy, and rich, they must, without further ado, kill, burn, and destroy,—the villagers, quite mystified, listen with open mouth; but as to understanding what the gentleman in black—the dark shadow of the government of progress—so glibly states, he might as well be talking Turkish or Japanese. Every one looks at *Monsieur le Curé*, they scan his face, and ask him what they are to do; and let him only feel angry or disgusted with the wordy nonsense, and just make one sign, or raise one finger, and 1200—aye, 2000 men would in a trice surround him, and send the orator and all his staff to preach their pestilential doctrines under the turf, and this without more ceremony and remorse than if they were so many mad dogs. Poor fools! who think it possible to change a people in a few weeks, and imagine that a fine discourse from lips unknown and unloved will have a deeper effect upon men's minds than the admonitions of a pastor, whose life has been without reproach, and adorned with every practical virtue.

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Yes, the influence exercised in our rural districts by the *curés* is great, and this influence is well merited, for it is never abused—and never used unless for the benefit and happiness of the flock confided to their care. Without any motive of a personal nature, without ambition in any sense to which that word can apply, they preach the Catholic religion in all its simplicity, accepting and considering as brothers all those who really desire to follow the example of their Saviour Christ—all those who really love to do good; unworldly and unselfish, they would think themselves dishonoured, their reputation sullied, if the gown, which gives them in the eyes of the people a sacred character, served as a cloak, a pretext to cover a dishonourable or disgraceful action.

It is also remarkable, and speaks volumes in their favour, that the bishops are almost always at war with these poor and self-denying *curés*, and would wish to see them take more interest in temporal affairs, which they do not in the least understand; they would fain put into their mouths the language of anger and bitter feeling, alike foreign to their natures and the religion of their Divine master. The large proprietors also, those who live on their estates and do not press hard upon their dependants, enjoy great consideration, and share largely with the *curés* the hold they have on the affections of the people. They frequently direct the opinions of the masses, and, with the exception of their pastors, are the only class our rural population know and revere. As to the generality of our statesmen, good, bad, or indifferent, their names, brilliant as they may be, are not half so well known in our villages as that of the most obscure labourer, the humble artisan who knows how to file a saw or make a wheel.

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"Who is that gentleman, sir?" said a Morvinian of the plain to me one day, pointing to a tall thin man, with a bald head, and a pair of gold spectacles on his nose,—a notability of the legislative assembly who was going to step into the village tribune.

"That gentleman?" I replied; "he is an orator."

"Ah! an orator: and pray what sort of a bird is that? what is he going to chirrup about?"

"An orator is not a bird, my good fellow; he does not sing, he makes very fine speeches."

"And what of them?"

"What of them? why they teach men their duty."

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"Their duty in what?" continued the peasant, with his pinching logic. "Is it the duty of a father, of a son, of a soldier, of a baker?"

"Not at all; the duty of a citizen."

"Citizen? I don't understand, sir," said the peasant.

"Well, your political duties, if you like it better."

"I am still none the wiser. And so this fine gentleman, with his yellow spectacles and bald head, is not going to tell us anything about crops, vineyards, planting, or sowing?"

"No; but he will teach you your duty as a man, as a Frenchman, a citizen—a member of the great human family; he will teach you your rights; what you can and should demand of your government under the articles 199, 305, 1202, 9999 of the charter—the last charter."

"Sir, I am ashamed to have troubled you; I thank you much for your explanation; I wish you a very good morning; for mathematics you see, sir, do send me to sleep, and our *curé* will tell me all about it on Sunday. I shall go back to the forest, and finish my job of yesterday."

And are not these simple-minded men much in the right? is not all the good sense on their side?—they, who living by the axe, the plough, and the produce of the earth, think only of their trees and their fields, and ask of God but health and strength to work, rain and sun to nourish the vines and gild their harvests. They leave to those who possess their confidence, because they have never deceived them, the care of their political interests; the care of setting and keeping them in the right path, and of directing them in that current of life, slow it is true, but which nevertheless is more effectual towards ameliorating the condition, and eventually increasing the happiness of the human race, than all the new-fangled doctrines promulgated by the statesmen and philosophers of France.

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CHAPTER XVII.

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The wolf—His aspect and extreme ferocity—His cunning in hunting his prey—His unsocial nature—Antiquity of the race—Where found, and their varieties—Annihilated in England by the perseverance of the kings and people—Decrees and rewards to encourage their destruction by Athelstane, John, and Edward I.—Death of the last wolf in England—Death of the last in Ireland.

THE wild and furious wolf, both prudent and cowardly, is, from its strength and voracity, the terror and the most formidable pest of the inhabitants of those districts of France in which it is found. Provided by Nature with a craving appetite for blood, possessing great muscular powers, and an extraordinary scent, whether hunting or laying in ambush; always ready to pursue and tear its victim limb from limb, the wolf,—this tyrant,—this buccaneer of the forest lives only upon rapine, and loves nothing but carnage.

The aspect of the wolf has something sinister and terrible in its appearance, which his sanguinary and brutal disposition does not belie. His head is large, his eyes sparkle with a diabolical and cannibal look, and in the night seem to burn like two yellow flames. His muzzle is black, his cheeks are hollow, the upper lip and chin white, the jaws and teeth are of prodigious strength, the ears short and straight, the tail tufty, the opening of the mouth large, and the neck so short that he is obliged to move his whole body in order to look on one side. His length in our forests, from the extreme point of the muzzle to the root of the tail, is generally about three feet; his height two and a half feet. The colour of his hair is black and red, mingled with white and gray; a thick and rude fur, on which the showers and severe cold of winter have no effect. The limbs of this animal are well set, his step is firm and quick, the muscles of the neck and fore part of the body are of unusual strength,—he will easily carry off a fat sheep in his mouth, without resting it on the ground, and run with it faster than the shepherd who flies to its rescue. His senses are delicate and sensitive in the extreme; that of smelling, as I have before remarked, particularly: he can scent his prey at an immense distance,—blood which is fresh and flowing will attract him at least a league from the spot. When he leaves the forest, he never forgets to stop on its verge; there turning round, he snuffs the breeze, plunges his nostrils deep into the passing wind, and receives through his wonderful instinct a knowledge of what is going on amongst the animals, dead or alive, that are in the neighbourhood.

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The declared and uncompromising enemy to almost everything that has life, the wolf attacks not only cows, oxen, horses, sheep, goats, and pigs, but also fowls and turkeys, and especially geese, for which he has a great fancy. In the woods also he destroys large quantities of game, such as fawns and roebucks; and even the wild boar himself, when young, is sometimes brought to his larder, for the wolf is one of that voracious tribe which professes a profound contempt for vegetable diet, and cannot do without flesh; hence the number of his devices for supplying his table and varying his bill of fare is astonishing. But mankind, it must be said in all justice, are not behindhand with him; they are always on the alert; they meet him with tricks as clever as his own, heap snare on snare to take him, and the result is that Mr. *Lupus*, in spite of his strength, his agility, his practical experience, and cunning instincts, often stretches out his limbs in death in the dark ravines of the forest—the victim of his enemy's superior intelligence.

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Obliged during the day to hide himself in the most solitary parts of the woods, he finds there only those animals whose rapid flight enables them to escape his clutches. Sometimes, however, after the exercise of prodigious patience on his part, by lying in wait the whole day, at a spot where he knows they will be certain to pass when the sun goes down, a defenceless roebuck will occasionally fall into his jaws.

This chance on the sly producing nothing, when night has set in he seeks the open country, approaches the farms, attacks the sheepfolds, scratches his way under the doors, and entering wild with rage, puts everything to death—for, to his infernal spirit, destruction is as great a pleasure as the satisfaction of his hunger.

When the dogs growl in an under tone, when they are restless and agitated, and snuff the wind as it drives in eddies through the shutters, "The wolf is abroad," say the peasants.

If these runs in the open country by the light of the moon afford no supper, he returns to the depths of his lair, or takes up the scent of some roebuck, tracks it like a hound, and though his hope is small indeed of ever catching it, he perseveringly follows the trail, trusting that some other wolf, famished like himself, will head the timid animal in its flight, and seize it as it passes, and that, like staunch friends, they will afterwards divide the spoil between them. [Pg 225]

But the reverse more often occurs,—and foiled and disappointed, he then becomes, though naturally a dastard and full of fear, absolutely courageous; the fire of hunger consumes his stomach, he fears nothing, and braves every danger; all prudence is forgotten, and his natural ferocity is wound up to such a pitch, that he hesitates not to meet certain destruction, attacks the animals that are actually under the care of man, man himself,—throws himself suddenly upon the poor benighted traveller, and gliding slowly and softly, with the stealthy movements of a serpent, seizes and carries off with him to the depth of the forest the infant sleeping in its cradle, or the little, helpless, innocent child which, ignorant of danger, laughs and plays at the cottage-door.

Unsociable as well as savage, with a heart harder than the ball which drills the ghastly hole in his side, loving only himself and his dark solitudes, the wolf never associates with its own kind; and when, by accident, it happens that a few are seen together, be sure the meeting is not a Peace Congress, or a party of pleasure. The assembled wolves represent a society of reds, preparing the arrangements for a combat, in which many a stream of blood shall flow, amidst the most fearful and horrible cries. If a wolf intends to attack a large animal,—for instance, an ox or a horse,—or if he desires to put a watch-dog, whose strength disquiets him, or whose vigilance incommodes him, out of his way, he roves about the lonely paths of the forest, raising a sharp prolonged cry, which immediately attracts other wolves in the neighbourhood; and when he finds himself surrounded by a numerous troop of his colleagues, bound together by no other tie than the common object they all have in view for the moment, he conducts them to the attack, and should the farmer be not there to out-manœuvre them, it will be odd indeed if the animal that they have agreed to destroy does not fall a victim to their plans. The expedition over, the valiant brotherhood separate, and each returns in silence to his thicket, whence they emerge to reunite, when slaughter and blood call them forth again to make common cause. [Pg 226]

Wolves attain their full size in three years, and live from fifteen to twenty; their hair, like that of man, grows gray with years, and like him also they lose their teeth, but without the advantage of being able to replace them; the race of wolves is as old as the flood,—even older, for their bones have been found in antediluvian remains. They are found in all countries on the New Continent as well as the Old. "They exist," observes Cuvier, "in Asia, Africa, and America, as well as in Europe; from Egypt to Lapland; everywhere, in fact, excepting in England." How an animal so detestable and so universally hated should have continued to perpetuate itself, when every other species of savage beast on the face of the earth diminishes in an infinitely greater proportion, is a problem difficult to solve. [Pg 227]

Fourrier, in his "*Théorie Harmonique et comparative des espèces*," remarks truly, that each species of the human race corresponds with some species of the brute creation. The wolves in the forest represent the Jews in the towns; and he asserts, that it being possible only to compare the voracity of the one with the rapacity of the other, these two races, which are identical by reason of their several characteristics, will never perish, never become extinct, except together. But the Jews decline to acknowledge the relationship thus assumed and the paradoxical connexion between themselves and this race of animals; they deny that the idiosyncrasies are in any degree similar, and persist in placing this luminous idea of Fourrier's on a level with that of the sea of lemonade, which will, according to the same author, one day surround our planet. [Pg 228]

The bones and teeth of wolves are often discovered, as I have already said, amongst the *débris* of the antediluvian world.

In the Holy Scriptures, too, there are several observations respecting the wolf,—in them it is stated that he lives upon rapine, is violent, cruel, bloody, crafty, and voracious; he seeks his prey by night, and his sense of smell is wonderful. False teachers are described as wolves in sheep's clothing; and the Prophet Habakkuk, speaking of the Chaldeans, says, "Their horses are more fierce than the evening wolves." And again, Isaiah, describing the peaceful reign of the Messiah, writes,—"The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid: and [Pg 229]

the calf and the young lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them."

The wolf varies in shape and colour, according to the country in which it lives. In Asia, towards Turkey, this animal is reddish; in Italy, quite red; in India, the one called the beriah is described as being of a light cinnamon colour; yellow wolves, with a short black mane along the entire spine, are found in the marshes of all the hot and temperate regions of America. The fur of the Mexican wolf is one of the richest and most valuable known. In the regions of the north the wolf is black, and sometimes black and gray: others are quite white; but the black wolf is always the fiercest. The black is also found in the south of Europe, and particularly in the Pyrennees. Colonel Hamilton Smith relates an anecdote illustrative of its great size and weight. At a *battue* in the mountains near Madrid, one of these wolves, which came bounding through the high grass towards an English gentleman who was present, was so large that he mistook it for a donkey; and whatever visions of a ride home might have floated across his brain for the moment, right glad was he on discovering his error, to see his ball take immediate effect.

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In former days, the Spanish wolves congregated in large packs in the passes of the Pyrennees; and even now the *lobo* will follow a string of mules, as soon as it becomes dusk, keeping parallel with them as they proceed, leaping from bush and rock, waiting his opportunity to select a victim. Black wolves also are found in the mountains of Friuli and Cattaro; the Vekvoturian wolf of Siberia, described by Pallas, is one of the darkest variety. In Persia and in India wolves are trained and made to play tricks and antics as monkeys and dogs are in Europe. At Teheran, Bankok, and Arracan, a well-trained wolf that can dance a polka of the country, sing a national air, and preserve a grave face during five minutes, with a pair of spectacles on his nose, will fetch as much as 500 dollars.

