

# ABOUT EDMOND

THE MAN WITH  
THE BROKEN  
EAR

**Edmond About**  
**The Man With The Broken Ear**

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*The Man With The Broken Ear:*

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# Edmond About The Man With The Broken Ear

## DEDICATION OF THE FIRST EDITION.<sup>1</sup>

Dear Leypoldt:

You have not forgotten that nearly two years ago, before our business connection was thought of, this identical translation was 'respectfully declined' by you with that same courtesy, the exercise of which in frequent similar cases, each one of us now tries so hard to shove on the other's shoulders. I hope that your surprise on reading this note of dedication will not interfere with your forgiving the pertinacity with which, through it, I still strive to make the book *yours*.

*H. H.*

451 Broome Street, May 16, 1867.

The Translator has placed a few explanatory Notes at the end of the volume. They are referred to by numbers in the text.

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<sup>1</sup> Published by Leypoldt & Holt.

# CHAPTER I.

## WHEREIN THEY KILL THE FATTED CALF TO CELEBRATE THE RETURN OF A FRUGAL SON

On the 18th of May, 1859, M. Renault, formerly professor of physics and chemistry, now a landed proprietor at Fontainebleau, and member of the Municipal Council of that charming little city, himself carried to the post-office the following letter:—

*"To Monsieur Leon Renault, Civil Engineer, Berlin, Prussia.*

(To be kept at the Post-Office till called for.)

"My dear child:

"The good news you sent us from St. Petersburg caused us the greatest joy. Your poor mother had been ailing since winter, but I had not spoken to you about it from fear of making you uneasy while so far from home. As for myself, I had not been very well; and there was yet a third person (guess the name if you can!) who was languishing from not seeing you. But content yourself, my dear Leon: we have been recuperating more and more since the time of your return is almost fixed. We begin to believe that the mines of the Ural will not swallow up that which is dearer to us than all the world. Thank God! that fortune which you have so honorably and so quickly made will not have

cost your life, nor even your health, since you tell us you have been growing fat off there in the desert. If you have not finished up all your business out there, so much the worse for you: there are three of us who have sworn that you shall never go back again. You will not find it hard to accede, for you will be happy among us. Such, at least, is the opinion of Clementine.... I forget that I was pledged not to name her. Master Bonnivet, our excellent neighbor, has not rested content with investing your funds in a good mortgage, but has also drawn up, in his leisure moments, a most edifying little indenture, which now lacks nothing but your signature. Our worthy mayor has ordered, on your account, a new official scarf, which is on the way from Paris. You will have the first benefit of it. Your apartment (which will soon belong to a plural 'you') is elegant, in proportion to your present fortune. You are to occupy....; but the house has changed so in three years, that my description would be incomprehensible to you. M. Audret, the architect of the imperial chateau, directed the work. He actually wanted to construct me a laboratory worthy of Thénard or Duprez. I earnestly protested against it, and said that I was not yet worthy of one, as my celebrated work on the Condensation of Gases had only reached the fourth chapter. But as your mother was in collusion with the old scamp of a friend, it has turned out that science has henceforth a temple in our house—a regular sorcerer's den, according to the picturesque expression of your old Gothon: it lacks nothing, not even a four-horse-power steam engine. Alas! what can I do with it? I am confident, nevertheless, that the expenditure will

not be altogether lost to the world. You are not going to sleep upon your laurels. Oh, if I had only had your fortune when I had your youth! I would have dedicated my days to pure science, instead of losing the best part of them among those poor young men who got nothing from my lectures but an opportunity to read Paul de Kock. I would have been ambitious!—I would have striven to connect my name with the discovery of some great general law, or at least with the invention of some very useful apparatus. It is too late now; my eyes are worn out, and the brain itself refuses to work. Take your turn, my boy! You are not yet twenty-six, the Ural mines have given you the wherewithal to live at ease, and, for yourself alone, you have no further wants to satisfy; the time has come to work for humanity. That you will do so, is the strongest wish and dearest hope of your doting old father, who loves you and who waits for you with open arms.

*"J. Renault.*

"P. S. According to my calculations, this letter ought to reach Berlin two or three days before you. You have been already informed by the papers of the 7th inst. of the death of the illustrious Humboldt. It is a cause of mourning to science and to humanity. I have had the honor of writing to that great man several times in my life, and he once deigned to reply, in a letter which I piously cherish. If you happen to have an opportunity to buy some personal souvenir of him, a bit of his handwriting or some fragment of his collections, you will bring me a real pleasure."

A month after the departure of this letter, the son so eagerly

looked for returned to the paternal mansion. M. and Mme. Renault, who went to meet him at the depot, found him taller, stouter, and better-looking in every way. In fact, he was no longer merely a remarkable boy, but a man of good and pleasing proportions. Leon Renault was of medium height, light hair and complexion, plump and well made. His large blue eyes, sweet voice, and silken beard indicated a nature sensitive rather than powerful. A very white, round, and almost feminine neck contrasted singularly with a face bronzed by exposure. His teeth were beautiful, very delicate, a little inclined backward, and very evenly shaped. When he pulled off his gloves, he displayed two small and rather pudgy hands, quite firm and yet pleasantly soft, neither hot nor cold, nor dry nor damp, but agreeable to the touch and cared-for to perfection.

As he was, his father and mother would not have exchanged him for the Apollo Belvedere. They embraced him rapturously, overwhelming him with a thousand questions, most of which he, of course, failed to answer. Some old friends of the family, a doctor, an architect, and a notary, had run to the depot with the good old people; each one of them in turn gave him a hug, and asked him if he was well, and if he had had a pleasant journey. He listened patiently and even joyfully to this common-place music whose words did not signify much, but whose melody went to the heart because it came from the heart.

They had been there a good quarter of an hour, the train had gone puffing on its way, the omnibuses of the various hotels had



started one after another at a good trot up the street leading to the city, and the June sun seemed to enjoy lighting up this happy group of excellent people. But Madame Renault cried out all at once that the poor child must be dying of hunger, and that it was barbarous to keep him waiting for his dinner any longer. There was no use in his protesting that he had breakfasted at Paris, and that the voice of hunger appealed to him less strongly than that of joy. They all got into two carriages, the son beside his mother, the father opposite, as if he could not keep his eyes off his boy. A wagon came behind with the trunks, long boxes, chests, and the rest of the traveller's baggage. At the entrance of the town, the hackmen cracked their whips, the baggage-men followed the example, and this cheerful clatter drew the people to their doors and woke up for an instant the quietude of the streets. Madame Renault threw her glances right and left, searching out the spectators of her triumph, and saluting with most cordial affability people she hardly knew at all. And more than one mother saluted her, too, without knowing her; for there is no mother indifferent to such kinds of happiness, and, moreover, Leon's family was liked by everybody. And the neighbors, meeting each other, said with a satisfaction free from jealousy:

"That is Renault's son, who has been at work three years in the Russian mines, and now has come to share his fortune with his old parents."

Leon also noticed several familiar faces, but not all that he

wished to see. For he bent over an instant to his mother's ear, saying: "And Clementine?" This word was pronounced so low and so close that M. Renault himself could not tell whether it was a word or a kiss. The good lady smiled tenderly, and answered but a single word: "Patience!" As if patience were a virtue very common among lovers!

The door of the house was wide open, and old Gothon was standing on the threshold. She raised her arms toward heaven and cried like a booby, for she had known Leon since he was not much higher than her wash-tub. There was now another formidable hugging on the upper step, between the good old servant and her young master. After a reasonable interval, the friends of M. Renault prepared to leave, but it was wasted pains; for they were assured that their places at table had already been prepared. And when all save the invisible Clementine were reassembled in the parlor, the great round-backed chairs held out their arms to the scion of the house of Renault; the old mirror on the mantle delighted to reflect his image; the great chandelier chimed a little song of welcome with its crystal pendants, and the mandarins on the *etagère* shook their heads in sign of welcome, as if they were orthodox *penates* instead of strangers and pagans. No one can tell why kisses and tears began to rain down again, but it certainly did seem as if he had once more just returned.

"Soup!" cried Gothon.

Madame Renault took the arm of her son, contrary to all the laws of etiquette, and without even apologizing to the honored

guests present. She scarcely excused herself, even, for helping the son before the company. Leon let her have her own way, and took it all smilingly: there was not a guest there who was not ready to upset his soup over his waistcoat rather than taste it before Leon.