"In China," remarks Colonel Smith, "wolves abound in the northern province of Shantung;" and Buffon, quoting from Adanson, asserts, that "there is a powerful species of the wolf in Bengal, which hunt in packs, in company with the lion." "One night," says Adanson, "a lion and a wolf entered the court of the house in which I slept, and unperceived, carried off my provisions; in the morning my hosts were quite satisfied, from the well-marked and well-known impressions of their feet in the sand, that the animals had come together for forage." Colonel Smith observes, that "the French wolves are generally browner and somewhat stronger than those of Germany, with an appearance far more wild and savage: the Russian are larger, and seem more bulky and formidable, from the great quantity of long coarse hair that cover them on the neck and cheeks."

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"The Swedish and Norwegian are," he says, "similar to the Russian; but appear deeper and heavier in the shoulder; they are also lighter in colour, and in winter become completely white. The Alpine wolves are yellowish, and smaller than the French. This is the type of wolf that is commonly found in the western countries of Europe; and it was, in all probability, this species that once infested the wild and extensive woodland districts of the British Islands; for that wolves were once exceedingly numerous in England, is as certain as that the bear formerly prowled in Wales and Scotland, and with the former was the terror of the inhabitants. How dangerous to them, and how very common they must have been, is evident from the necessity that existed in the reign of Athelstane, 925, for erecting on the public highway a refuge against their attacks. A retreat was built at Flixton, in Yorkshire, to protect travellers against these ravenous brutes. King John, in a grant quoted by Pennant, from Bishop Littleton's collection, mentions the wolf as one of the beasts of the chase that, despite the severe forest laws of the feudal system, the Devonshire men were permitted to kill. Even in the reign of the first Edward, they were still so numerous that he applied himself in earnest to their extirpation, and enlisting criminals into the service, commuted their punishment for a given number of wolves' tongues;—he also permitted the Welsh to redeem the tax he imposed upon them, by an annual tribute of 300 of these horrid animals."

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That Edward, however, failed in his attempt to extirpate them, is evident from a *mandamus* of that monarch's successor, to all bailiffs and legal officers of the realm, to give aid and assistance to his faithful and well-beloved Peter Corbet, whom the King had appointed to take and destroy wolves (*lupos*) in all forests, parks, and other places in the counties of Gloucester, Worcester, Hereford, and Salop, wherever they could be found. In Derbyshire, certain tenants of lands, at Wormhill, held them on condition that they should hunt the wolves that harboured in that county. The flocks of Scotland appear to have suffered a great deal from the ravages of wolves in 1577, and they were not finally rooted out of that portion of the island till about the year 1686, when the hand of Sir Evan Cameron made the last of them bite the dust.

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Wolves were seen in Ireland as late as the year 1710, about which time the last presentment for killing them was found in the county of Cork. The Saxon name for the month of January, "wolf-moneth," in which dreary season the famished beasts became probably more desperate; and the term for an outlaw, "wolfshed," implying that he might be killed with as much impunity as a wolf, indicate how numerous wolves were in those times, and the terror and hatred they inspired. In every country the inhabitants have declared this ferocious brute the enemy of man; and in order, if possible, to annihilate him, have employed every device;—the result in England has been most satisfactory. The Esquimaux, that distant and half-frozen people, have their own peculiar way of trapping wolves; and it is somewhat singular that their ice wolf-trap, as described by Captain Lyon, resembles exactly, except in the material of which it is made, that of France, though it is very certain no Morvinian ever went so far as the Melville peninsula to take a hunting lesson

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from an Esquimaux. The very birds of prey, those flying thieves of the air, are used for wolf-hunting amongst some of the savage nations of the earth. The Kaissocks take them with the help of a large sort of hawk, called a *beskat*, which is trained to fly at and fasten on their heads, and tear their eyes out; and the Grand Khan of Tartary has eagles tamed and trained to the sport in the same way as we have our packs to hunt the roebuck and wild boar.

In the sombre forests of the Nivernais and Burgundy, where wolves are still numerous, and where they occasion the farmers great loss by the destruction of their cattle, they are destroyed in every way imaginable. General *battues* are held, and private hunting parties meet, a multitude of traps set, pits dug, the sportsman and the peasant lie in wait for them, and dogs and cats, well stuffed with deadly poison, are placed near their haunts in the thick underwood. Nevertheless, and in spite of all these crafty inventions and open war with them, the wolves scarcely diminish in number; they still present the same formidable phalanx, and seem determined to defy their destroyers.

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CHAPTER XVIII.

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The *battues* of May and December—The gathering of sportsmen—Distribution in the forest—The *charivari*—The fatal rush—Excitement of the moment—The volley—The day's triumph, and the reward—The peasants returning—Hunting the wolf with dogs—Cub-hunting—The drunken wolf.

IN the first days of May, that interesting epoch in which in the forest, the woods, and the plain, the majority of all animals are with young; and in the commencement of December, the period of storm and tempest and the heavy rains, which precede the great snows, two general *battues* take place in Le Morvan. To these all the tribe of sportsmen—the good, the bad, and the indifferent—are invited; in short, every one in the neighbourhood who loves excitement attends. Gentlemen, poachers, and *gens-d'armes*, young conscripts and old soldiers, doctors and schoolmasters, every one who is the fortunate possessor of a gun, a carbine, a pistol, a sabre, a bayonet, or any other weapon, presents himself at the rendezvous. Bands of peasants, also, armed with bludgeons, spears, broomsticks, cymbals, bells, frying-pans, sauce-pans, and fire-irons (it is impossible to make too much noise on the occasion), arrive from every point of the compass, and add their numbers to those already assembled. On the day agreed upon, therefore, and at the spot indicated, a small army is on foot, which, full of ardour and thirsting for the combat, brandish with shouts their various weapons and kitchen utensils, drink to the success of the enterprise, and wait with no little impatience the signal to place themselves in march, and attack the enemy. The commander of these assembled forces,—generally the head ranger of the forest,—having under his orders a battalion of sub *gardes-de-chasse*, directs their movements.

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This mode of taking the wolf is conducted with very great order and circumspection; everything is well arranged beforehand; the ravines and deep underwood, which the wolves are known to resort to, have been carefully ascertained; the number of guns and rifles necessary to surround this or that wood are told off, and the whole plan is so well prepared, the execution of it is so prompt, every one is so well aware of what he has to do, that in one day a large tract of country is carefully beaten.

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In these *battues*, those who have fire-arms form two sides of a triangle, and are placed with their backs to the wind, along the roads which border the wood the *traqueurs* are about to beat. On no account ought they to fire to their rear, but always to the front; and in order to prevent, in this respect, misunderstanding and accident, the *garde*, whose duty it is to place each sportsman at his post, breaks a branch, or cuts a notch in the tree before him, in order that in a moment of hesitation and excitement this broken bough or barked spot may remind him of his real position. The base of the triangle or the cord of the arc (for this curved line had more the shape of a great bow slightly strung than any other geometrical figure) is formed of the peasants, who, side by side, wait only for the last signal to advance, when they commence their euphonious concert—a *charivari* not to be described.

The arrangements and preparations, conducted in profound silence, being terminated, the signal is given, when the tumult, which at once breaks forth, produces intense excitement. The forest, hitherto silent, and apparently without life, is suddenly awakened with confused noises, metallic and human—the peasants shout, halloo, sing, and bang together their pots, kettles, and pieces of iron, striking every bush and thicket with their staves, and scaring every animal before them. Flights of wood-pigeons, coveys of partridges, birds of every size, species, and plumage, pass like moving shadows above their heads. The owls, too, suddenly aroused from sleep, leave their dark holes, and, blinded by the light, fly against the branches in their alarm with cries of terror—probably imagining the order of night and day is reversed, and that the unusual and unearthly noises proclaim that the end of the world has arrived for the owls. Then come the roebuck and the foxes, bounding and breaking through the underwood, and the hares and rabbits, which jump up under the feet of the beaters.

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Motionless as a mile-stone at your post, and rifle ready, this flying legion of animals gives you a

twinge of impatience, for you must allow them a free passage, as in these *battues* one dare not fire at anything, save and except the great object of the day, the wolf. Wolves alone have the honour on these important occasions of receiving the contents of your double-barrel. But the cowards, divining what is in preparation for them, are the last to show themselves; as the line advances, they trot up and down the portion of the wood thus enclosed, seeking for an outlet, or some break in the line; and they never make up their minds to advance to the front until the tempest of sounds behind them is almost ringing in their ears. But now the thunder of voices, till then distant, approaches, and the cries and hallooing of the peasants, like a flowing tide, forces them to draw nearer to the huntsmen.

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Whether or no, that fatal line must now be passed, and the few minutes that precede the last movement of the wolves towards it brings to every sportsman sensations impossible to describe. He knows the brutes are in his rear, approaching, and a feeling like an electric current runs at this exciting moment from one to the other; every man's finger is on his trigger, his pulse throbs at a feverish pace, his heart beats like the clapper of a bell in full swing—all, to take a surer aim, kneel, or place their back against the nearest tree, and each offers up a prayer for aid to his patron saint. This nervous moment has sometimes such an effect upon ardent and excitable imaginations, that I have observed many young sportsmen look very queer, some actually tremble and one shed tears. But the *traqueurs* are at hand, and the largest and boldest of the wolves, placing themselves in front, are preparing for the fatal rush—one more *charivari* from the peasants and their sauce-pans decides them, when the whole troop bound forward, yelling and howling upon the line, in passing which a storm of balls and buck-shot salute and assail them in their course.

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The death of from thirty to forty wolves is generally the result of the day's exertions, without counting the wounded, which always escape in greater or less numbers. The Government give a reward of twenty francs for every wolf, and twenty-five for every she-wolf, and these sums being immediately divided amongst the peasants, they return to their homes not a little pleased, singing their old hunting ballads, stopping occasionally by the way at some village inn for a glass, where they may be seen cutting capers, with the true peasant notions of the dance. On a fine day, with the blue sky above, the forest breathing perfume, and the sun shedding over it its golden rays, the passing game, the distant halloo! of the *traqueurs*, the gun-shots which suddenly rattle around you, the watching for and first view of the wolves, put the head and the heart in such a state of excitement, as once felt can never be forgotten. The May and December *battues* are, therefore, looked forward to with immense impatience; and nothing short of sudden death, or an injured limb, prevents the country-people from hastening with alacrity to the rendezvous.

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Wolves are likewise hunted all the year round, with dogs, by gentlemen, in the neighbourhood of the forest. But this sport is very fatiguing and weary work, if that animal alone is employed; for nothing is so difficult as to get up with a cunning old wolf, whose sinewy limbs never tire, and whose wind never fails—who goes straight ahead, ten or fifteen miles, without looking behind him; if he meets with a *Mare*, or stream of water on his road, then your chance is indeed up,—for into it he plunges, and makes off again, quite as fresh as he was when he left his lair.

The best and most expeditious mode of taking a wolf is, to set a bloodhound on him, bred expressly for this particular sport; large greyhounds being placed in ambush, at proper distances, and slipped, when the wolf makes his appearance in crossing from one wood to another. These dogs, by their superior swiftness, are soon at his haunches, and worry and impede his flight, until their heavy friend the hound comes up; for the strongest greyhound could never manage a wolf, unless he was assisted in his meritorious work by dogs of large size and superior strength. The huntsmen, well mounted, follow and halloo on the hounds; every one runs, every one shouts, the forest echoes their cries, and wolf, dogs, and sportsmen pass and disappear like leaves in a whirlwind, or the demon hounds and huntsmen of the Hartz. And now the panting beast, with hair on end and foaming at the mouth, bitten in every part, is brought to bay—his hour is come—no longer able to fly, he sets his back against some rock or tree, and faces his numerous enemies.

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It is then that the oldest huntsman of the party, in order to shorten his death-agony, and save the dogs from unnecessary wounds, dismounts, and, drawing a pistol from his hunting-belt, finishes his career before further mischief is done. When a ball hits a wolf and breaks one of his bones, he immediately gives a yell; but if he is dispatched with sticks and bludgeons, he makes no complaint. Stubborn, and apparently either insensible or resolute, Nature seems to have given him great powers of endurance in suffering pain. Having lost all hope of escape, he ceases to cry and complain; he remains on the defensive, bites in silence, and dies as he has lived. In a sheepfold the noise of his teeth while indulging his appetite is like the repeated crack of a whip. His bite is terrible.

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The months of September and October, the period for cub-hunting, afford capital sport. The young wolves are not like the old ones, strong enough to take a straight course, and they consequently can rarely do more than run a ring; when tired, which is soon the case, they retire backwards into some hole or under a large stone, where they show their teeth and await, with a juvenile courage worthy of a better fate, the onset of their assailants. The mode of separating the cubs from their mother, who, with maternal tenderness (for that feeling exists even in a wolf), always offers to sacrifice her life for her young, is by turning loose two or three bloodhounds.

These first distract her attention, and then pursue her so closely that at last she thinks it prudent to decamp, and seek safety in flight; when these dogs have fairly got her away, and their deep music dies away in the distance, others are laid on the scent of the cubs, and the sport ceases only with the death of the litter. A young wolf may be tamed; but it is not wise to place much confidence in his civilization: with age he resumes his nature, becomes ferocious, and sooner or later, should the occasion present itself, will return to his native woods;—for as water always flows towards the river, so the wolf always returns to his kind.

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In the summer, the wolves, like the gypsies, have no fixed residence; they may then be met with in the standing barley or oats, the vineyards and fields; they sleep in the open country, and seldom seek the friendly shelter of the forest, except during the most scorching hours of the day. Towards the end of August I have often met them in the vineyards, apparently half drunk, scarcely able to walk, in short, quite unsteady on their legs, almost ploughing the ground up with their noses, and staring stupidly about them. Every well-kept vineyard ought to be as free from stones as possible, and therefore the peasants, when they weed, dig a trench about the vines, or prune them, always remove at the same time whatever stones or flints they may meet with; these are piled at the end of the vineyard in a heap of about twenty feet square and six feet high, called a *meurger*.

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On these *meurgers* the breezes of summer waft every description of seed, and they are consequently soon covered with verdure, shrubs, brambles, and wild roses, which from a distance give them the appearance of a small copse or thicket. These elevated and shady spots are the favourite retreats of game in the middle of the day; here they love to repose and take their *siesta* in the cool—here the red partridges meet to have a gossip—hither the young rabbits scuttle to recover their various alarms, and the trembling hare also squats and conceals herself the moment a dog or a gun appears in the adjoining vineyard. Of course these green mounds have a corresponding value in the eyes of the sportsmen, who always find in them something to put up.

Often, therefore, walking gently on the soft ground, have I stolen to one of these *meurgers*, and throwing in a stone, generally turned out some partridges and rabbits that were there quietly ensconced; I have also, and greatly to my surprise, heard there the growl of a wolf, which, rising lazily amongst the bushes, stumbled and fell, and was evidently incapable of getting further. A salute from both barrels, with small shot, scarcely tickled his skin; but it brought him once more on his legs, though only to fall again,—when, having reloaded, I advanced on him and administered a double dose in his ear, which had the desired effect. The fact was, he was quite drunk, though not disorderly.

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These wolves, during the ardent heats of August, suffer dreadfully from thirst; and finding no water, take to the vineyards, and endeavour to assuage it by eating large quantities of grapes, very cool, and no doubt very delightful at the time; but the treacherous juice ferments, Bacchanalian fumes soon infect their brain, and for several hours these gentlemen are for a time entirely deprived of their senses. What a field for Father Mathew; but never, I am certain, has the worthy Apostle of Temperance ever dreamed of offering the pledge to the wolves of Le Morvan—the rub would be to hang the medal round the necks of these Bacchanals of the forest.

CHAPTER XIX.

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Wolf-hunting, an expensive amusement—The *Traquenard*—Mode of setting this trap—A night in the forest with Navarre—The young lover—Dreadful accident that befell him—His courage and efforts to escape—The fatal catastrophe—The poor mad mother.

WOLF-HUNTING in the forests is an expensive amusement, whether they are killed by the method I have described,—namely, of employing beaters, and shooting them when breaking through the line of sportsmen, or running them down with dogs. The peasants and *traqueurs* have to be paid, in the first case; hunters and hounds have to be purchased and maintained, in the second, without counting the innumerable incidental expenses which a kennel of hounds always brings in its train. This kind of establishment is too extravagant for our country-gentlemen, and thus it is that for one wolf killed in the great meetings, or with the dogs, thirty are taken in pits and snares, or by some species of stratagem.

Every small farmer or large proprietor, to protect his family and his cattle,—every shepherd, to protect himself and his flock, invokes to his aid the genius of strategy; and as the mind of man is a sponge full of expedients, from which once pressed by the hard fingers of necessity many an ingenious device is extracted, innumerable are the various seductive baits that in our plains and forests are placed in the way of the gluttonous appetite of the wolf; and I shall now describe the inventions that are more generally adopted.

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The favourite trap employed in Le Morvan is the *Traquenard*. This is the most dangerous, and the strongest that is made, requiring two men to set it; it has springs of great power, which once touched, the jaws of the trap close with tremendous force. Each jaw, formed of a circle of iron, four or five feet in circumference, is furnished along its whole length with teeth shaped like those of a saw, but less sharp, which shut one within the other. To these redoubtable engines of

destruction is attached an iron chain, six feet in length, and at the other end of it is a bar of iron with hooks; these hooks or grapnel, which catch at everything that comes in their way, impede the escape of the wolf when once seized, and prevent him from going any great distance from the spot where he has been caught. The trap should not be tied or fixed in any way, for then the wolf would probably in his first bound, his first frantic movement of terror, either break some part of it, or in his violent endeavours to escape, succeed, only leaving a leg behind him.

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In placing the trap and chain, a little earth is taken away, so that both are on a level with the turf; after which, the jaws being opened, they are covered with leaves in as natural a manner as possible. Great care must be taken by the person who sets the trap that he does not touch it with his naked hand; this should invariably be done with a glove on, otherwise the wolf—always extremely difficult to catch by reason of his delicate sense of smell—would be awakened to his danger. The mode of taking the wolf by means of the *Traquenard*, is as follows:—A spot having been selected in the depths of the forest, and in a sombre pathway unfrequented by the beasts of prey, the trap is set about an hour before the sun goes down, and a dog, young pig, a sheep, or some other animal which has been dead a few days, is divided into five parts; one of the portions is suspended to the lower branch of the tree, under which the trap is set; and the other four, being each attached to a withe or the band of a faggot,—not rope, for in that the wolf detects the hand of man, and he hates the smell of the material,—are drawn by men along the ground in the direction of the four points of the compass. These men are mounted either on horseback, or on an ass, or they put on a pair of *sabots* and walk, each of them dragging after him, through the wood and along the unfrequented paths, his portion of the bait, stopping every now and then to let the soil over which it passes be as much as possible impregnated with the smell of the flesh on the verge of corruption.

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The *traineur* should always walk as much as possible through those parts of the forest that are the clearest of underwood, for in these spots the wolf is least on his guard; and when he has thus traversed from 2,500 to 3,000 paces—the distance required in order to give the animal, (who will at first follow his track with caution and even suspicion,) time to regain his confidence—he stops, throws the bait over his shoulder, and walks home, leaving the result to chance, and the hunger of the savage game. When four or five other traps have been set for the same night, in a radius of three or four miles thus prepared, it rarely happens that some of these various lines—which intersect each other on every side and in every direction, taking in a considerable surface of ground—are not hit upon during the night by the roving wolves: and be sure that each wolf whose olfactories discern the scented line, and who at length arrives at the trap, is a wolf taken.

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Well do I remember the fever of impatience with which I was seized, the first time I was present at the preparations for this sport, and the desire I had to know what would be the result of our machinations; so much so, indeed, that the arrangement being completed, I positively refused to return to the *château*;—climbing into a thick tree, distant about a hundred paces from the trap, I passed the whole night there on the watch, shivering in my jacket, sitting astride upon one branch, my feet on another, and Navarre at my side. Poor Navarre! he had in the beginning of the evening brought all his astronomical knowledge to bear upon me, with a view of proving that the night would be terribly unwholesome; that we should have a furious hurricane and be deluged with rain, blinded by the lightning, and terrified by the thunder; and that, in the way of eating and a cordial, the only thing he had in his game-bag was a sorry piece of black bread, hard enough to break the tooth of a boar. I had a stiff tustle with him before he gave in; but finding he could not damp the burning curiosity which devoured me, and that my ears were deaf to the somewhat rough music of his reasoning and his predictions, the worthy man at length closed the fountain of his eloquence, and, though growling and mumbling in an under tone at my juvenile obstinacy, which had deprived him of his bed and his supper, quietly took his seat in the tree; then drawing from the bottom of his pocket some tobacco and a short pipe—his consolation in his greatest misfortunes—he whiffed away, burying his irritated countenance in his breast by way of showing his vexation.

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It seems to me but yesterday these eight hours passed in the forest in the silence of that starlight night, hid in the branches, and waiting for the wolves! We caught three, and nine galloped under the very oak in which we were seated. This midnight scene was exciting beyond description; and the worthy Navarre, notwithstanding his pipe, his fox-skin cap, and his goat-skin riding-coat, caught such a melancholy cold, that he did nothing but sneeze and hoop the whole of the next day, making more noise than all the dogs and cattle in the farm put together.

Wolf-hunting with traps has its dangers and its inconveniences, and the *Traquenard* must be used with great caution. Every morning it should be visited and shut; otherwise a man, a horse, a dog, or some other animal, may fall into it, and be taken. In order, therefore, as much as possible to prevent accidents, our peasants, farmers, and poachers, when using this kind of trap, always tie stones, or little pieces of dead wood, to the bushes and branches of the trees near the spot in which it is set; they likewise place the same kind of signal at the extremity of the pathway which leads to the trap, as a warning to those who may walk that way; and the peasants, who know what these signals dancing in the air with every puff of wind mean, turn aside, and take very good care how they proceed on their road.

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In spite of all these precautions, however, very sad occurrences will sometimes happen in our

forests. Some years ago a trap was placed in a deserted footway, and the usual precautions were taken of hanging stones and bits of wood in the approach to the path at either end. The same day, a young man of the neighbourhood, full of love and imprudence—upon the eve, in fact, of being entangled in the conjugal "I will"—anxious to present to his *fiancée* some turtle-doves and pigeons with rosy beaks, with whose whereabouts he was acquainted, left his home a little before sunset to surprise the birds on their nest; but he was late, the night closed in rapidly, and with the intention of shortening the road, instead of following the beaten one he took his way across the forest. Without in the least heeding the brambles and bushes which caught his legs, or the ditches and streams he was obliged to cross, he pressed on; and after a continued and sanguinary battle with the thorns, the stumps, the roots, and the long wild roses, came exactly on the path where the trap was set. The night was now nearly dark, and, in his agitation and hurry, thinking only of his doves and the loved one, he failed to observe that several little pieces of string were swinging to and fro in the breeze from the branches of a thicket near him. Dreadful indeed was it for him that he did not; for suddenly he felt a terrible shock, accompanied by most intense pain, the bones of his leg being apparently crushed to pieces—he was caught in the wolf-trap!

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The first few moments of pain and suffering over, comprehending at once the danger of his position, he with great presence of mind collected all the strength he had, and by a determined effort endeavoured to open the serrated iron jaws which held him fast: but though despair is said to double the strength of a man, the trap refused to give up its prey; and as at the least movement the iron teeth buried themselves deeper and deeper with agonizing pain into his leg, and grated nearly on the bone, his sufferings became so intense that in a very few minutes he ceased from making any further attempts to release himself. Feeling this to be the case, he began to shout for help, but no one replied; and as the night drew in he was silent, fearing that his cries would attract the notice of some of the wolves that might be prowling in the neighbourhood, and resolved to wait patiently and with fortitude what fate willed—what he could not avert. He had under his coat a little hatchet, a weapon which the Morvinians constantly carry about with them, and thus in the event of his being attacked by the dreaded animals, he trusted to it to defend himself; but he was still not without hope that the wolves would not make their appearance.

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The night lengthened; the moon rose, and shed her pale light over the forest. Immovable, with eyes and ears on the *qui vive*, his body in the most dreadful agony, he listened and waited: when, all at once, far—very far off, a confused murmur of indistinct sounds was heard. Approaching with rapidity, these murmurs became cries and yells; they were those of wolves—and not only wolves, but wolves on the track, which must ere a few minutes could elapse be upon him. A pang of horror, and a cold perspiration poured from his face;—but fear was not a part of his nature, and by almost superhuman efforts, and, in such an awful moment, forgetting all pain, he dragged himself and the trap towards an oak tree, against which he placed his back.

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Here leaning with his left hand upon a stout staff he had with him when he fell, and having in his right his hatchet ready to strike, the young man, full of courage, after having offered up a short prayer to his God, and embraced, as it were, in his mind his poor old mother and his bride, awaited the horrible result, determined to show himself a true child of the forest, and meet his fate like a man. A few minutes more, and he was as if surrounded by a cordon of yellow flames, which, like so many Will-o'-the-wisps, danced about in all directions. These were the eyes of the monsters; the animals themselves, which he could not see, sent forth their horrible yells full in his face, and the smell of their horrid carcasses was borne to him on the wind. Alas! the *denouement* of the tragedy approached. The wolves had hit upon the scented line of earth, and following it; hungry and enraged, were bounding here and there, and exciting each other. They had arrived at the baited spot....

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What passed after this no one can tell—no eye saw but His above: but on the following morning when the Père Séguin, for he was the unfortunate person who set the *Traquenard*, came to examine it, he found the trap at the foot of the oak deluged with blood, the bone of a human leg upright between the iron teeth, and all around, scattered about the turf and the path, a quantity of human remains: bits of hair, bones,—red and moist, as if the flesh had been but recently torn from them,—shreds of a coat, and other articles of clothing were also discovered near the spot; with the assistance of some dogs that were put on the scent, three wolves, their heads and bodies cut open with a hatchet, were found dying in the adjacent thickets. The bones of their victim were carried to the nearest church; and on the following day these mournful fragments, which had only a few hours before been full of life and youth and health, were committed to the earth.