"Mother!" cried Leon, spoon in hand, "this is the first time for three years that I've tasted good soup." Madame Renault felt herself blush with satisfaction, and Gothon was so overcome that she dropped a plate. Both fancied that possibly he had spoken to please their self-conceit; but nevertheless he spoke truly. There are two things in this world which a man does not often find away from home: the first is good soup; the second is disinterested love.

If I should attempt here an accurate enumeration of all the dishes that appeared on the table, there would not be one of my readers whose mouth would not water. I believe, indeed, that more than one delicate lady would be in danger of an attack of indigestion. Suppose, if you please, that such a list would reach nearly to the end of the volume, leaving me but a single page on which to write the marvellous history of Fougas. Therefore I forthwith return to the parlor, where coffee is already served.

Leon took scarcely half of his cup: but do not let that lead you to infer that the coffee was too hot, or too cold, or too sweet. Nothing in the world would have prevented his drinking it to the last drop, if a knock at the street-door had not stopped it just opposite his heart.

The minute which followed appeared to him interminable.

Never in his travels had he encountered such a long minute. But at length Clementine appeared, preceded by the worthy Mlle. Virginie Sambucco, her aunt; and the mandarins who smiled on the etagère heard the sound of three kisses. Wherefore three? The superficial reader, who pretends to foresee things before they are written, has already found a very probable explanation. "Of course," says he, "Leon was too respectful to embrace the dignified Mlle. Sambucco more than once, but when he came to Clementine, who was soon to become his wife, he very properly doubled the dose." Now sir, that is what I call a premature judgment! The first kiss fell from the mouth of Leon upon the cheek of Mlle. Sambucco; the second was applied by the lips of Mlle. Sambucco to the right cheek of Leon; the third was, in fact, an accident that plunged two young hearts into profound consternation.

Leon, who was very much in love with his betrothed, rushed to her blindly, uncertain whether he would kiss her right cheek or her left, but determined not to put off too long a pleasure which he had been promising himself ever since the spring of 1856. Clementine did not dream of defending herself, but was fully prepared to apply her pretty rosy lips to Leon's right cheek or his left, indifferently. The precipitation of the two young people brought it about that neither Clementine's cheeks nor Leon's received the offering intended for them. And the mandarins on the etagère, who fully expected to hear two kisses, heard but one. And Leon was confounded, and Clementine blushed up to her

ears, and the two lovers retreated a step, intently regarding the roses of the carpet which will remain eternally graven upon their memories.

In the eyes of Leon Renault, Clementine was the most beautiful creature in the world. He had loved her for little more than three years, and it was somewhat on her account that he had taken the journey to Russia. In 1856 she was too young to marry, and too rich for an engineer with a salary of 2,400 francs to properly make pretensions to her hand. Leon, who was a good mathematician, proposed to himself the following problem: "Given—one young girl, fifteen and a half years old, with an income of 8,000 francs, and threatened with the inheritance from Mlle. Sambucco of, say 200,000 more:—to obtain a fortune at least equal to hers within such a period as will give her time enough to grow up, without leaving her time enough to become an old maid." He had found the solution in the Ural mines.

During three long years, he had indirectly corresponded with the beloved of his heart. All the letters which he wrote to his father or mother, passed into the hands of Mlle. Sambucco, who did not keep them from Clementine. Sometimes, indeed, they were read aloud in the family, and M. Renault was never obliged to omit a phrase, for Leon never wrote anything which a young girl should not hear. The aunt and the niece had no other distractions; they lived retired in a little house at the end of a pretty garden, and received no one but old friends. Clementine, therefore, deserved but little credit for keeping her heart for

Leon. With the exception of a big colonel of cuirassiers, who sometimes followed her in her walks, no man had ever made any demonstrations toward her.

She was very pretty withal, and not so merely to the eyes of her lover, or of the Renault family, or of the little city where she lived. Provincial towns are apt to be easily satisfied. They give the reputation of being a pretty woman or a great man, cheaply; especially when they are not rich enough in such commodities to show themselves over particular. In capitals, however, people claim to admire nothing but absolute merit. I have heard the mayor of a village say, with a certain pride: "Admit now, that my servant Catherine is right pretty, for a village of six hundred people!" Clementine was pretty enough to be admired in a city of eight hundred thousand. Fancy to yourself a little blonde creole, with black eyes, creamy complexion and dazzling teeth. Her figure was round and supple as a twig, and was finished off with dainty hands and pretty Andalusian feet, arched and beautifully rounded. All her glances were smiles, and all her movements caresses. Add to this, that she was neither a fool nor a prude, nor even an ignoramus like girls brought up in convents. Her education, which was begun by her mother, had been completed by two or three respectable old professors selected by M. Renault, who was her guardian. She had a sound heart, and a quick mind. But I may reasonably ask myself why I have so much to say about her, for she is still living; and, thank God! not one of her perfections has departed

## CHAPTER II.

# UNPACKING BY CANDLE-LIGHT

About ten o'clock in the evening, Mlle. Virginie Sambucco said it was time to think of going home: the ladies lived with monastic regularity. Leon protested; but Clementine obeyed, though not without pouting a little. Already the parlor door was open, and the old lady had taken her hood in the hall, when the engineer, suddenly struck with an idea, exclaimed:

"You surely won't go without helping me to open my trunks! I demand it of you as a favor, my good Mademoiselle Sambucco!"

The respectable lady paused: custom urged her to go; kindness inclined her to stay; an atom of curiosity swayed the balance.

"I'm so glad!" cried Clementine, replacing her aunt's hood on the rack.

Mme. Renault did not yet know where they had put Leon's baggage. Gothon came to say that everything had been thrown pell-mell into the sorcerer's den, to remain there until Monsieur should point out what he wanted taken to his own room. The whole company, armed with lamps and candles, betook themselves to a vast room on the ground floor, where furnaces, retorts, philosophical instruments, boxes, trunks, clothes bags, hat boxes and the famous steam-engine, formed a confused and entertaining spectacle. The light played about this interior, as it

appears to in certain pictures of the Dutch school. It glanced upon the great yellow cylinders of the electric machine, struck upon the long glass bottles, rebounded from two silver reflectors, and rested, in passing, upon a magnificent Fortin barometer. The Renaults and their friends, grouped in the midst of the boxes—some sitting, some standing, one holding a lamp, another a candle—detracted nothing from the picturesqueness of the scene.

Leon, with a bunch of little keys, opened the boxes one after another. Clementine was seated opposite him on a great oblong box, and watched him with all her eyes, more from affection than curiosity. They began by setting to one side two enormous square boxes which contained nothing but mineralogical specimens. After this they passed in review the riches of all kinds which the engineer had crowded among his linen and clothing.

A pleasant odor of Russia leather, tea from the caravans, Levant tobacco, and attar of roses soon permeated the laboratory. Leon brought forth a little at a time, as is the custom of all rich travellers who, on leaving home, left a family and good stock of friends behind. He exhibited, in turn, fabrics of the Asiatic looms, narghiles of embossed silver from Persia, boxes of tea, sherbets flavored with rose, precious extracts, golden webs from Tarjok, antique armor, a service of frosted silver of Toula make, jewelry mounted in the Russian style, Caucasian bracelets, necklaces of milky amber, and a leather sack full of turquoises such as they sell at the fair of Nijni Novgorod. Each object passed from hand to hand amid questions, explanations,



and interjections of all kinds. All the friends present received the gifts intended for them. There was a concert of polite refusals, friendly urgings, and 'thank-yous' in all sorts of voices. It is unnecessary to say that much the greater share fell to the lot of Clementine; but she did not wait to be urged to accept them, for, in the existing state of affairs, all these pretty things would be but as a part of the wedding gifts—not going out of the family.

Leon had brought his father an exceedingly handsome dressing gown of a cloth embroidered with gold, some antiquarian books found in Moscow, a pretty picture by Greuze, which had been stuck out of the way, by the luckiest of accidents, in a mean shop at Gastinitvor; two magnificent specimens of rock-crystal, and a cane that had belonged to Humboldt. "You see," said he to M. Renault, on handing him this historic staff, "that the postscript of your last letter did not fall overboard." The old professor received the present with visible emotion.