When the venerated *curé* of the village, after previously endeavouring in every possible way by Christian exhortation to prepare his aged mother to hear the sad tale, informed her that these remnants of humanity was all that was left of her boy, she laughed—alas! it was the laugh of madness—reason had fled! Many a time have I met the aged creature strolling in a glade of the forest, or seated basking in the sun outside the door of her cottage. Her complexion was of the yellow paleness of some old parchment, she was always laughing and singing—always rocking in her arms a log of wood, a hank of hemp, or bundle of fern—objects which to her poor crazy eyes represented her child;—her child as it was in its tender years: she called it by his name, she kissed, embraced and dandled it, rocked it on her knees; and when she thought it should be tired, sang those lullabies which had soothed the slumbers of him who was now no more. I have

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witnessed the horrors of war, I have heard many a tragic story, but never has my heart been more touched with feelings of profound grief than the day on which I first met this poor creature—this widowed mother, then seventy years of age—singing and walking in the forest, carrying and dandling in her shrivelled arms a shawl rolled up; kissing and talking to the silent bundle, smiling on it,—sitting at the foot of a tree, and opening that bosom in which the springs of life had for years been dried, to nurse and nourish once more what seemed to her still her baby boy.

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The morning after the dreadful catastrophe of which I have just spoken, the path in which this terrible tragedy took place was closed, and trees were planted along its length, so that no person could in future pass that way. But the Père Séguin has often shown me the oak, at the foot of which during that fearful night the young peasant suffered such agonies, made such incredible efforts, and drew with such indomitable courage his last breath. This tree is still called by the peasants, "The Widow's Oak," or, "The Oak of the Wolves."

CHAPTER XX.

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Shooting wolves in the summer—The most approved baits to attract them—Fatal error—Hut-shooting—Silent joviality—The approach of the wolves—The first volley—The retreat—The final slaughter—The sportsman's reward—The farm-yard near St. Hibaut—The dead colt—The onset—Scene in the morning—Horrible accident—The gallant farmer—Death of the wolves, the dogs, and the peasant—The wolf-skin drum—Anathema of the naturalists.

WHEN the sportsman does not absolutely care about sleeping in his own bed, and will not be denied the pleasure of shooting a wolf himself, a drag is run similar to those we have already mentioned, but other parts of the proceedings are conducted in a manner widely different. In the first place, there is no trap; then, instead of the piece of flesh, the great attraction, being put in an obscure and hidden path, it should, on the contrary, be placed in an open spot, on the border of a wood, in a glade, or in a field on the verge of the forest, in order that the sportsman who is laying in wait, in ambush, may be able to see what is passing; he must, too, conceal himself as much as possible, either in a thicket under the foliage, in a hut made with the boughs of trees, or in a hole dug in the ground; but he should always be so placed that he is against the wind, and if the moon is up he ought to take especial care that he is in the shade.

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But it sometimes happens that the sportsman, at a moment when there is no time to run a drag,—for instance, after dinner when smoking a cigar, he suddenly takes it into his head to kill a wolf, and it is too late to bait the spot; nevertheless the hunter will have nothing less than his wolf. Before leaving home, therefore, he orders his servant to bring him a duck; this he puts into his pocket, and shouldering his gun, seeks the depths of the forest alone. Having found a favourable spot,—a place where four roads meet is that, if possible, generally chosen,—he hangs the unfortunate duck by the leg to the branch of a neighbouring tree, which, as if divining the part that he is intended to play in the piece, flaps his wings, and begins to cry and quack most vehemently.

Extraordinary as it may appear, it is well known that the cries of the duck and the goose are those most readily heard by a wolf, and consequently it is by no means a rare occurrence to see one of these animals arrive. An unweaned lamb, which is always bleating for its mother, is also an excellent decoy-bait to attract them.

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In the months of May and June, when the sportsman happens to tumble upon a she-wolf, the cubs of which are suckling, a drag may be run with one of them; the mother will for certain follow the track, and, if you are not properly on your guard, and well prepared to receive her, it is equally certain she will play you a very unpleasant trick, and make you feel that it is not wise to excite the maternal tenderness of a wild animal. But it is in winter that the wolves are more especially dangerous, and it is in this rough season that war to the knife is declared against them. The peasants, as well the wood-cutters and charcoal-burners of the forest, having then no employment, assemble in small bands, furnish themselves with provisions for several days, and armed with ponderous and clumsy fowling-pieces, go in search of the wild cat and the wolf, the rebeck and the boar.

On these occasions, as in all those where fire-arms are used, the chapter of accidents is seldom without a page relating some sad history. Two young men of the village of Akin, near Vezelay, one of whom was engaged to the sister of his companion, having made their arrangements, set out to hunt together in this manner, trusting that a heavy bag might pay for the expenses of the wedding fête. As luck would have it, they soon fell upon the traces of a boar, and separating at the entrance of a dark ravine, to beat for and watch the animal, were lost to view. But a short time had elapsed when the young man who was about to be married observing, though not clearly, between the trees and bushes a large black mass, which moved to and fro, and which he imagined was the boar listening, brought his gun to his shoulder, and, firing, lodged two iron slugs in the body of his comrade, who, advancing towards him, his shoulders being covered with a black sheepskin, had stooped down for a few seconds to tie the strings of his leggings, or his shoes.

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When the trees are devoid of foliage and the snow covers the ground, when the forest is melancholy and cold, and the wolves famished with hunger, a rather original mode of taking them by night is adopted. A few days previously to the one appointed for the purpose, a large glade in the very thickest part of the forest having been selected, a carpenter and his assistant, with a well-furnished bag of tools, start for the spot. There, choosing some suitable trees, or branches of young pollards, they cut down a sufficient number, place them in the ground so as to form a hut of twelve yards square, leaving between each tree an interval of about four inches; strengthening the edifice by beams at the base, and boards nailed transversely seven feet from the ground.

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This open hut thus prepared, and which, at fifty paces distance, ought not, if well constructed, to be distinguishable from the trees, is left open to the inspection of the beasts of the forest for several nights in succession, in order that they, always suspicious of the most trifling circumstance, may get accustomed to it. Two or three ducks, a goose, and sometimes a sheep, are fastened during these nights near the hut, with a view of alluring the wolves and inducing them to visit the mansion.

The day, or rather the appointed evening, having arrived (a star or moonlight night being selected), the assembled huntsmen, and a long line of servants, betake themselves to the forest, leading by the head four calves, and carrying with them a cask of cold meat, a hamper of wine, a box of cigars, and a horse-load of pale *cogniac*—a few camels and dromedaries added to this cavalcade, and one would have a complete picture of a tribe of Bedouins preparing to pass the Great Desert. Arrived in the forest about nightfall, and well and duly shut up in their Gibraltar of wood, the sportsmen may eat, drink, and smoke, and converse in an undertone; but a heavy fine is invariably inflicted on those who make the least noise. No one is permitted to sneeze, talk loud, or laugh; as to blowing one's nasal organ vigorously, the thing is absolutely forbidden; no one is allowed to have a cold, much less an influenza, for at least eight hours, and every sportsman is careful that the wine and the viands take each their proper line of road; if either should unfortunately diverge, the gentleman must choke rather than cough—as to the servants, they do every thing by gesture and signal; and woe betide the John that speaks—chance may be, his tongue is thrown to the wolves.

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When night has set in, the four calves are led out from the stockade and fastened to strong posts which have been fixed in front of each face of the hut. Silence now reigns supreme, and the wolves,—the spur of famine in their insides, mad in short with hunger,—begin to sniff the breeze and run their noses over the rank dewy grass of the underwood. At this point of my narrative I must bespeak the forbearance of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, and beg them to read on to the end, and weigh well the question and the result, before they bring an action against me for what follows. The calves in question having been placed, they each—must I write it?—receive an incision in the neck, the effect of which is that the blood flows slowly, and they bleat without ceasing;—such is the custom, as it is said, with butchers to make veal white and pleasing to the eye of the epicure; a really inhuman habit—but when the deed is done with a view to the extermination of wolves, I think there is little doubt but Mr. Martin himself would have used a fleam in the cause.

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This operation over, the sportsmen divide, post themselves, with their guns ready, on each side of the hut, and wait with beating hearts the arrival of the expected four-footed visitors. Nine o'clock passes—ten, half-past—not a sound is heard in the forest; the sportsmen who look out on the snowy scene around them observe nothing; all without is dreary silence, broken at intervals by the poor ruminating creatures in front, the cry of a solitary owl, the fall of some dead branch which age and the tempest has separated from the giant oak, the sudden spring of the squirrel awakened by the noise, and, in the interior of the cabin, by the soft gurgling of the ruby wine escaping joyfully from its glass prison-house, to cheer the heart of the impatient *chasseur*—and who knows better than he how to empty a flask of genuine Burgundy?

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We will, therefore, imagine some of the party enjoying themselves after this fashion; when suddenly the calves are heard to rise, to bellow and groan, strain at the ropes with which they are fastened, and endeavour to escape; every cigar is at once extinguished, the comic changes to the serious—the wolves are on the scent. A few minutes more, and black spots are seen dotted about here and there on the snow; these increase in number and approach,—they are the wolves that observe and listen; the frantic terror of the calves is redoubled; the black spots become larger, they advance still nearer, and at length the animals may clearly be distinguished. The wolves imagine the calves have come astray. What a charming thing if they could carry them off to the dark ravines they inhabit! The great square hut, silent as Harpocrates, and the smell of man, make them hesitate; but a hunger of many days (and we know that man, the image of his Maker, will eat man, his fellow, in his extremity) and the smell of blood prevail and overcome their fears. Four or five wolves rush forward, and endeavour to remove the calves; the attempt is vain, the ropes are strong, and so are the posts to which the animals are fastened: unable, therefore, to succeed, and stretched across their dying victims, they plunge their ravenous jaws into the palpitating flesh, forget their alarm in so delicious a supper, and eat and drink to their heart's content. The rest of the pack thus encouraged, and afraid of being too late, now advance at a gallop to share in the repast.

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It is then, and amid the yells, the disputes, and the bloody encounters occasioned by a division of the spoil, that the sportsmen open their fire. The first volley puts the wolves to flight, and they retire to a short distance. But again all is silent, they soon return to the carcasses they cannot make up their minds to desert; other wolves also, that have been in the rear, attracted by the cries and smell of their wounded companions, and the blood of the calves, arrive and take part in the strife, so that during several hours the forest echoes with repeated volleys. At length the calves are fairly eaten up, when the fortunate survivors of the fray, gorged and satiated, take to flight, and disappear like a band of black demons into the recesses of the forest. It is then the sportsmen leave their hut, stretch their limbs, count the dead, dispatch their wounded enemies, and, clothed in thick fur cloaks, sit as if at the bivouac round a large fire, passing the remaining hours of the night in emptying more bottles, excavating more pies, drinking more punch, and telling better stories than those which I have had the pleasure of laying before the reader.

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The morning has scarcely dawned and the party is on the road home, when a crowd of peasants arrive with their dogs, who, following the bloody traces of the wolves in the snow, dispatch those which, though wounded, have been able to leave the spot—for the sight of a dead wolf is to a Morvinian as delightful as the possession of one is profitable. Having killed his ferocious enemy, the peasant cuts off his head and his four feet, which he fastens crosswise at the end of his staff; then arraying himself in his best and most showy clothes, his hat ornamented with flowers and ribbons streaming in the breeze, like those in the cap of an English recruit, he is off, the left foot foremost, to the mayor of his parish to receive the reward offered by the government. But his road to his worship is anything but direct; he performs what he terms the grand tour, visits every village in his way, makes his bow to the women, calls at the sheep-farms and the *chateaux*, showing, with no little pride and exultation, his wolf's head, and receives at each some acknowledgment for the service he has rendered the community,—money, a dozen of eggs, a pound of lard, a bit of pork, bread, flour, flax, or salt, &c. He who kills the wolf, and carries the spoils as a trophy in this manner, is accompanied by the musician of the neighbourhood, who marches before him blowing his bagpipe with the force of an ox; behind him is one of the strongest men of the village, with a large bag on each shoulder, who carries the presents, and imitates the cry and yells of a wolf when the piper is tired. It will not therefore be considered astonishing if it is always with renewed pleasure that a peasant of Le Morvan kills a wolf; and though one becomes tired, *blazé* with almost everything in this mortal world, it is not the case when a gallant fellow is seen entering a village carrying the head of this hideous monster on his pole. This trophy, with tongue distended and mouth kept wide open by a piece of wood to show his long yellow teeth, frightens all the little children that see it.

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There are many other methods of taking the wolf, with a hook, a net, with tame she-wolves *à la loge*, the poacher's method, in pits, and in a washing-tub by the side of a pond, &c. But a description of these several modes would occupy too much space. I cannot, however, before taking a final leave of this subject, resist the temptation to relate one last and most fearful incident—a frightful illustration of the horrors to which a country infested by this animal is liable. It happened during my sojourn at St. Hibaut, at a farm in that neighbourhood.

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It was in the month of February, the winter was exceedingly severe, and three feet of snow still covered the mountains; all communication between the villages had ceased, and bands of hungry wolves besieged the farms in the heart of the woods.

The forest of La Madeleine, particularly full of ravines and dark thickets, small hamlets, and solitary houses, was overrun with these insatiable and remorseless brutes. Travellers had been devoured in the passes of La Goulotte, and mangled and torn in the ravines of Lingou. No one dared venture into the country when night approached.

The farm of which I am about to speak stands just on the borders of the forest of La Madeleine, in the midst of pastures and patches of furze; it was full of cattle and sheep, and by the time the stars were brilliantly illuminating the dark arch of heaven, was frequently surrounded by troops of wolves, scratching under the walls, and loudly demanding the trifling alms of a horse, an ox, or a man. It so happened that at this time one of the farmer's colts died, and he determined, if possible, to use it as a bait, which would provide him the opportunity of destroying some of his nocturnal visitors.

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For this purpose he placed the dead body in the middle of his court-yard, and having fastened weights to its neck and legs, to prevent the wolves from dragging it away, he set the principal gate open, but so arranged with cords and pulleys that it could be closed at any required moment. Night came on; the house was shut up, the candles extinguished, the stables barricaded, the dogs brought in-doors and muzzled to prevent them from barking, and, in the bright starlight, on some clean straw, the better to attract attention, lay the dead body of the colt—the gate, as we have said, being open. All was ready, all within on the watch, when about ten o'clock the wolves were heard in the distance; they approached, smelt, looked, listened, grumbled, and distrusting the open gate, paused; not one would enter. Profound was the silence and excitement in the house. Hunger at last overcame prudence and mistrust. Their savage cries were renewed; they became more and more impatient and exasperated,—how was it possible to resist a piece of young horseflesh? The most forward, probably the captain of the band, could hold out no longer, and to show his fellows he was worthy to be their leader, he advanced alone, passed the Rubicon,

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went up to the colt, tore away a large piece of his chest, and, proud of his achievement, set off at speed with his booty between his teeth. The other wolves, seeing him escape in safety, regained their confidence, and one, two, three, six, eight wolves were soon gathered round the animal, but, though eating as fast as they could, they remained with ears erect, and each eye still on the gate.

Eight wolves! The farmer thought it a respectable number, and whistled, when the four men at the ropes hauling instantly, the large folding-gates rolled to, and closed in the stillness with the noise of thunder,—the wolves were prisoners. Startled and terrified at finding themselves caught, they at once deserted the small remains of the colt, creeping about in all directions in search of some outlet by which they might escape, or some hole to hide in, while the farmer, having secured them, sent his household to bed, putting off their destruction till sunrise.

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The morning dawned, and with the first rays of light master and men, for whom the event was a perfect *fête*, set some ladders against the walls of the court, and from them, as well as the windows, fired volleys on the entrapped wolves. Unable to resist, the animals for some time hurried hither and thither, crouching in every nook and corner of the yard: but the wounds from balls which reached them behind the stones, or under the carts, soon turned their fear into rage. They began to make alarming leaps, and the most dreadful yells. The work of destruction went on but slowly;—the men were but indifferent shots, the wolves never an instant at rest;—and the rapidity and perseverance with which they continued to gallop round, or leap from side to side of the yard, as if in a cage, essentially baffled the endeavours of their enemies.

The affair was in this way becoming tedious, when an unlooked-for misfortune threw a dreadful gloom over the whole scene.

The ladder used by one of the party being too short, the young man placed himself on the wall, as if in a saddle, to have a better opportunity of taking aim; when one of the wolves, the largest, strongest, and most exasperated, suddenly bounded at the wall, as if to clear it, but failed; subsequently the animal attempted to climb up by means of the unhewn stones, like a cat, and though he again failed, reached high enough almost to seize with his sharp teeth the foot of the unfortunate lad. Terrified at this he raised his leg to avoid the brute—lost his balance—and the same moment fell with a heart-rending scream into the court below. Each and all the wolves turned like lightning on their helpless, hopeless victim, and a cry of horror was heard on every side.

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The storm of leaden hail ceased: no man dared fire again, and yet something must be done, for the monsters were devouring their unhappy fellow-servant. Listening only to the dictates of courage and humanity, the noble-hearted farmer, gun in hand, leaped at once into the yard, and his men all followed his heroic example. A general and frightful conflict ensued. The scene which then took place defies every attempt at description. No pen could adequately place before the reader the awful incidents that succeeded. He must, if he can, imagine the howling of the wolves, the piteous cries of the lacerated and dying youth, the imprecations of the men, the neighing of the horses and roaring of the bulls in the stables; and, more than all, the crying and lamentations of the women and children in the house—a fearful chorus—such as happily few, very few persons were ever doomed to hear. At last the farmer's wife, a powerful and resolute woman, with great presence of mind unmuzzled the dogs, and threw them from a window into the yard. This most useful reinforcement with their vigorous attacks and loud barking completed the tumult and the tragedy. In twenty minutes the eight wolves were dead, and with them half the faithful dogs. The poor unfortunate lad, his throat torn open, was dead; his courageous, though unsuccessful defenders, were all more or less wounded, and the gallant farmer's left hand so injured, that as soon as surgical assistance could be procured for him, amputation was found to be necessary.

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The monsters, stretched side by side in the yard, were also stone dead, every one of them; but not a voice on the farm raised the heart-stirring shout of victory. Consternation and gloom reigned over it, and it was long indeed ere the voice of mourning deserted its walls.

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The skin of the wolf is strong and durable; the woodmen, *braconniers*, and mountaineers, make cloaks and caps of it, the tail being left on the latter to fall over the ear by way of ornament; they likewise cover with it the outside of their game-bags. They tan it also, and excellent shoes are made of the leather, soft and light for summer wear,—it is likewise made into parchment, not to write the history of their ancestors upon, but to cover small drums, the rattle of which, on fairdays and *fêtes* is sure to set the peasants dancing. This fact is alluded to in a song of our province, written by a shepherd-poet, in the pleasing dialect of Le Morvan, of which the following is a free translation:

Hark! 'tis the wolf-skin drum,
 We come! We come!
 Yes, come with me sweet girl, and fair
 As rosebud wild that scents the air.
The heavens are bright, the stars are shining,
Thy lovely form my arms entwining;
 Together let us lead the dance
 Deep in thy sylvan haunts, dear France!
Hark! I hear those sounds again,

Wealthy persons use a wolf-skin for a carriage-rug, and in the rainy season as a mat at the door of a room. "There is nothing good in the wolf," says Buffon, "he has a base low look—a savage aspect, a terrible voice, an insupportable smell, a nature brutal and ferocious, and a body so foul and unclean that no animal or reptile will touch his flesh. It is only a wolf that can eat a wolf." "No animal," writes Cuvier, "so richly merits destruction as the wolf." With these two funeral orations on these incarnate fiends of Natural History, I shall close this chapter, remarking that the anathema bestowed on them by Buffon is not quite correct, for if wolves are dangerous, and enemies to the public weal, and "there is nothing good" in them during their lives, they, at least, become useful after their death.

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CHAPTER XXI.

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Fishing in Le Morvan—The naturalists—The *Gour* of Akin—The English lady—The mountain streams—Château de Chatelux—Sermiselle—New mode of killing pike—Pierre Pertuis—The rocks and whirlpool there—The syrens of the grotto—Château des Panolas—The Cousin—The ponds of Marot and lakes of Lomervo—Mode of taking fish with live trimmers—The Scotch farmer.

HAVING disposed of the quadrupeds of Le Morvan, I must enlarge a little upon the finny tribe of my native province, who would, I feel sure, be not a little annoyed if after having mentioned nearly every other creature capable of affording amusement to the sportsman I were to pass them over in silence. Besides, the shade of Izaak Walton would haunt me, and his disciples no doubt wish me well hooked, if I omitted to give them a chapter on angling,—but it shall be short, and I will avoid all scientific discussion. Theories sufficient have been hazarded, and books written without number from the days of old Aristotle, who arranged them in three great divisions, the Cetaceous, the Cartilaginous, and the Spinous; down to Gmelin, who divided them into six orders, the Apodal, the Jugular, the Thoracic, the Abdominal, the Branchiostagous, and the Chondropterygious.

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How men, learned and scientific men, can be so barbarous as to invent such grotesque names as these is surprizing, or why Apicius should be remembered for having been the first to teach mankind how to suffocate fish in Carthaginian pickle; or Quin, for having discovered a sauce for John Dories; or Mrs. Glasse, for an eel pie; or M. Soyer, celebrated for depriving barbel of their sight, in order to make them grow fatter, and be more acceptable to the epicure. Into this wilderness of discoveries, I have no intention of introducing you, gentle reader. The wisest plan is to cook and eat your fish in the ordinary mode—fry, broil, bake, boil, or grill; and call a perch, a perch, not a thoracic; a pike, a pike, &c., and pay little attention either to cooks or naturalists.

Le Morvan, intersected by numerous rivers, streams, and runs of water, in the liquid depths of which the various species of the fresh-water fishy-family are found from the powerful, swift, and travelled salmon, to the modest little gudgeon that stays quietly at home, is a country where the angler may live in a state of perpetual jubilee; the carp, the eel, and the pike attain an enormous size, particularly near the dams and flood-gates, where the depth of water is great, and in the *Gours* or water-courses which, diverging at several points on the stream, are constructed for supplying the flour and paper-mills with water.

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The punters of Richmond, Hampton Court, and Chertsey, with their magnificent tackle, gentles, ground-bait, and comfortable chair, &c., would be astonished to see the quantities of fish that are taken in one of these *Gours* by a half-naked peasant, with a line as thick as packthread, during a sultry tempestuous evening in the month of June; from thirty to forty pounds' weight of carp and eels is by no means an unusual take,—Apodal and Abdominal, as the learned Gmelin would say.

These *Gours* are perfect jewels in the eyes of our fishermen; on very great occasions, for instance, when the miller marries, or an infant miller makes his appearance, if the occurrence should happen during the summer season, the flood-gates of the *Gours* are opened, when the waters being let off to within a few inches of the bottom, the quantity of fish taken with the casting-net is enormous. In the large *Gour* of Akin, the longest, the deepest, and containing more fish than any on the Cure or the Cousin, which I mention as representing the ten or twelve second-rate rivers of Le Morvan, I have seen as much as four horse-loads of fish taken, though every fish under two pounds was thrown back. The average depth of water in these rivers is from three to four feet, except near the dams and flood-gates, where it is from twelve to thirteen. With rivers so well supplied, sport is invariably obtained; so that patience, a virtue generally considered absolutely necessary in the angler, is scarcely required here, and fishing is actually a pastime of the *beau sexe*.

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Well do I remember the astonishment, the pleasure, the delicious joy of a young English lady we had the good fortune to have with us at Vezelay, some few years since (where, by-the-bye, she made quite a sensation), when for the first time, and seated comfortably upon the soft turf by the river side, she gracefully threw her line into the great *Gour* of Akin; the bait had scarcely sunk,

when the float was dancing about like a dervish, and finally disappeared; the lady pulled, the fish resisted; excited beyond measure, she redoubled her efforts, and tugging away with both hands, at length drew from his watery home a large carp, which flying through the air, described a splendid parabola, and landed in the adjoining field, to the great joy of the young lady, who showed her white teeth and laughed with might and main. But the poor devil of a servant to whom was confided the delicate task of impaling the bait, disentangling the line, and searching for the fish, when thus projected over the lady's head into the long grass behind her, had plenty to do I can aver, and did anything but laugh.

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Near the forests and the hills the rivers are much more shallow, more clear and limpid, and flow, dance, and bubble over a gravelly bottom or golden sands. In these the voracious trout abounds; he may be seen allowing himself to be lazily rocked by the eddy, by the twirling current, or reposing under the shadow of the large rocks, which, detached from the adjacent mountains, have fallen into the river, and been arrested in their course; here he waits for the delicious May-fly, and the fisherman's basket is soon filled—so soon that a celebrated doctor in our neighbourhood, whose house is situated near one of these streams, used to send his servant every morning to take a fresh dish for his breakfast. The largest and the best trout are found near Chatelux, in the heart of the Morvan,—an old *château*, on the summit of a high rock, ornamented with towers and turrets, and surrounded by thick and solitary woods, in itself a lion worth seeing.

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The present Count de Chatelux was aide-de-camp to Louis Phillipe, and a great friend of that sovereign. The river Cure flows at the foot of the hill on which the castle is situated, and its bed at this part is frequently divided, and forms many little islets, full of flowering shrubs and forest trees, which give the landscape a pleasing and picturesque appearance. From hence, for nearly twelve miles, roach, dace, chub, and trout are numerous, and take the fly well.

Besides the *Gours* we have mentioned, there are three spots in the Morvan that deserve attention in connection with fishing. These are Sermiselle, Pierre Pertuis, and the Château des Panolas. Sermiselle, at the junction of the Cure and the Cousin, at which point the road from Paris to Lyons passes, is a charming village, full of life and gaiety. At this spot the river begins to make a respectable figure; deep, solemn, and silent, it seems proud of its boats and ferries; but its waters have not that transparent appearance, that vivacious, laughing, and brawling character which distinguished them some miles further up. The fish in like manner resemble the stream; there are in this part monstrous carp, majestic eels, and solemn pike; and the line should be doubly strong if the angler is desirous of ever seeing a fish, or his hooks again.

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At some distance above Sermiselle, where the silence and solitude of the country still reign, a very curious mode of fishing is adopted during the burning heat of the summer months. About mid-day, when the sun in all its power shoots his golden rays perpendicularly on the waters, illuminating every large hole even in the profoundest depths, the large fish leave them, and, ascending to the surface, remain under the cool shade of the trees, watching for whatever tit-bit or delicacy the stream may bring with it, while others prefer a quiet saunter, or, with the dorsal fin above the water, lie so still and stationary near some lily or other aquatic plant, that they seem perfectly asleep.