"I will never use it," said he to his son. "The Napoleon of science has held it in his hand: what would one think if an old sergeant like me should permit himself to carry it in his walks in the woods? And the collections? Were you not able to buy anything from them? Did they sell very high?"

"They were not sold," answered Leon. "All were placed in the National Museum at Berlin. But in my eagerness to satisfy you, I made a thief of myself in a strange way. The very day of my arrival, I told your wish to a guide who was showing me the place. He told me that a friend of his, a little Jew broker by the name of

Ritter, wanted to sell a very fine anatomical specimen that had belonged to the estate. I ran to the Jew's, examined the mummy, for such it was, and, without any haggling, paid the price he asked. But the next day, a friend of Humboldt, Professor Hirtz, told me the history of this shred of a man, which had been lying around the shop for more than ten years, and never belonged to Humboldt at all. Where the deuce has Gothon stowed it? Ah! Mlle. Clementine is sitting on it."

Clementine attempted to rise, but Leon made her keep seated. "We have plenty of time," said he, "to take a look at the old baggage; meanwhile you can well imagine that it is not a very cheerful sight. This is the history that good old Hirtz told me; he promised to send me, in addition, a copy of a very curious memoir on the same subject. Don't go yet, my dear Mademoiselle Sambucco; I have a little military and scientific romance for you. We will look at the mummy as soon as I have acquainted you with his misfortunes."

"Aha!" cried M. Audret, the architect of the chateau, "it's the romance of the mummy, is it, that you're going to tell us? Too late my poor Leon! Theophile Gautier has gotten ahead of you, in the supplement to the *Moniteur*, and all the world knows your Egyptian history."

"My history," said Leon, "is no more Egyptian than Manon Lescault. Our excellent doctor Martout, here, ought to know the name of professor John Meiser, of Dantzic; he lived at the beginning of this century, and I think that his last work appeared

in 1824 or 1825."

"In 1823," replied M. Martout. "Meiser is one of the scientific men who have done Germany most honor. In the midst of terrible wars which drenched his country in blood, he followed up the researches of Leeuwenkoeck, Baker, Needham, Fontana, and Spallanzani, on the revivification of animals. Our profession honors in him, one of the fathers of modern biology."

"Heavens! What ugly big words!" cried Mlle. Sambucco. "Is it decent to keep people till this time of night, to make them listen to Dutch."

"Don't listen to the big words, dear little aunty. Save yourself for the romance, since there is one."

"A terrible one!" said Leon. "Mlle. Clementine is seated over a human victim, sacrificed to science by professor Meiser."

Clementine instantly got up. Her fiancé handed her a chair, and seated himself in the place she had just left. The listeners, fearing that Leon's romance might be in several volumes, took their places around him, some on boxes, some on chairs.

# **CHAPTER III.**

## **THE CRIME OF THE LEARNED PROFESSOR MEISER**

"Ladies," said Leon, "Professor Meiser was no vulgar malefactor, but a man devoted to science and humanity. If he killed the French colonel who at this moment reposes beneath my coat tails, it was for the sake of saving his life, as well as of throwing light on a question of the deepest interest, even to each one of you.

"The duration of our existence is very much too brief. That is a fact which no man can contradict. We know that in a hundred years, not one of the nine or ten persons assembled in this house will be living on the face of the earth. Is not this a deplorable fact?"

Mlle. Sambucco heaved a heavy sigh, and Leon continued:

"Alas! Mademoiselle, like you I have sighed many a time at the contemplation of this dire necessity. You have a niece, the most beautiful and the most adorable of all nieces, and the sight of her charming face gladdens your heart. But you yearn for something more; you will not be satisfied until you have seen your little grand nephews trotting around. You will see them I earnestly believe. But will you see their children? It is doubtful. Their grandchildren? Impossible! In regard to the

tenth, twentieth, thirtieth generation, it is useless even to dream.

"One *will* dream of it, nevertheless, and perhaps there is no man who has not said to himself at least once in his life: 'If I could but come to life again in a couple of centuries!' One would wish to return to earth to seek news of his family; another, of his dynasty. A philosopher is anxious to know if the ideas that he has planted will have borne fruit; a politician, if his party will have obtained the upper hand; a miser, if his heirs will not have dissipated the fortune he has made; a mere land-holder, if the trees in his garden will have grown tall. No one is indifferent to the future destinies of this world, which we gallop through in a few years, never to return to it again. Who has not envied the lot of Epimenides, who went to sleep in a cave, and, on reopening his eyes, perceived that the world had grown old? Who has not dreamed, on his own account, of the marvellous adventure of the sleeping Beauty in the wood?

"Well, ladies, Professor Meiser, one of the least visionary men of the age, was persuaded that science could put a living being to sleep and wake him up again at the end of an infinite number of years—arrest all the functions of the system, suspend life itself, protect an individual against the action of time for a century or two, and afterwards resuscitate him."

"He was a fool then!" cried Madame Renault.

"I wouldn't swear it. But he had his own ideas touching the main-spring which moves a living organism. Do you remember, good mother mine, the impression you experienced as a little

girl, when some one first showed you the inside of a watch in motion? You were satisfied that there was a restless little animal inside the case, who worked twenty-four hours a day at turning the hands. If the hands stopped going, you said: 'It is because the little animal is dead.' Yet possibly he was only asleep.

"It has since been explained to you that a watch contains an assemblage of parts well fitted to each other and kept well oiled, which, being wound, can be considered to move spontaneously in a perfect correspondence. If a spring become broken, if a bit of the wheel work be injured, or if a grain of sand insinuate itself between two of the parts, the watch stops, and the children say rightly: 'The little animal is dead.' But suppose a sound watch, well made, right in every particular, and stopped because the machinery would not run from lack of oil; the little animal is not dead; nothing but a little oil is needed to wake him up.

"Here is a first-rate chronometer, made in London. It runs fifteen days without being wound. I gave it a turn of the key yesterday: it has, then, thirteen days to run. If I throw it on the ground, or if I break the main-spring, all is over. I will have killed the little animal. But suppose that, without damaging anything, I find means to withdraw or dry up the fine oil which now enables the parts to slip upon one another: will the little animal be dead? No! It will be asleep. And the proof is that I can lay my watch in a drawer, keep it there twenty-five years, and if, after a quarter of a century, I put a drop of oil on it, the parts will begin to move again. All that time would have passed without waking up the

little sleeping animal. It will still have thirteen days to go, after the time when it starts again.

"All living beings, according to the opinion of Professor Meiser, are watches, or organisms which move, breathe, nourish themselves, and reproduce themselves as long as their organs are intact and properly oiled. The oil of the watch is represented in the animal by an enormous quantity of water. In man, for example, water provides about four-fifths of the whole weight. Given—a colonel weighing a hundred and fifty pounds, there are thirty pounds of colonel and a hundred and twenty pounds, or about sixty quarts, of water. This is a fact proven by numerous experiments. I say a colonel just as I would say a king; all men are equal when submitted to analysis.

"Professor Meiser was satisfied, as are all physiologists, that to break a colonel's head, or to make a hole in his heart, or to cut his spinal column in two, is to kill the little animal; because the brain, the heart, the spinal marrow are the indispensable springs, without which the machine cannot go. But he thought too, that in removing sixty quarts of water from a living person, one merely puts the little animal to sleep without killing him—that a colonel carefully dried up, can remain preserved a hundred years, and then return to life whenever any one will replace in him the drop of oil, or rather the sixty quarts of water, without which the human machine cannot begin moving again.

"This opinion, which may appear inadmissible to you and to me too, but which is not absolutely rejected by our friend Doctor

Martout, rests upon a series of reliable observations which the merest tyro can verify to-day. There *are* animals which can be resuscitated: nothing is more certain or better proven. Herr Meiser, like the Abbé Spallanzani and many others, collected from the gutter of his roof some little dried worms which were brittle as glass, and restored life to them by soaking them in water. The capacity of thus returning to life, is not the privilege of a single species: its existence has been satisfactorily established in numerous and various animals. The genus *Volvox*—the little worms or wormlets in vinegar, mud, spoiled paste, or grain-smut; the *Rotifera*—a kind of little shell-fish protected by a carapace, provided with a good digestive apparatus, of separate sexes, having a nervous system with a distinct brain, having either one or two eyes, according to the genus, a crystalline lens, and an optic nerve; the *Tardigrades*—which are little spiders with six or eight legs, separate sexes, regular digestive apparatus, a mouth, two eyes, a very well defined nervous system, and a very well developed muscular system;—all these die and revive ten or fifteen times consecutively, at the will of the naturalist. One dries up a rotifer: good night to him; somebody soaks him a little, and he wakes up to bid you good day. All depends upon taking great care while he is dry. You understand that if any one should merely break his head, no drop of water, nor river, nor ocean could restore him.

"The marvellous thing is, that an animal which cannot live more than a year, like the minute worm in grain-smut, can lie by



twenty-four years without dying, if one has taken the precaution of desiccating him.

"Needham collected a lot of them in 1743; he presented them to Martin Folkes, who gave them to Baker, and these interesting creatures revived in water in 1771. They enjoyed a rare satisfaction in elbowing their own twenty-eighth generation. Wouldn't a man who should see his own twenty-eighth generation be a happy grandfather?

"Another no less interesting fact is that desiccated animals have vastly more tenacity of life than others. If the temperature were suddenly to fall thirty degrees in this laboratory, we should all get inflammation of the lungs. If it were to rise as much, there would be danger of congestion of the brain. Well, a desiccated animal, which is not absolutely dead, and which will revive to-morrow if I soak it, faces with impunity, variations of ninety-five degrees and six-tenths. M. Meiser and plenty of others have proved it.

"It remains to inquire, then, if a superior animal, a man for instance, can be desiccated without any more disastrous consequences than a little worm or a tardigrade. M. Meiser was convinced that it is practicable; he wrote to that effect in all his books, although he did not demonstrate it by experiment.

"Now where would be the harm in it, ladies? All men curious in regard to the future, or dissatisfied with life, or out of sorts with their contemporaries, could hold themselves in reserve for a better age, and we should have no more suicides on account

of misanthropy. Valetudinarians, whom the ignorant science of the nineteenth century declares incurable, needn't blow their brains out any more; they can have themselves dried up and wait peaceably in a box until Medicine shall have found a remedy for their disorders. Rejected lovers need no longer throw themselves into the river; they can put themselves under the receiver of an air pump, and make their appearance thirty years later, young, handsome and triumphant, satirizing the age of their cruel charmers, and paying them back scorn for scorn. Governments will give up the unnatural and barbarous custom of guillotining dangerous people. They will no longer shut them up in cramped cells at Mazas to complete their brutishness; they will not send them to the Toulon school to finish their criminal education; they will merely dry them up in batches—one for ten years, another for forty, according to the gravity of their deserts. A simple store-house will replace the prisons, police lock-ups and jails. There will be no more escapes to fear, no more prisoners to feed. An enormous quantity of dried beans and mouldy potatoes will be saved for the consumption of the country.

"You have, ladies, a feeble delineation of the benefits which Doctor Meiser hoped to pour upon Europe by introducing the desiccation of man. He made his great experiment in 1813 on a French colonel—a prisoner, I have been told, and condemned as a spy by court-martial. Unhappily he did not succeed; for I bought the colonel and his box for the price of an ordinary cavalry horse, in the dirtiest shop in Berlin."

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE VICTIM

"My dear Leon," said M. Renault, "you remind me of a college commencement. We have listened to your dissertation just as they listen to the Latin discourse of the professor of rhetoric; there are always in the audience a majority which learns nothing from it, and a minority which understands nothing of it. But every body listens patiently, on account of the sensations which are to come by and by. M. Martout and I are acquainted with Meiser's works, and those of his distinguished pupil, M. Pouchet; you have, then, said too much that is in them, if you intended to speak for our benefit; and you have not said enough that is in them for these ladies and gentlemen who know nothing of the existing discussions regarding the vital and organic principles.

"Is life a principle of action which animates the organs and puts them into play? Is it not, on the contrary, merely the result of organization—the play of various functions of organized matter? This is a problem of the highest importance, which would interest the ladies themselves, if one were to place it plainly before them. It would be sufficient to say: 'We inquire whether there is a vital principle—the source of all functions of the body, or if life be not merely the result of the regular play of the organs? The vital principle, in the eyes of Meiser and his disciple, does not exist;

if it really existed, they say, one could not understand how it can leave a man and a tardigrade when they are desiccated, and return to them again when they are soaked.' Now, if there be no vital principle, all the metaphysical and moral theories which have been hypothecated on its existence, must be reconstructed. These ladies have listened to you patiently, it is but justice to them to admit; but all that they have been able to gather from your slightly Latinish discourse, is that you have given them a dissertation instead of the romance you promised. But we all forgive you for the sake of the mummy you are going to show us. Open the colonel's box."

"We've well earned the sight!" cried Clementine, laughing.

"But suppose you were to get frightened?"

"I'd have you know, sir, that I'm not afraid of anybody, not even of live colonels!"

Leon took his bunch of keys and opened the long oak box on which he had been seated. The lid being raised, they saw a great leaden casket which enclosed a magnificent walnut box carefully polished on the outside, and lined on the inside with white silk, and padded. The others brought their lamps and candles near, and the colonel of the 23d of the line appeared as if he were in a chapel illuminated for his lying in state.

One would have said that the man was asleep. The perfect preservation of the body attested the paternal care of the murderer. It was truly a remarkable preparation, and would have borne comparison with the finest European mummies described

by Vicq d'Azyr in 1779, and by the younger Puymaurin in 1787.

The part best preserved, as is always the case, was the face. All the features had maintained a proud and manly expression. If any old friend of the colonel had been present at the opening of the third box, he would have recognized him at first sight.

Undoubtedly the point of the nose was a little sharper, the nostrils less expanded and thinner, and the bridge a little more marked than in the year 1813. The eyelids were thinned, the lips pinched, the corners of the mouth drawn down, the cheek bones too prominent, and the neck visibly shrunken, which exaggerated the prominence of the chin and larynx. But the eyelids were closed without contraction, and the sockets much less hollow than one could have expected; the mouth was not at all distorted like the mouth of a corpse; the skin was slightly wrinkled but had not changed color; it had only become a little more transparent, showing, after a fashion, the color of the tendons, the fat and the muscles, wherever it rested directly upon them. It also had a rosy tint which is not ordinarily seen in embalmed corpses. Doctor Martout explained this anomaly by saying that if the colonel had actually been dried alive, the globules of the blood were not decomposed, but simply collected in the capillary vessels of the skin and subjacent tissues where they still preserved their proper color, and could be seen more easily than otherwise, on account of the semi-transparency of the skin.

The uniform had become much too large, as may be readily understood; though it did not seem, at a casual glance, that

the members had become deformed. The hands were dry and angular, but the nails, although a little bent inward toward the root, had preserved all their freshness. The only very noticeable change was the excessive depression of the abdominal walls, which seemed crowded downward toward the posterior side; at the right, a slight elevation indicated the place of the liver. A tap of the finger on the various parts of the body, produced a sound like that from dry leather. While Leon was pointing out these details to his audience and doing the honors of his mummy he awkwardly broke off the lower part of the right ear, and a little piece of the Colonel remained in his hand.

This trifling accident might have passed unnoticed, had not Clementine, who followed with visible emotion all the movements of her lover, dropped her candle and uttered a cry of affright. All gathered around her. Leon took her in his arms and carried her to a chair. M. Renault ran after salts. She was as pale as death, and seemed on the point of fainting.

She soon recovered, however, and reassured them all by a charming smile.

"Pardon me," she said, "for such a ridiculous exhibition of terror; but what Monsieur Leon was saying to us ... and then ... that figure which seemed sleeping ... it appeared to me that the poor man was going to open his mouth and cry out when he was injured."

Leon hastened to close the walnut box, while M. Martout picked up the piece of ear and put it in his pocket. But

Clementine, while continuing to smile and make apologies, was overcome by a fresh accession of emotion and melted into tears. The engineer threw himself at her feet, poured forth excuses and tender phrases, and did all he could to console her inexplicable grief. Clementine dried her eyes, looked prettier than ever, and sighed fit to break her heart, without knowing why.

"Beast that I am!" muttered Leon, tearing his hair. "On the day when I see her again after three years' absence, I can think of nothing more soul-inspiring than showing her mummies!" He launched a kick at the triple coffin of the Colonel, saying: "I wish the devil had the confounded Colonel!"