The enthusiastic sportsman, who fears neither storms nor a *coup-de-soleil*, makes his appearance about this time, without, it is true, either fishing-rod, lines, worms, flies, or bait of any description, but having under his left arm a double-barrel gun, in his right hand a large cabbage, and at his heels a clever poodle. The fisherman, or the huntsman, I scarcely know which to call him, now duly reconnoitres the river, fixes upon some tree, the large and lower branches of which spread over it, ascends with his gun and his cabbage, and having taken up an equestrian position upon one of the projecting arms, examines the surface of the deep stream below him. He has not been long on his perch when he perceives a stately pike paddling up the river; a leaf is instantly broken off the cabbage, and when the Branchiostagous has approached sufficiently near, is thrown into the water; frightened, the voracious fish at once disappears, but shortly after rises, and grateful to the unknown and kind friend who has sent him this admirable parasol, he goes towards it, and after pushing it about for a few seconds with his nose, finally places himself comfortably under its protecting shade. The sportsman, watching the animated gyrations of his cabbage-leaf, immediately fires, when the poodle, whose sagacity is quite equal to that of his master, plunges into the water, and if the fish is either dead or severely wounded fails not to bring out with him the scaly morsel; thus so long as the heavens are bright and blue, the water is warm, the large fish choose to promenade in the sun, and the sportsman's powers of climbing hold out, the sport continues. Sometimes the poodle and the fish have a very sharp struggle, and then the fun is great indeed, unless by chance the sportsman should unfortunately miss his hold in the midst of his laughter, and drop head-foremost into the water with his cabbage and his double-barrel.

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Pierre Pertuis on the Cure, is also a famous place for fishing, and an extraordinary spot, and the Morvinian peasant, a highly poetically-flavoured individual, has made it the theatre of some very fantastic scenes. Imagine a yellow rock, of gigantic height, terminating in a point, with its sides full of fissures, holes, and crevices, inhabited by crows, owls, and bats, having its base in the river and its summit crowned with a rough *chevelure* of brambles and large creeping plants. The lower part of this rock is intersected by holes, through which the water rushes, tumbles, and

whirls. The peasants pretend that the river near the rock cannot be fathomed, and that this particular spot is inhabited by fairies, nymphs, syrens, and other amiable ladies of this description, who have superb voices, and sing from the interior of their grottos delicious melodies of the other world, with the charitable intention of attracting the passing traveller or fisherman, and drowning him in the whirlpool beneath—a fate that would certainly be inevitable, if the attraction in question could bring them within its vortex, for certain it is that neither sheep-dogs or cattle which have fallen in, or been drawn within reach of its power, have ever been seen again. When the tempest rages here, the wind, rushing into the holes and fissures, produces a kind of moaning Æolian noise, and this with the cries of the owls and the rooks when the *mistral* blows and they have the rheumatism, produces, and no wonder, a superstitious feeling of awe in the mind of the ignorant peasant.

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On the Cousin, which flows majestically through some of the most magnificent pastures in the world, and on the summit of a large hill, stands the charming Château des Panolas, the towers and walls of which, covered with pointed roofs and weather-cocks, and surrounded by domes, belvederes, and old-fashioned dovecots, give it at a distance the appearance of some oriental building. The weather-cocks in particular are of the most fanciful and grotesque designs, and it is said, and I should think there can be no doubt of the fact, that in no other structure have so many been seen together: it is calculated there are no less than three hundred. In going and returning from the forest, many a time have I and my friends, in the hey-day of youthful iniquities, knocked one of them off with a ball from our guns, to the great anger of the proprietor, who threatened us with his mahogany crutch from the hall door.

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In the great ponds of Marot, and in the lakes of Lomervo—immense liquid plains, deep and surrounded in their whole circumference by a forest of green rushes, water-lilies, flags, and many other aquatic plants, forming a wall of verdure—the enormous quantity of fish of every kind is almost incredible. Nor is this extraordinary, for the waters of at least a dozen streams from the mountains, which swarm with life, fall into these vast reservoirs, and they are only fished once in every five years. This is a delectable spot for fishermen; but, on the other hand, as the value of these sheets of water is well understood by their proprietors, they are sharply looked after by them and their keepers, and it is almost as difficult to find an opportunity of throwing a line during the day, as it is for a poacher to throw a casting net on a moonlight night.

Nevertheless, as the appropriation of other people's property has an exquisite charm for some temperaments,—as a stolen apple to a child's palate is much more delightful than one that is not—the demon of acquisitiveness is always leaning over a man's shoulder,—that is to say, a poacher's shoulder, or even that of a gentleman with poaching tastes and inclinations,—to breathe in his ear bad advice. As to the peasants in the neighbourhood, they are always consulting together, or inventing some method by which they may circumvent the proprietors and appropriate their fish to themselves.

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One of the happiest discoveries of the kind I ever heard of,—not the most recent but the best,—is the following. Every person in the possession of a cottage, possesses also a few ducks and geese, which paddle about their humble habitations. A man who has an itching for the thing, and who desires to become a pond-skimmer, as they are called, carefully selects from his squadron of *palmipedes*, the strongest, the most intelligent duck or goose of the party; his choice made, he immediately sets to work to give him the education befitting a bird destined for so honourable and diplomatic an employment.

After very many trials, lessons, and lectures, more or less difficult and tedious, the bird is taught to swim to a distance right ahead—to turn to one side when his master sings, and return to him when he whistles. These two primary and elementary movements, which appear so very natural, demand, nevertheless, wonderful patience, and no little cleverness and tact in the professor to instil—for his pupils, be it remembered, are ducks and geese—and furnishes an example of how the hope and love of gain has its effect on mankind. These very peasants, who never would take the trouble to learn their letters—only twenty-four—who would not many of them go two miles to learn how to sign their own names, pass whole days in the gray waters of these marshes, more often than not up to their waists in mud, whistling and singing and twitching the legs of their unfortunate birds, and nearly pulling them off with a string, when they either do not comprehend, or obey as quickly as they might, the orders they receive.

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Dozens of ducks and geese that would in London or Paris be considered highly curious and infinitely wiser than any of their species—even those of the Capitol—are thus trained every year in Le Morvan, without any one giving them a thought, and may be purchased, education included, for two shillings a piece. When these winged students are so thoroughly qualified for their duties, that they can go through their exercise without a mistake, and are considered worthy of taking the field, the peasant puts them into his bag, and setting off very early in the morning to one of the great ponds I have mentioned, conceals himself behind a thick tufty curtain of flags, from whence he can see without being seen.

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Here, opening his bag, he takes out the half suffocated ducks or geese, which are glad enough to find themselves once more on their favourite element; and the intelligent birds have scarcely regained their liberty when the peasant commences his ballad, and immediately the anchor is apeak and they are off; he sings, he whistles, and they turn, like two well-manned frigates, and

come back to him without a moment's delay. The act is so natural, so simple, that no one can be attracted by it; nor is it possible to suspect a goose or a duck with its head down searching for food, that paddles about in the weeds or on the shore, or dabbles amongst the rushes. Should the keeper appear, the peasant is sure to be found lying on his back half asleep, or singing or whistling, as if mocking the lark in the clear blue sky above him.

Nevertheless, this goose, this duck, and this man are first-rate thieves,—cracksmen of their class; for the peasant, before he confides his poultry to the waves, makes their toilette; sliding under the left wing and over the right, across the body, like a soldier's belt, a strong and well-baited pike-hook. Thus equipped and ready for the start, the pirate birds leave on their buccaneering expedition; but they are scarcely a stone's throw from the shore, and well clear of the little islands of flags, when a hungry pike, observing the delicious frog towing in the rear, seizes it, and makes off to his hole, to gorge the bait at his leisure. More easily thought than done;—the goose stoutly resists, and refuses to accompany the fresh-water shark to his weedy home. A warm and obstinate engagement is the result; the peasant watches, with approving eye, the embarrassment of his feathered accomplice, until he thinks it time to put an end to the scrimmage, when he whistles like an easterly wind in a passion. The goose, rather encumbered by the carnivorous gentleman below him, endeavours for some time but in vain to obey the signal; he flaps his wings, works away with his legs, and cackles without ceasing. The poacher encourages him with another whistle, and at length the bird, in spite of all his adversary's attempts to the contrary, leads the "greedy game of the deep" to the shore, and delivers it to his master. This is, certainly, a very curious mode of taking pike, and the live trimmer looks very puzzled when the voracious fish is hooked; but the following anecdote, taken from the scrap-book of Mr. M'Diarmid, shows that a Scotchman once adopted the same method, though for a different reason. "Several years ago," he writes, "a farmer, living in the immediate neighbourhood of Lochmaben, Dumfriesshire, kept a gander, who not only had a great trick of wandering himself, but also delighted in piloting forth his cackling harem, to weary themselves in circumnavigating their native lake, or in straying amidst forbidden fields on the opposite shore. Wishing to check this flagrant habit, the farmer one day seized the gander just as he was about to spring upon the blue bosom of his favourite element, and tying a large fish-hook to his leg, to which was attached part of a dead frog, he suffered him to proceed upon his voyage of discovery. As had been anticipated, this bait soon caught the eye of a ravenous pike, which swallowing the deadly hook, not only arrested the progress of the astonished gander, but forced him to perform half-a-dozen summersets on the surface of the water! For some time, the struggle was most amusing—the fish pulling, and the bird screaming with all its might,—the one attempting to fly, and the other to swim, from the invisible enemy—the gander one moment losing and the next regaining his centre of gravity, and casting between whiles many a rueful look at his snow-white fleet of geese and goslings, who cackled out their sympathy for their afflicted commodore. At length Victory declared in favour of the feathered angler, who, bearing away for the nearest shore, landed on the smooth green grass one of the finest pike ever caught in the Castle Loch."

This adventure is said to have cured the gander of his desperate propensity for wandering.

CHAPTER XXII.

Village *fêtes*—The first of May—The religious festivals—The *Fête Dieu*—Appearance of the streets—The altars erected in them—Procession from the church—Country fairs—The book-stalls at them—Pictures of the Roman Catholic Church—Before the *Vendange*—Proprietors' hopes and fears—Shooting in the vineyards—The first day of the *Vendange*—Appearance of the country—Influx of visitors at this season—The consequences—Herminie—Her sad history—Le Morvan—Recommended to the English traveller—Lord Brougham and Cannes—Contrast between it and Le Morvan.

ONE of the happiest and most useful customs established by our ancestors, was, without doubt, the village *fête*—the periodical festival that takes place in every hamlet, and at which the inhabitants of the adjoining *communes* assemble on a specified day to foot it gaily in the dance and drink each other's health glass to glass in brimming bumpers. These joyous *fêtes*, a kind of fraternal and social invitation, which are given and accepted by the rural population when spring and verdure made their appearance, are held all over France, and rejoice every heart. In our day, though much shorn of its ancient revelry, and neglected, *la fête du village* is still kept up, for it is, so to speak, indigenous,—a part of our social habits, and like everything which carries within it a generous sentiment, is loved and cherished by the people. As the day approaches every village is suitably decorated, the women are all on the tip toe of excitement to see and be seen, the peasant throws dull care behind him, and the artizans in the nearest town work with renewed energy in order that they may do honour to the occasion. Every one, in short, makes his way to the rendezvous, a merry laugh on his lip and joy in his heart, and, lost in the tumult and general gaiety that prevail, all forget, for some few hours, their hard work and privations.

These festivals offer to each either profit or amusement; the peasants find in them a refreshing and salutary rest from toil, the tradesman fails not to fill his pockets with their hard earnings, the clown shows off his summersets, the young men are touched with the tender passion, and the

young girls, with their white teeth and sparkling eyes, await with feigned indifference the proposals of their admirers. The village *fête* forms a bright epoch in rustic life, and the gay hours passed at them are the happiest, the most joyous, and the most enchanting of the year.

Our ancestors, who knew and more thoroughly understood these matters than we do, who loved a laugh, the dance, and the merry outpourings of the heart, endeavoured by every means in their power to multiply them, and, after having seized upon the name of every saint in paradise, they managed to appropriate, and always for the same motive, all the various occupations known in the cultivation of the fields as a good excuse for holding more of these saturnalia. The season for sowing was one, the hay-harvest another, the wheat-harvest, the period of felling the oaks in the forest were excellent opportunities for establishing a new *fête*, and consequently buying a new coat, singing a carol, drinking to France, and skipping *des Rigodons*. For, be it said, one really does amuse oneself in my beautiful country; yes, one amuses oneself, perhaps, much more than one works; there are more Casinos built than acres grubbed up, and is not this partly the reason why the land is so badly tilled and produces only one half of what it should. But what signifies it, after all, if this half is sufficient for us. England, they say, is more opulent and better cultivated; be it so,—she is richer, she manufactures more; but is she happier?

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Independently of these *fêtes*, the number of which is infinite, but which occur only, in each locality, once a year, there exist also those merry meetings, which, like the Sunday, are understood by the peasantry as a general holiday. Amongst these, the most animated and attractive, and more usually marked by happy incidents, is that of the first of May. At the earliest dawn of day, the tones of the bagpipe may be distinguished in the distance, coming up the principal street of the village. He who has heard this rustic sound in the happy days of his childhood, under the shade of the elms, will always love the unmusical and melancholy wailing of the bagpipe. The strain has scarcely died away when all the village is alive, every one is up and dressed in his best—the children, with enormous nosegays in each little hand, go and present them to their delighted parents, and wish them "*un doux mois de Mai*."