"No!" cried Clementine with redoubled energy and emotion. "Do not curse him, Monsieur Leon! He has suffered so much! Ah! poor, poor unfortunate man!"

Mlle. Sambucco felt a little ashamed. She made excuses for her niece, and declared that never, since her tenderest childhood, had she manifested such extreme sensitiveness. M. and Mme. Renault, who had seen her grow up; Doctor Martout who had held the sinecure of physician to her; the architect, the notary, in a word, everybody present was plunged into a state of absolute stupefaction. Clementine was no sensitive plant. She was not even a romantic school girl. Her youth had not been nourished by Anne Radcliffe, she did not trouble herself about ghosts, and she would go through the house very tranquilly at ten o'clock at night without a candle. When her mother died, some months before Leon's departure, she did not wish to have any one share with

her the sad satisfaction of watching and praying in the death-chamber.

"This will teach us," said the aunt, "how to stay up after ten o'clock. What! It is midnight, all to quarter of an hour! Come, my child; you will get better fast enough after you get to bed."

Clementine arose submissively, but at the moment of leaving the laboratory she retraced her steps, and with a caprice more inexplicable than her grief, she absolutely wished to see the mummy of the colonel again. Her aunt scolded in vain; in spite of the remarks of Mlle. Sambucco and all the persons present, she reopened the walnut box, knelt down beside the mummy and kissed it on the forehead.

"Poor man!" said she, rising, "How cold he is! Monsieur Leon, promise me that if he is dead you will have him laid in consecrated ground!"

"As you please, Mademoiselle. I had intended to send him to the anthropological museum, with my father's permission; but you know that we can refuse you nothing."

They did not separate as gaily, by a good deal, as they had met. M. Renault and his son escorted Mlle. Sambucco and her niece to their door, and met the big colonel of cuirassiers who had been honoring Clementine with his attentions. The young girl tenderly pressed the arm of her betrothed and said: "Here is a man who never sees me without sighing. And what sighs! Gracious Heavens! It wouldn't take more than two to fill the sails of a ship. The race of colonels has vastly degenerated since



1813. One doesn't see any more such fine looking ones as our unfortunate friend."

Leon agreed with all she said. But he did not exactly see how he had become the friend of a mummy for which he had just paid twenty-five louis. To divert the conversation, he said to Clementine: "I have not yet shown you all the nice things I brought. His majesty, the Emperor of all the Russias, made me a present of a little enamelled gold star hanging at the end of a ribbon. Do you like button-hole ribbons?"

"Oh, yes!" answered she, "the red ribbon of the Legion of Honor. Did you notice? The poor colonel still has a shred of one on his uniform, but the cross is there no longer. Those wicked Germans tore it away from him when they took him prisoner!"

"It's very possible," said Leon.

When they reached Mlle. Sambucco's house, it was time to separate. Clementine offered her hand to Leon, who would have been better pleased with her cheek.

Father and son returned home arm in arm, with slow steps, giving themselves up to endless conjectures regarding the whimsical emotions of Clementine.

Mme. Renault was waiting to put her son to bed; a time-honored and touching habit which mothers do not early lose. She showed him the handsome apartment above the parlor and M. Renault's laboratory, which had been prepared for his future domicile.

"You will be as snug in here as a little cock in a pie," said she,

showing him a bed-chamber fairly marvellous in its comfort. "All the furniture is soft and rounded, without a single angle. A blind man could walk here without any fear of hurting himself. See how I understand domestic comfort! Why, each arm-chair can be a friend! This will cost you a trifle. Penon Brothers came from Paris expressly. But a man ought to be comfortable at home, so that he may have no temptation to go abroad."

This sweet motherly prattle stretched itself over two good hours, and much of it related to Clementine, as you will readily suppose. Leon had found her prettier than he had dreamed her in his sweetest visions, but less loving. "Devil take me!" said he, blowing out his candle; "One might think that that confounded stuffed Colonel had come to thrust himself between us."

## **CHAPTER V.**

# **DREAMS OF LOVE, AND OTHER DREAMS**

Leon learned to his cost, that a good conscience and a good bed are not enough to insure a good sleep. He was bedded like a sybarite, innocent as an Arcadian shepherd, and, moreover, tired as a soldier after a forced march; nevertheless a dull sleeplessness weighed upon him until morning. In vain he tossed into every possible position, as if to shift the burden from one shoulder on to the other. He did not close his eyes until he had seen the first glimmering of dawn silver the chinks of his shutters.

He lulled himself to sleep thinking of Clementine; an obliging dream soon showed him the image of her he loved. He saw her in bridal costume, in the chapel of the imperial chateau. She was leaning on the arm of the elder M. Renault, who had put spurs on in honor of the ceremony. Leon followed, having given his arm to Mlle. Sambucco; the ancient maiden was decorated with the insignia of the Legion of Honor. On approaching the altar, the bridegroom noticed that his father's legs were as thin as broomsticks, and, when he was about expressing his astonishment, M. Renault turned around and said to him: "They are thin because they are desiccated; but they are not deformed." While he was giving this explanation, his face

altered, his features changed, he shot out a black moustache, and grew terribly like the Colonel. The ceremony began. The choir was filled with tardigrades and rotifers as large as men and dressed like choristers: they intoned, in solemn measure, a hymn of the German composer, Meiser, which began thus:

The vital principle  
Is a gratuitous hypothesis!

The poetry and the music appeared admirable to Leon; he was trying to impress them on his memory when the officiating priest advanced toward him with two gold rings on a silver salver. This priest was a colonel of cuirassiers in full uniform. Leon asked himself when and where he had met him. It was on the previous evening before Clementine's door. The cuirassier murmured these words: "The race of colonels has vastly degenerated since 1813." He heaved a profound sigh, and the nave of the chapel, which was a ship-of-the-line, was driven over the water at a speed of forty knots. Leon tranquilly took the little gold ring and prepared to place it on Clementine's finger, but he perceived that the hand of his betrothed was dried up; the nails alone had retained their natural freshness. He was frightened and fled across the church, which he found filled with colonels of every age and variety. The crowd was so dense that the most unheard-of efforts failed to penetrate it. He escapes at last, but hears behind him the hurried steps of a man who tries to catch him.

He doubles his speed, he throws himself on all-fours, he gallops, he neighs, the trees on the way seem to fly behind him, he no longer touches the earth. But the enemy comes up faster than the wind; Leon hears the sound of his steps, his spurs jingle; he catches up with Leon, seizes him by the mane, flings himself with a bound upon his back, and goads him with the spur. Leon rears; the rider bends over toward his ear and says, stroking him with his whip: "I am not heavy to carry:—thirty pounds of colonel." The unhappy lover of Mlle. Clementine makes a violent effort and springs sideways; the Colonel falls and draws his sword. Leon loses no time; he puts himself on guard and fights, but almost instantly feels the Colonel's sword enter his heart to the hilt. The chill of the blade spreads further and further, and ends by freezing Leon from head to foot. The Colonel draws nearer and says, smiling: "The main-spring is broken; the little animal is dead." He puts the body in the walnut box, which is too short and too narrow. Cramped on every side, Leon struggles, strains and wakes himself up, worn out with fatigue and half smothered between the bed and the wall.

He quickly jumped into his slippers and eagerly raised the windows and pushed open the shutters. "He made light, and saw that it was good," as is elsewhere written. \* \* \* \* \*

\* Brrroum! He shook off the recollections of his dream as a wet dog shakes off drops of water. The famous London chronometer told him that it was nine o'clock. A cup of chocolate, served by Gotho, helped not a little to untangle his ideas. On proceeding

with his toilet, in a very bright, cheerful and convenient dressing-room, he reconciled himself to the realities of life. "Everything considered," he said to himself, combing out his yellow beard, "nothing but happiness has come to me. Here I am in my native country, with my family and in a pretty house which is our own. My father and mother are both well, and, for myself, I revel in the most luxuriant health. Our fortune is moderate, but so are our tastes, and we shall never feel the want of anything. Our friends received me yesterday with open arms; and as for enemies we have none. The prettiest girl in Fontainebleau is willing to become my wife; I can marry her in less than three weeks if I see fit to hurry things a little. Clementine did not meet me as if I were of no interest to her; far from it. Her lovely eyes smiled upon me last night with the most tender regard. It is true that she wept at the end, that's too certain. That is my only vexation, my only anxiety, the sole cause of that foolish dream I had last night. She did weep, but why? Because I was beast enough to regale her with a lecture, and that, too, about a mummy. All right! I'll have the mummy buried; I'll hold back my dissertations, and nothing else in the world will come to disturb our happiness."

He went down stairs, humming an air from the *Nozze*. M. and Mme. Renault, who were not accustomed to going to bed after midnight, were still asleep. On going into the laboratory, he saw that the triple box of the Colonel was closed. Gothon had placed a little wooden cross and a sprig of consecrated box on the cover. "We may as well begin masses for his soul," he

murmured between his teeth, with a smile that might have been a little sceptical. At the same time he noticed that Clementine, in her agitation, had forgotten the presents he had brought her. He made a bundle of them, looked at his watch, and concluded that there would be no indiscretion in straining a point to go to Mlle. Sambucco's.

The much-to-be-respected aunt was an early riser, as they generally are in the rural districts, and had, in fact, already gone out to church, and Clementine was gardening near the house. She ran to her lover without thinking of throwing down the little rake she held in her hand, and with the sweetest smile in the world, held up her pretty rosy cheeks which were a little moist and flushed by the pleasant warmth of pleasure and exercise.

"Aren't you put out with me?" said she. "I was very ridiculous last night. My aunt has scolded me in the bargain. And I forgot to take the pretty things you brought me from among the savages! But it was not from lack of appreciation. I am so happy to see that you have always thought of me as I have thought of you! I could have sent for them to-day, but I am pleasantly anticipated. My heart told me that you would come yourself."

"Your heart knew me, dear Clementine."

"It would be very unfortunate if it did not know its owner."

"How good you are, and how much I love you!"

"Oh! I, too, dear Leon, I love you dearly."

She stood the rake against a tree, and hung upon the arm of her intended husband with that supple and languishing grace, the

secret of which the creoles possess.

"Come this way" said she, "so that I can show you all the improvements we have made in the garden."

Leon admired everything she wanted him to. The fact is that he had eyes for nothing but her. The grotto of Polyphemus and the cave of Cæcus would have appeared to him pleasanter than the gardens of Armida, if Clementine's little red jacket had been promenading in them.

He asked her if she did not feel some regret in leaving so charming a retreat, and one which she had embellished with so much care.

"Why?" asked she, without thinking to blush. "We will not go far off, and, besides, won't we come here every day?"

The coming marriage was a thing so well settled, that it had not even been spoken of on the previous evening. Nothing remained to be done but to publish the bans and fix the date. Clementine, simple and honest heart, expressed herself without any false modesty concerning an event so entirely expected, so natural and so agreeable. She had expressed her tastes to Mme. Renault in the arrangement of the new apartments, and chosen the hangings herself; and she no longer made any ceremony in talking with her intended of the happy life in common which was about beginning for them, of the people they would invite to the marriage ceremony, of the wedding calls to be made afterwards, of the day which should be appropriated for receptions and of the time they would devote to each other's society and to work.



She inquired in regard to the occupation which Leon intended to make for himself, and the hours which, of preference, he would give to study. This excellent little woman would have been ashamed to bear the name of a sloth, and unhappy in passing her days with an idler. She promised Leon in advance, to respect his work as a sacred thing. On her part she thoroughly intended to make her time also of use, and not to live with folded arms. At the start she would take charge of the housekeeping, under the direction of Madame Renault, who was beginning to find it a little burdensome. And then would she not soon have children to care for, bring up and educate? This was a noble and useful pleasure which she did not intend to share with any one. Nevertheless she would send her sons to college, in order to fit them for living in the world, and to teach them early those principles of justice and equality which are the foundation of every good manly character. Leon let her talk on, only interrupting her to agree with her: for these two young people who had been educated and brought up with the same ideas, saw everything with the same eyes. Education had created this pleasant harmony rather than Love.

"Do you know" said Clementine, "that I felt an awful palpitation of the heart when I entered the room where you were yesterday?"

"If you think that my heart beat less violently than yours—"

"Oh! but it was a different thing with me: I was afraid."

"What of?"

"I was afraid that I should not find you the same as I had seen you in my thoughts. Remember that it had been three years since we bid each other good bye. I remembered distinctly what you were when you went away, and, with imagination helping memory a little, I had reconstructed my Leon entire. But if you had no longer resembled him! What would have become of me in the presence of a new Leon, when I had formed the pleasant habit of loving the other?"

"You make me tremble. But your first greeting reassured me in advance."

"Tut, sir! Don't speak of that first greeting, or you will make me blush a second time. Let us speak rather of that poor colonel who made me shed so many tears. How is he getting along this morning?"

"I forgot to inquire after his health, but if you want me to—"

"It's useless. You can announce to him a visit from me to-day. It is absolutely necessary that I should see him this noon."

"You would be very sensible to give up this fancy. Why expose yourself again to such painful emotions?"

"The fancy is stronger than I am. Seriously, dear Leon, the old fellow attracts me."

"Why 'old fellow?' He has the appearance of a man who died when from twenty-five to thirty years of age."

"Are you very sure that he is dead? I said 'old fellow' because of a dream I had last night."

"Ha! You too?"

"Yes. You remember how agitated I was on leaving you, and, moreover, I had been scolded by my aunt. And, too, I had been thinking of terrible sights—my poor mother lying on her death-bed. In fact, my spirits were quite broken down."

"Poor dear little heart!"

"Nevertheless, as I did not want to think about anything any more, I went to bed quickly, and shut my eyes with all my might, so tightly, indeed, that I put myself to sleep. It was not long before I saw the colonel. He was lying as I saw him in his triple coffin, but he had long white hair and a most benign and venerable appearance. He begged us to put him in consecrated ground, and we carried him, you and I, to the Fontainebleau cemetery. On reaching my mother's tomb we saw that the stone was displaced. My mother, in a white robe, was moved so as to make a place beside her, and she seemed waiting for the colonel. But every time we attempted to lay him down, the coffin left our hands and rested suspended in the air, as if it had no weight. I could distinguish the poor old man's features, for his triple coffin had become as transparent as the alabaster lamp burning near the ceiling of my chamber. He was sad, and his broken ear bled freely. All at once he escaped from our hands, the coffin vanished, and I saw nothing but him, pale as a statue, and tall as the tallest oaks of the *bas-Breau*. His golden epaulettes spread out and became wings, and he raised himself to heaven, holding over us both hands as if in blessing. I woke up all in tears, but I have not told my dream to my aunt, for she would have scolded

me again."

"No one ought to be scolded but me, Clementine dear. It is my fault that your gentle slumbers are troubled by visions of the other world. But all this will be stopped soon: to-day I am going to seek a definite receptacle for the Colonel."

## CHAPTER VI.

# A YOUNG GIRL'S CAPRICE

Clementine had a fresh young heart. Before knowing Leon, she had loved but one person—her mother. No cousins of either sex, nor uncles, nor aunts, nor grandfathers, nor grandmothers, had dissipated, by dividing it among themselves, that little treasure of affection which well-constituted children bring into the world. The grandmother, Clementine Pichon, was married at Nancy in January, 1814, and died three months later in the suburbs of Toulon, during her first confinement. The grandfather, M. Langevin, a sub-commissary of the first class, being left a widower, with a daughter in the cradle, devoted himself to bringing up his child. He gave her, in 1835, to M. Sambucco, an estimable and agreeable man, of Italian extraction, born in France, and King's counsel in the court of Marseilles. In 1838 M. Sambucco, who was a man of considerable independence, because he had resources of his own, in some manner highly honorable to himself, incurred the ill-will of the Keeper of the Seals. He was therefore appointed Advocate-General to Martinique, and after some days of hesitation, accepted the transfer to that remote situation. But old M. Langevin did not easily console himself for the departure of his daughter: he died two years later without having

embraced the little Clementine, to whom it was intended that he should be godfather. M. Sambucco, his son-in-law, lost his life in 1843, during an earthquake. The papers of the colony and of the metropolis related at the time how he had fallen a victim to his devotion to others. After this fearful misfortune, the young widow hastened to recross the sea with her daughter. She settled in Fontainebleau, in order that the child might live in a healthy atmosphere. Fontainebleau is one of the healthiest places in France. If Mme. Sambucco had been as good a manager as she was mother, she would have left Clementine a respectable fortune, but she regulated her affairs badly and got herself under heavy embarrassments. A neighboring notary relieved her of a round sum; and two farms which she had paid dearly for, brought her almost nothing. In short, she no longer knew what her situation was, and began to lose all control of it, when a sister of her husband, an old maid, pinched and pious, expressed a desire to live with her and use their resources in common. The arrival of this long-toothed spinster strangely frightened the little Clementine, who hid herself under the furniture and nestled among her mother's skirts; but it was the salvation of the house. Mlle. Sambucco was not one of the most spirituelle nor one of the most romantic of women, but she was Order incarnated. She reduced the expenses, handled the resources herself, sold the two farms in 1847, bought some three-per-cents. in 1848, and restored stable equilibrium in the budget. Thanks to the talents and activity of this female steward, the gentle and improvident

widow had nothing to do but to fondle her child. Clementine learned to honor the virtues of her aunt, but she adored her mother. When she had the affliction of losing her, she found herself alone in the world, leaning on Mlle. Sambucco, like a young plant on a prop of dry wood. It was then that her friendship for Leon glimmered with a vague ray of love; and young Renault profited by the necessity for expansion which filled this youthful soul.