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Each house, perfumed like a parterre of flowers, opens its doors, and, during the live long day, it is between friends and acquaintance a series of happy smiles, and a mutual exchange of nosegays and hearty shaking of hands. Then in the evening, when the moon has risen in the west over the fir woods, the young lads and lasses, with their fathers and mothers, saunter along the streets arm in arm. At short distances, on the roofs of the houses, are seen, elevated in the air, gigantic chaplets of flowers, illuminated by large torches of rosin. Within these chaplets are others of smaller size. A dance, *grand rond*, is formed by the young lovers that have carried the May to their sweethearts, who, rising before the dawn, had already gathered the mysterious declaration of love, perfumed and still covered with the tears of night. In this large circle is formed another of children, about ten years of age, and within this again, a third of quite little things; small human garlands within the greater one. And the bagpipe plays, and all the world dance, and every one is happy, and the evening breeze shaking the large chaplets above showers of lilac and hawthorn bloom fall on the dancers and rustic ballroom beneath.

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To these village *fêtes* must be added, to complete the list of our popular holidays—the religious festivals, established by the Roman Catholic church, which, in the eyes of our rural population, are the most imposing and magnificent ceremonies of the year. These *fêtes* are very little known in Protestant countries; a few details, therefore, of one of them, taken at hazard, may please, or at least offer some point of interest to the reader.

In the month of June, when the heavens are all azure, when the sun smiles on us here below, and the summer flowers are all in bloom, the long-expected *fête*, the *Fête Dieu*, *la fête des Roses*, the feast of Corpus Christi, one of the most brilliant festivals of the Roman Catholic church takes place.

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Several days before, all the houses appear in a new toilette, decked out with evergreens and branches of the vine and tamarisk, festoons of which are suspended from window to window. All the streets of the village are washed and swept, like a drawing-room. On the preceding evening every garden is opened, the borders are ravaged, baskets-full of roses, armfulls of jasmine, bunches of gilly-flowers and sweet-pea fall under a little army of scissars and white hands. The camellias complain, the heliotropes murmur, all the tribe of tulips are in low spirits, for each family gathers in a perfect harvest of flowers—every one remarks to the other—"To-morrow is the *fête Dieu*, the feast of roses—the favourite festival of the year." And when aurora, pale with watching, rises in the cloudless sky, when the cock, herald of the morn, proclaims the birth of another day, when the first golden ray, traversing space, lights the eastern casement, behind which many a lovely bosom heaves, with anticipated conquest and excitement, the bells of the village church are heard, and at this merry signal every one is up and soon busily engaged superintending the preparations for the day.

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The streets, as if by enchantment, are carpeted with verdure; the pine, the oak, and the birch, from the neighbouring forest, contribute their young shoots and leaves; the prickly broom its yellow flowers. The façades of the houses are hidden under their various hangings, the rich suspend from their windows their splendid carpets; the poor, sheets as white as driven snow. All ornament them, here and there, with roses, pinks, and carnations. Then, at short distances down the principal street, the young *demoiselles* of the village erect what are termed *repositoires*, a kind

of chapel or altar, improvised for the occasion, which lead to an emulation and an animated rivalry perfectly terrible. It is whose shall be the largest, best, and most elegantly decorated, and these young nymphs, usually so reserved and so easily frightened, become, for this week, as bold and free as so many dragoons. They enter the house, without being announced, open the drawers, visit the secretaries, ransack the cupboards. Pirates, with taper fingers, they put into their baskets and reticules all the valuables they can lay their hands on. Objects of art they are sure to seize, more especially if they are made of the precious metals. It is who shall adorn her *reposoir* with gold and bronze vases, with enamelled cups, pictures, and rich crucifixes. Important meetings are held, in some secret spot, to determine of what form the altar shall be; if the dominating colour shall be blue, purple, or lilac. Then there is a consultation whether the drapery, that is to cover this temporary chapel, shall be with or without a fringe,—a discussion which becomes more entangled with difficulties than those in the Parliamentary Club of the Rue des Pyramides, as to the continued existence or demise of our poor constitution. Silk, satin, and velvet ornament the interior of the elegant edifice; the most delicate perfumes burn in each of its corners, and, in order further to embellish the altar on which the Holy Eucharist is to rest for a few minutes, there is a perfect coquetting with chaplets, festoons of gauze, crystal lamps of various colours, and transparencies through which the subdued rays of the sun shed their softened light.

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And, when everything is ready, when the mass has been said, when the moment has arrived for the procession to move through the streets, the bells ring a still merrier peal, the great folding-doors of the principal entrance of the church are thrown open, and emerging from thence one sees beneath the vaulted arch, first, the great silver cross, then the banner of the blessed Virgin, carried by a beautiful young girl, dressed in a robe of spotless white; after her come several little children with flaxen heads, their hair parted and flowing on their shoulders, carrying in their hands baskets ornamented with lace, and full of poppies and corn-flowers; behind them are the children of the choir, with their silver-chased incense burners; then two deacons, one carrying on a silver plate the bloom of the vine, the other a head of corn; then four men supporting a large shield, on which are twelve loaves and a lamb, symbolical of the day; and lastly, under a canopy enriched with gold lace and fringe, the old priest, calm and grave, who carries in his hands the Holy Eucharist, followed by a long line of his faithful parishioners, with the mammas and young girls two and two, singing psalms and canticles. In this order they move along the crowded streets, which are strewn with fennel, green branches, and leaves.

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From time to time the whole procession halts before some *reposoir*—the little girls drop three curtsies before the beautiful altar, and scatter high in the air handfuls of broken flowers, which shed a delicious fragrance around; the children of the choir wave their censers to and fro, the old priest blesses the crowd who kneel before him, and the smoke of the incense, and the perfume of the roses, ascend towards heaven as the adorations and prayers of all present ascend to God. This, the holiest and most imposing *fête* of our rural districts, is also the one the most loved. Pity not the peasant, pity not those who are from necessity obliged to live in these retired spots. They have their *fêtes* as well as the rich, happier and much more magnificent, at which they can be present and form part without paying anything. Nature, too, source of so many marvels, whether she covers the earth with a robe of verdure, or fields of golden corn, or that she shelters it under a mantle of snow, presents to the husbandman some interesting scene. Have they not also the shade and silence of the forest, the eternal freshness of the fountains?

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It is true the peasants know nothing of Beethoven's symphony in C, they are not familiar with the melodies of Rossini, Madame Grisi has never in her terrible finale "*Qual cor tradisti*" made them weep, nor has the orchestra of Monsieur Jullien made them deaf. But what are these splendid wonders of the town to them? Have they not a melodious choir of birds to arouse them each morning from their slumbers? have they not as scenes, the woods, the bubbling waters, verdant valleys, real sunrises and sunsets? Can they not, seated on the summit of some hill, round which the breeze of evening plays, gaze upon the glorious sky above them spangled with stars, those unfading flowers of Heaven? Say, reader, is not this hill a charming pit-stall, and much preferable to the narrow crimson section of the bench at the Opera? These are some of their enjoyments; then how could they with any degree of pleasure stick themselves up like logs of wood or trusses of hay before a row of lurid lamps, to admire some painted men and women mincing up and down the stage, or peer through two telescopes at forests of painted calico and moons cut out of pasteboard, or listen to hackneyed airs which have been sung and resung a hundred times—worn up, in short, like an old rope?

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The peasant farmer or yeoman of France, who in the midst of the most pleasing circumstances, never forgets his own interests, has also found it desirable for the advancement of his worldly prosperity, to establish fairs, at which he can sell his hemp and beasts, his wine and his crops; purchase clothes for his family, and coulter for his ploughs.

These fairs, which are held once in each month in all the towns of Burgundy and large villages of Le Morvan, attract a great concourse of people, and as there is much variety in the costumes, head-dresses and colours, the effect is highly picturesque. The mountaineer brings with him for sale wild boar and venison, wood and wild fruits of the forest; the inhabitant of the plain, the thousand productions of the neighbouring manufactories. Second-rate jewellers arrive with their boxes full of gold crosses and buckles, holy chaplets blessed at some favourite shrine, and silver

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rings.

Book-stalls are also to be seen, kept by Jesuits in disguise, the shelves of which are loaded with inferior literature, with a perfect deluge of breviaries, almanacks, abridgments of the Lives of the Saints, with "Letters fallen from Heaven," in which, "Ladies and gentlemen," shouts the proprietor, "you will read the details, truthful and historical, of the last miracle at Rimini; also a new and marvellous account, equally authentic, of several pictures of Christ that have shed tears of blood. Buy, ladies and gentlemen, buy the history of these astonishing miracles—only a penny, ladies, for which you will have into the bargain the invaluable signature of our Holy Father the Pope, and the benediction of our Lord the Bishop."

But ought one to be surprised at such announcements, at such a traffic, or that in these so-called enlightened days, not only auditors but purchasers should be found?—that there should, in fact, be a sale for these printed mystifications, when officers of the government and officers of the armed force, attest on their honour the truth of these impudent impositions upon the credulity of mankind, affirm the accuracy and *bonâ fide* character of these winking, blinking, blasphemous, lachrymal representations?

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Yes—a sub-prefect, a mayor, and an officer of the *gendarmérie*, have signed a document stating that they had seen a picture of Christ shedding tears of blood!

When archbishops order public prayers and thanksgivings for the renewal of these pasquinades, this ridiculous mockery, can one be astonished, I say, at the state of religious ignorance and blindness of our peasantry? Such, with a few wretched prints representing Napoleon passing the Alps seated on an eagle; Poniatowsky and his white horse attempting to cross the Oder; Cambronne, with imperial moustachios, on his knees repeating the celebrated *mot* which he never said: "*La garde meurt et ne se rend pas*," &c.,—such, I am grieved to confess, is the miserable intellectual food, the wretched mental and moral stock of human and religious knowledge that supplies the literary and artistic wants of the greater portion of the peasants of our departments.

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At these fairs all the farm servants are engaged; those who wish to try a change of masters, or hire themselves merely for the harvest, assemble in the open space near the church, and then offer to those who require them, their brawny arms, and their farming acquirements. The most celebrated of these fairs is that held on the First of September, to which whole hamlets send all their able-bodied men and women, who hire themselves to the great proprietors for the *vendange*—for this in Burgundy and Le Morvan is the great work, the chief event of the year; it is on the *vendange* that depend the commerce, the tranquillity and happiness of the country.

Monsieur B.... is ruined if the sun is obscured by clouds. Monsieur D.... who has cunningly laid his hands upon all the barrels within thirty miles round, will put a pistol to his head if he cannot sell his army of hogsheads. This one relies upon his vineyard for paying his debts—another cannot marry unless he makes three hundred tierces of wine. Eight out of twelve, in short, reckon upon the produce of their vines to buy a new carriage or to be saved from prison; and the agonised mariners of the wrecked *Medusa* never cast their eyes with more intense anxiety towards the horizon than do these proprietors of our vineyards every morning before the vintage.

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If it looks like rain no sunflower is more yellow than their countenances; if the cold is unusual every face is pale, and should a frost appear imminent, those whose affairs are the most compromised, pack up their effects and make ready for a start. But on the other hand, if the sky is serene and the wind warm, husbands are actually seen embracing their wives, and promising them any toilette they may fancy. Should the heat become Bengalic and insupportable oh! then all Burgundy is dancing and running to the vineyards,—all the Morvinians fly to the hills to enjoy the cool breezes and admire the luxuriant panorama beneath and around them.

But for some months previous to the *vendange*, no one but a proprietor has the right to enter a vineyard; at this period a perfect calm and silence reigns, and they become an asylum, a veritable land of Goshen, an oasis for all the partridges, hares, and rabbits of the neighbourhood. In order to prevent gentlemen and professional poachers from cruising in these delightful latitudes, killing the game and injuring the vines, a number of *gardes champêtres*, generally old soldiers, are chosen, who armed with an old sabre, post themselves on some height which commands the vineyard, ready to lay violent hands on any delinquent that may make his appearance. But in spite of the *garde champêtre*, his long sabre, their interminable cut and thrust, and his eternal *de par la loi, arrêtez!* there is a sport in the early morning, called *à la traulée*, which is not without its charms.

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The vineyards of Burgundy are for the most part divided into sections, that is to say, at from two to three hundred paces the contiguity of the vines is interrupted, and a small road, which serves during the *vendange* to facilitate the communication and transport of the grapes, is cut in the vineyard. At daylight, therefore, before the sun is above the horizon, or the white fog hanging in the valleys has been dispersed by his rays, and the fashionable gentleman of the town is on the point of going to bed, the sportsman, always keen and on the alert, arrives, walks slowly and carefully along the roads I have just mentioned, looking cautiously right and left, and between the intervals of the vines on either side of him.

The rabbits hopping under the leaves, the covey of partridges bathing amidst the dew, the hares gravely discussing among themselves the respective merits of the heath and wild thyme, are thus surprised in their matutinal occupations, and become the prey of the delighted sportsman. But the moment approaches when the comparative calm and protection which the poor animals enjoy will cease—their days of fun and festival are numbered; their enemies up to this period have been few—the rich proprietors, the privileged, but now the masses are preparing, they are cleaning up their clumsy blunderbusses, and to-morrow "the million" will take the field and assail and pop at them from every road and pathway—for the mayor, after due consultation with the principal personages in the village, has sent his drummer, his Mercury, his crier, to beat a tattoo in all the public places, and crossways, and announce in front of the *cabarets* that the grapes being ripe the *vendange* is opened.