During the three long years that Leon spent away from her, Clementine scarcely knew that she was alone. She loved and felt that she was loved in return; she had faith in the future, and an inner life of tenderness and timid hope; and this noble and gentle heart required nothing more.

But what completely astonished her betrothed, her aunt and herself, and strangely subverted all the best accredited theories respecting the feminine heart,—what, indeed, reason would have refused to credit had it not been established by facts, was that the day when she again met the husband of her choice, an hour after she had thrown herself into Leon's arms with a grace so full of trust, Clementine was so abruptly invaded by a new sentiment which was not love, nor friendship, nor fear, but transcended them all and spoke with master tones in her heart.

From the instant when Leon had shown her the figure of the Colonel, she had been seized by an actual passion for this nameless mummy. It was nothing like what she felt towards young Renault, but it was a combination of interest, compassion

and respectful sympathy.

If any one had recounted some famous feat of arms, or some romantic history of which the Colonel had been the hero, this impression would have been natural, or, at least, explicable. But she knew nothing of him except that he had been condemned as a spy by a council of war, and yet she dreamed of him the very night after Leon's return.

This inexplicable prepossession at first manifested itself in a religious form. She caused a mass to be said for the repose of the Colonel's soul, and urged Leon to make preparations for the funeral, herself selecting the ground in which he was to be interred. These various cares never caused her to omit her daily visit to the walnut box, or the respectful bending of the knee before the body, or the sisterly or filial kiss which she regularly placed upon its forehead. The Renault family soon became uneasy about such strange symptoms, and hastened the interment of the attractive unknown, in order to relieve themselves of him as soon as possible. But the day before the one fixed for the ceremony, Clementine changed her mind.

"By what right could they shut in the tomb a man who, possibly, was not dead? The theories of the learned Doctor Meiser were not such that one could reject them without examination. The matter was at least worthy of a few days' reflection. Was it not possible to submit the Colonel's body to some experiments? Professor Hirtz, of Berlin, had promised to send some valuable documents concerning the life and death of



this unfortunate officer: nothing ought to be undertaken before they were received; some one ought to write to Berlin to hasten the sending of these papers."

Leon sighed, but yielded uncomplainingly to this new caprice, and wrote to M. Hirtz.

Clementine found an ally in this second campaign in Doctor Martout. Though he was but an average practitioner and disdained the acquisition of practice far too much, M. Martout was not deficient in knowledge. He had long been studying five or six great questions in physiology, such as reanimation, spontaneous generation and the topics connected with them. A regular correspondence kept him posted in all recent discoveries; he was the friend of M. Pouchet, of Rouen; and knew also the celebrated Karl Nibor, who has carried the use of the microscope into researches so wide and so profound. M. Martout had desiccated and resuscitated thousands of little worms, rotifers and tardigrades; he held that life is nothing but organization in action, and that the idea of reviving a desiccated man has nothing absurd about it. He gave himself up to long meditations when Professor Hirtz sent from Berlin the following document, the original of which is filed among the manuscripts of the Humboldt collection.

# **CHAPTER VII.**

## **PROFESSOR MEISER'S WILL IN FAVOR OF THE DESICCATED COLONEL**

On this 20th day of January, 1824, being worn down by a cruel malady and feeling the approach of the time when my person shall be absorbed in the Great All;

I have written with my own hand this testament which is the expression of my last will.

I appoint as executor my nephew Nicholas Meiser, a wealthy brewer in the city of Dantzic.

I bequeath my books, papers and scientific collections of all kinds, except item 3712, to my very estimable and learned friend, Herr Von Humboldt.

I bequeath all the rest of my effects, real and personal, valued at 100,000 Prussian thalers or 375,000 francs, to Colonel Pierre Victor Fougas, at present desiccated, but living, and entered in my catalogue opposite No. 3712 (Zoology).

I trust that he will accept this feeble compensation for the ordeals he has undergone in my laboratory, and the service he has rendered to science.

Finally, in order that my nephew Nicholas Meiser may exactly

understand the duties I leave him to perform, I have resolved to inscribe here a detailed account of the desiccation of Colonel Fougas, my sole heir.

It was on the 11th of November in that unhappy year 1813, that my relations with this brave young man began. I had long since quitted Dantzic, where the noise of cannon and the danger from bombs had rendered all labor impossible, and retired with my instruments and books under the protection of the Allied Armies in the fortified town of Liebenfeld. The French garrisons of Dantzic, Stettin, Custrin, Glogau, Hamburg and several other German towns could not communicate with each other or with their native land; meanwhile General Rapp was obstinately defending himself against the English fleet and the Russian army. Colonel Fougas was taken by a detachment of the Barclay de Tolly corps, as he was trying to pass the Vistula on the ice, on the way to Dantzic. They brought him prisoner to Liebenfeld on the 11th of November, just at my supper time, and Sergeant Garok, who commanded in the village, forced me to be present at the examination and act as interpreter.

The open countenance, manly voice, proud firmness and fine carriage of the unfortunate young man won my heart. He had made the sacrifice of his life. His only regret, he said, was having stranded so near port, after passing through four armies; and being unable to carry out the Emperor's orders. He appeared animated by that French fanaticism which has done so much harm to our beloved Germany. Nevertheless I could not help

defending him; and I translated his words less as an interpreter than as an advocate. Unhappily, they found upon him a letter from Napoleon to General Rapp, of which I preserved a copy:

"Abandon Dantzic, break the blockade, unite with the garrisons of Stettin, Custrin and Glogau, march along the Elbe, arrange with St. Cyr and Davoust to concentrate the forces scattered at Dresden, Forgau, Wittenberg, Magdeburg and Hamburg; roll up an army like a snow ball; cross Westphalia, which is open, and come to defend the line of the Rhine with an army of 170,000 Frenchmen which you will have saved!

*"Napoleon."*

This letter was sent to the headquarters of the Russian army, whilst a half-dozen illiterate soldiers, drunk with joy and bad brandy, condemned the brave Colonel of the 23d of the line to the death of a spy and a traitor. The execution was fixed for the next day, the 12th, and M. Pierre Victor Fougas, after having thanked and embraced me with the most touching sensibility, (He is a husband and a father.) was shut up in the little battlemented tower of Liebenfeld, where the wind whistles terribly through all the loopholes.

The night of the 11th and 12th of November was one of the severest of that terrible winter. My self-registering thermometer, which hung outside my window with a southeast exposure, marked nineteen degrees below zero, centigrade. I went early in the morning to bid the Colonel a last farewell, and met Sergeant

Garok, who said to me in bad German:

"We won't have to kill the Frantzouski, he is frozen to death."

I ran to the prison. The colonel was lying on his back, rigid. But I found after a few minutes' examination, that the rigidity of the body was not that of death. The joints, though they had not their ordinary suppleness, could be bent and extended without any great effort. The limbs, the face, and the chest gave my hands a sensation of cold, but very different from that which I had often experienced from contact with corpses.

Knowing that he had passed several nights without sleep, and endured extraordinary fatigues, I did not doubt that he had fallen into that profound and lethargic sleep which is superinduced by intense cold, and which if too far prolonged slackens respiration and circulation to a point where the most delicate physiological tests are necessary to discover the continuance of life. The pulse was insensible; at least my fingers, benumbed with cold, could not feel it. My hardness of hearing (I was then in my sixty-ninth year) prevented my determining by auscultation whether the beats of the heart still aroused those feeble though prolonged vibrations which the ear continues to hear some time after the hand fails to detect them.

The colonel had reached that point of torpor produced by cold, where to revive a man without causing him to die, requires numerous and delicate attentions. Some hours after, congelation would supervene, and with it, impossibility of restoration to life.

I was in the greatest perplexity. On the one hand I knew

that he was dying on my hands by congelation; on the other, I could not, by myself, bestow upon him the attentions that were indispensable. If I were to administer stimulants without having him, at the same time, rubbed on the trunk and limbs by three or four vigorous assistants, I would revive him only to see him die. I had still before my eyes the spectacle of that lovely young girl asphyxiated in a fire, whom I succeeded in reviving by placing burning coals under the clavicles, but who could only call her mother, and died almost immediately, in spite of the administration of internal stimulants and electricity for inducing contractions of the diaphragm and heart.

And even if I should succeed in bringing him back to health and strength, was not he condemned by court-martial? Did not humanity forbid my rousing him from this repose akin to death, to deliver him to the horrors of execution?

I must confess that in the presence of this organism where life was suspended, my ideas on reanimation took, as it were, fresh hold upon me. I had so often desiccated and revived beings quite elevated in the animal scale, that I did not doubt the success of the operation, even on a man. By myself alone I could not revive and save the Colonel; but I had in my laboratory, all the instruments necessary to desiccate him without assistance.

To sum up, three alternatives offered themselves to me. I. To leave the Colonel in the crenellated tower, where he would have died the same day of congelation. II. To revive him by stimulants, at the risk of killing him. And for what? To give him up, in

case of success, to inevitable execution. III. To desiccate him in my laboratory with the quasi certainty of resuscitating him after the restoration of peace. All friends of humanity will doubtless comprehend that I could not hesitate long.

I had Sergeant Garok called, and I begged him to sell me the body of the Colonel. It was not the first time that I had bought a corpse for dissection, so my request excited no suspicion. The bargain concluded, I gave him four bottles of kirsch-wasser, and soon two Russian soldiers brought me Colonel Fougas on a stretcher.

As soon as I was alone with him, I pricked one of his fingers: pressure forced out a drop of blood. To place it under a microscope between two plates of glass was the work of a minute. Oh, joy! The fibrin was not coagulated. The red globules appeared cleanly circular, flattened, biconcave, and without notches, indentations or spheroidal swellings. The white globules changed their shape, taking at intervals the spherical form, and varying their shapes again by delicate expansions. I was not deceived then, it was a torpid man that I had under my eyes, and not a dead one!

I placed him on a pair of scales. He weighed one hundred and forty pounds, clothing included. I did not care to undress him, for I had noticed that animals desiccated directly in contact with the air, died oftener than those which remained covered with moss and other soft materials, during the ordeal of desiccation.

My great air-pump, with its immense platform, its enormous

oval wrought-iron receiver, which a rope running on a pulley firmly fixed in the ceiling easily raised and lowered by means of a windlass—all these thousand and one contrivances which I had so laboriously prepared in spite of the railleries of those who envied me, and which I felt desolate at seeing unemployed, were going to find their use! Unexpected circumstances had arisen at last to procure me such a subject for experiment, as I had in vain endeavored to procure, while I was attempting to reduce to torpidity dogs, rabbits, sheep and other mammals by the aid of freezing mixtures. Long ago, without doubt, would these results have been attained if I had been aided by those who surrounded me, instead of being made the butt of their railleries; if our authorities had sustained me with their influence instead of treating me as a subversive spirit.

I shut myself up *tête-à-tête* with the Colonel, and took care that even old Getchen, my housekeeper, now deceased, should not trouble me during my work. I had substituted for the wearisome lever of the old fashioned air-pumps, a wheel arranged with an eccentric which transformed the circular movement of the axis into the rectilinear movement required by the pistons: the wheel, the eccentric, the connecting rod, and the joints of the apparatus all worked admirably, and enabled me to do everything by myself. The cold did not impede the play of the machine, and the lubricating oil was not gummed: I had refined it myself by a new process founded on the then recent discoveries of the French *savant* M. Chevreul.



Having extended the body on the platform of the air-pump, lowered the receiver and luted the rim, I undertook to submit it gradually to the influence of a dry vacuum and cold. Capsules filled with chloride of calcium were placed around the Colonel to absorb the water which should evaporate from the body, and to promote the desiccation.

I certainly found myself in the best possible situation for subjecting the human body to a process of gradual desiccation without sudden interruption of the functions, or disorganization of the tissues or fluids. Seldom had my experiments on rotifers and tardigrades been surrounded with equal chances of success, yet they had always succeeded. But the particular nature of the subject and the special scruples imposed upon my conscience, obliged me to employ a certain number of new conditions, which I had long since, in other connections, foreseen the expediency of. I had taken the pains to arrange an opening at each end of my oval receiver, and fit into it a heavy glass, which enabled me to follow with my eye the effects of the vacuum on the Colonel. I was entirely prevented from shutting the windows of my laboratory, from fear that a too elevated temperature might put an end to the lethargy of the subject, or induce some change in the fluids. If a thaw had come on, all would have been over with my experiment. But the thermometer kept for several days between six and eight degrees below zero, and I was very happy in seeing the lethargic sleep continue, without having to fear congelation of the tissues.

I commenced to produce the vacuum with extreme slowness, for fear that the gases distributed through the blood, becoming free on account of the difference of their tension from that of rarified air, might escape in the vessels and so bring on immediate death. Moreover, I watched, every moment, the effects of the vacuum on the intestinal gases, for by expanding inside in proportion as the pressure of the air diminished outside of the body, they could have caused serious disorders. The tissues might not have been entirely ruptured by them, but an internal lesion would have been enough to occasion death in a few hours after reanimation. One observes this quite frequently in animals carelessly desiccated.

Several times, too rapid a protrusion of the abdomen put me on my guard against the danger which I feared, and I was obliged to let in a little air under the receiver. At last, the cessation of all phenomena of this kind satisfied me that the gases had disappeared by exosmose or had been expelled by the spontaneous contraction of the viscera. It was not until the end of the first day that I could give up these minute precautions, and carry the vacuum a little further.

The next day, the 13th, I pushed the vacuum to a point where the barometer fell to five millimetres. As no change had taken place in the position of the body or limbs, I was sure that no convulsion had been produced. The colonel had been desiccated, had become immobile, had lost the power of performing the functions of life, without death having supervened, and without

the possibility of returning to activity having departed. His life was suspended, not extinguished.

Each time that a surplus of watery vapor caused the barometer to ascend, I pumped. On the 14th, the door of my laboratory was literally broken in by the Russian General, Count Trollohub, who had been sent from headquarters. This distinguished officer had run in all haste to prevent the execution of the colonel and to conduct him into the presence of the Commander in Chief. I loyally confessed to him what I had done under the inspiration of my conscience; I showed him the body through one of the bull's-eyes of the air-pump; I told him that I was happy to have preserved a man who could furnish useful information to the liberators of my country; and I offered to resuscitate him at my own expense if they would promise me to respect his life and liberty. The General, Count Trollohub, unquestionably a distinguished man, but one of an exclusively military education, thought that I was not speaking seriously. He went out slamming the door in my face, and treating me like an old fool.

I set myself to pumping again, and kept the vacuum at a pressure of from three to five millimetres for the space of three months. I knew by experience that animals can revive after being submitted to a dry vacuum and cold for eighty days.

On the 12th of February 1814, having observed that for a month no modification had taken place in the shrinking of the flesh, I resolved to submit the Colonel to another series of operations, in order to insure more perfect preservation

by complete desiccation. I let the air re-enter by the stop-cock arranged for the purpose, and, after raising the receiver, proceeded at once to my experiment.

The body did not weigh more than forty-six pounds; I had then reduced it nearly to a third of its original weight. It should be borne in mind that the clothing had not lost as much water as the other parts. Now the human body contains nearly four-fifths of its own weight of water, as is proved by a desiccation thoroughly made in a chemical drying furnace.

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