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The following day, when the last star in the heavens is disappearing, when the doors of morning are scarcely opened, every road is covered with long lines of waggons drawn by oxen, and a cavalcade of horses and mules, and great asses carrying panniers may be seen galloping along in all directions. Voices, shouts, squeaking wheels, and neighing horses are also heard on every side, and parties of *vendangeurs* and *vendangeuses*, arm in arm, with baskets on their backs, and grape knives in their belts, their broad-brimmed hats encircled with ribbons and flowers, are seen marching along, singing many a Bacchanalian chorus in honour of the occasion. They are on their way to the vineyards, and like so many fauns and Bacchantes, only well draped, are with joyous hearts ready to gather in the harvest of the ruby grape.

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In advance of this delighted and merry crowd, and always like the lark, the first on the wing, the sportsman is already at his post,—for the first day of the *vendange* is, as Navarre used to say, a day of powder, the *fête du fusil*. And now is formed a line of sometimes three hundred *vendangeurs* and *vendangeuses* who starting at the same moment, ascend the hill-side cutting the grapes, filling and emptying their baskets. The young men strike up some jovial song in praise of wine, the girls reply; and before this soul-stirring chorus, this burst of gay and animated feeling, the game, astounded at the concert, break and retire before them. Then is the moment for the sportsman, who, concealed in a large thicket and comfortably seated at the summit of the hill, listens and laughs in his sleeve as he hears the affrighted partridge call, and the timid hare rushing through the vines towards him; they approach, are within range of his gun, and ere long the shot-bag is emptied, and the sportsman is in that rare but agreeable dilemma of not knowing what to do with his game or his gun.

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In a wine country the *vendange* is certainly the most exciting and merriest season of the year—it is a succession of delightful *fêtes* in the open air, of repasts amongst the vines and under the shade of the peach-trees, riding-parties in the forest, whose echoes are awakened by the melancholy notes of the horn, water-parties on the lakes, dances in the field and round the wine-press, &c.

Every *château* is full to overflowing in Le Morvan during the month of August,—bands of Parisians, Picards, and Normans, acquaintances scarcely made, friends, friends'-friends, with their wives, children, dogs, nurses, and luggage arrive each hour and by every road. Every family is invaded, beds are doubled, plates are not to be found,—there is only one glass for two, one knife for three; the servants, stupified and astonished, know not how to reply or which way to turn themselves; the cooks, half-roasted and lost amidst an army of sauce-pans, know not what they are doing; they put mustard into the *méringues*, cruets of vinegar in the soup—every one is on the laugh, except however the heads of families, who rendered almost crazy by this tide of human beings always rising, by the bell of the *porte cochère* always ringing, pass on from one to the other the new arrivals, with a note as follows:

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"Mons. de G... presents his compliments to Mons. de V..., and has the honour to inform him that not possessing in his house one bed or one arm-chair that is not occupied, he has the pleasure of sending him two Normans and three Parisians."

P.S. "The two Normans are first-rate waltzers, the Parisians perfect singers." The reply will perhaps be couched in the following strain:

"Mons. de V... presents his compliments to Mons. de G..., and has the honour to inform him that being himself under the necessity of sleeping in his cellar, he cannot, though most anxious to oblige him, receive the two Norman dancers and the three Parisian warblers." Thus it sometimes happens that very charming, elegant, and sensitive gentlemen, who under ordinary circumstances would be very difficult to please, are obliged to sleep in a barn or loft, on a very nice bed of clean straw, with a dark lantern to light them there, and the luxury of a truss of hay for a pillow.

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The peasants, generally speaking, do not witness the arrival of these visitors with much pleasure,—the dandies more especially, who shod in varnished leather, always over-dressed, musked, and starched, attract, so they think, too much the attention of the young girls. Fathers, mothers, and, above all, lovers, are at once on the look out. They mistrust these fine gentlemen, whom they always designate by the appellation of "gilded serpents."

My friends from other departments often remarked the looks of aversion with which the

natives sometimes met them; and not comprehending the reason, have asked me for an explanation. Do you observe, I said, that little white house, half-hidden yonder in the poplars—there, on the banks of the Cure? That house, a few years ago, was the abiding-place of a happy and honest family,—a father, and his three daughters.

The father, who in his youth was in very good circumstances, was ruined by bad harvests, an epidemic disease in his cattle, and by other disasters that cause the downfall of many farmers. Nevertheless, and though his losses were great, he lived happy and even contented with his children, who, all three of irreproachable conduct and character, and excellent needlewomen, did their utmost to ameliorate his position. They made dresses for the ladies in the town, worked by the day, and sometimes, when they found their earnings during the summer months fall short of what they thought sufficient to meet the expenses of the coming winter, they hired themselves to some proprietor during the period of the *vendange*.

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The youngest of the three,—Herminie, she might be about sixteen,—was a charming girl, a true child of Nature, fresh as a wild flower, awaking and rising every day of the year from her peaceful happy couch with the birds of heaven, always smiling and singing. Herminie was the joy, the favourite of the old man,—she was the linnet, the darling, and the life of the house. One autumnal day, (the period at which, as I have before remarked, our province abounds with strangers,) her figure attracted the attention of one of those cursed beings, with a false heart and lying lips, that the great cities send into our rural districts, carrying with them desolation and mourning. I know not in what manner it occurred, what falsehoods, what arts he used, or what traps he laid,—but he succeeded too well in his base purpose. The poor girl was deceived. Easily convinced,—she was too pure, too young to doubt; and her mother, who would have been there to watch over her, was alas! sleeping in the very churchyard in which, in the shade of the evening, she first met her seducer. Enough,—the heartless man of the world obtained the love of the poor and simple Herminie,—and his whim, his heartless selfish whim gratified,—he disappeared.

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The fault, the fault of confiding woman, soon became public. Abandoned and betrayed, the poor girl sought death as a refuge in her distress, and threw herself into the river; but her father, who watched every action of his daughter, was near, and saved her. A man of unusual intelligence, and an excellent heart, his maledictions fell entirely upon the head of him who had wronged her; for his child he had only tears and consolation. Herminie became a mother; her sisters and friends were earnest and devoted in their attentions, and anticipated her every thought; but broken-hearted, she bent her head like some beautiful lily, which has at the parent root some corroding worm. Her gaiety fled, her songs ceased; pale and silent, she might be seen standing on some rock, listening to the howling of the storm, or, her little boy on her lap, seated for hours at her father's cottage door, picking some faded rose to pieces leaf by leaf, and looking vacantly on the fragments as they lay at her feet.

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But at the bottom of her cup of grief was still one more bitter drop,—oh! how much more bitter than the rest! Her child, as if inheriting the melancholy of its mother, ceased to prattle, to smile; it did not thrive, it sickened; and in spite of all her care and watchings, of whole nights passed in prayers to the Virgin, to her patron Saint, and God, in spite of many an hour of repentant and sorrowing tears,—it died! Bowed to the earth by this fresh, this overwhelming misfortune, Herminie complained not, but she became more pale: she was sometimes found plunged in silent but profound grief, looking towards heaven as if seeking there the little precious being the Almighty had taken from her; as if she was anxious to follow,—to be at rest, united with her baby boy again.

The *vendange* returned once more; but the perfumed gentleman, the villain from the capital, came not again. Herminie was desirous of assisting in the labours of the season. "I am," said she, "strong enough;" and though her sisters endeavoured to dissuade her, she persisted in accompanying them to the vineyard, but there she found her strength was unequal to the task, a smile to one, and a kind answer to another, was all that she could give,—nevertheless it was remarked, during the course of the day that she spoke several times out loud, as if conversing with some invisible being. Evening arrived, and the waggons carried off their ripe and luscious loads, leaving the young men and girls racing up and down the pathways, and amongst the vines, endeavouring to smear each other's faces with the purple fruit.

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Behind these laughing groups came Herminie, the expression of her dark blue eye floating in space, and, like the flight of the swallow, resting on nothing. Onward she slowly stepped, idly pushing before her the first faded leaves of autumn, withered by the hoar frost; and, instead of the intoxicating grape, she carried in her hand a *bouquet* of the arbutus and the *alize*, fruits without perfume, like her own heart, now without hope or love. Night came: every eye weary with toil was closed,—the chimes alone telling the hours of the night vibrated on the air. Towards morning a startling cry of horror was heard from a cottage on the banks of the Cure—Herminie was dead! that is to say, her face was paler than usual in her sleep; but she awoke no more! I shall ever remember that beautiful face, for I had never till then contemplated the countenance of one whose spirit had taken its way to that country from which no traveller returns.

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A few days, and the withered rose-leaves which the poor girl had pulled at the cottage door were scattered by the wind; a few more, and the poor old father followed his favourite child; and his surviving daughters, half-crazed with grief and sorrow, left the neighbourhood. As to him who

was the original cause of this domestic tragedy,—rich, happy, perhaps a deputy and making laws himself,—he lives, and is probably respected. We call ourselves a civilized people; we throw into prison a man who strikes another,—and we do not punish, we do not cast from society, we do not even reproach the base hypocrite, who, with a smile on his lips, and for the infamous gratification of his bad, ungovernable, selfish passions, becomes the murderer of a whole family. Bad and rotten are the laws which permit such infamous practices. Unworthy of trust are the legislators who dream not—who never think of preventing these impure and festering diseases of our social system. My friends, who had listened attentively to the sad tale, turned from me to inspect more closely the white cottage by the Cure, and no longer expressed any astonishment at the severe countenances of the peasants.

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But how does it happen, will the reader say, that so delightful a province of France as that of Le Morvan should have remained for nineteen centuries unknown to England,—that nation of travellers who are to be found in every corner of the globe inhabitable and uninhabitable? How is it that such a pearl,—a sporting country too,—should have remained buried for so long a period as it were under the dark mantle of indifference? And is it to be credited that in a district in which are to be found simultaneously wolves and health, wild boar and simplicity, the best wines in the world, and all the theological virtues, should have remained up to this day hidden—lost in the deep shadows of its woods and the solitude of its mountains?

In the first place, then, I must remind you that in order to reach Le Morvan it is not necessary to traverse either the Indian Archipelago or the Cordilleras, or black or ferocious populations. Those who have by accident passed through it, have not been induced by its appearance to inscribe its name in their note-books. But Le Morvan is close at hand; Le Morvan, so to speak, touches England,—a sufficient reason, as every one knows, for taking no interest in it.

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Every year caravans of tourists leave for Italy and the East; they go to gaze upon the remains of what was once the palace of the famous Zenobia, Queen of Palmyra, or to kill the lizards on the steps of the mouldering Coliseum; one invites the scorpions of Greece to bite his leg; another seeks the yellow fever in the Brazils; a third prefers being robbed in Calabria, or dying of thirst in the Deserts of Lybia;—the more distant and perilous the journey, the greater the pleasure of accomplishing it. Such is English taste.

Yet Le Morvan is a charming and picturesque country—a lovely region, clad with verdure, flowers, and forest-trees, and watered by fresh, sparkling, and silvery streams, which every one can reach without fatigue, much expense, and without the slightest chance of danger, but perhaps, as I have before said, its proximity is its misfortune.

Should any one after perusing this volume desire to visit Le Morvan, he should be aware that to do so with any degree of pleasure or profit it is absolutely necessary to speak French fluently,—for half our peasants are not in the least aware the earth is round, and that on it there are other nations besides their own. To see its thousand beauties, to fish its rivers and enter into its delightful, exciting and perilous sports, to plunge without hesitation into the depths of its forests, the traveller should also be accompanied by an experienced guide, and piloted by a friendly hand.

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Le Morvan, unknown to all to-day, would come forth quickly from the shell of obscurity in which it lies concealed, if some man of rank in England, led thither by hazard or caprice, were to spend a few weeks amidst its glades and vineyards, its mountains and its streams.

What was Cannes twenty years since? who ever mentioned it in England, who knew its beauties? Nobody. Lord Brougham passes there, stops, selects a hill, crowns its top with a white *château*, scatters the gold from his purse, and sheds over the little town the lustre of the renown won by his versatile genius—Cannes immediately becomes the vogue—Cannes is charming, magnificent! Cannes, certainly, with her fields of jasmine and roses, her groves of orange-trees, her burning sun, blue skies and sea, and her warm pine-woods, is a delightful spot;—but Cannes is also a place of languor and sloth, a lavender-water country. If you have the gout, if you are old and rich, if you have delicate lungs, go to Cannes, your life will be agreeable but enervating.

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But Le Morvan is certainly not a country for a *petit-mâitre* or a delicate lady to live in; to enjoy yourself there you must have the fire and energy of youth in your veins, a stout heart, the lungs of a mountaineer, and a sinewy frame. You must love a forester's life, the hound and the rifle; you must be a Gordon Cumming in a small way. To the English invalid, I would recommend the ex-Chancellor's retreat; but to him who in the full sense of the term is a sporting man, or a lover of nature, I would say: Go—explore Le Morvan!

LIFE OF BEAU BRUMMELL.

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