

Part 1

Chapter 1

A CHALLENGE

Nothing, sir, can induce me to surrender my claim."

"I am sorry, count, but in such a matter your views cannot modify mine."

"But allow me to point out that my seniority unquestionably gives me a prior right."

"Mere seniority, I assert, in an affair of this kind, cannot possibly entitle you to any prior claim whatever."

"Then, captain, no alternative is left but for me to compel you to yield at the sword's point."

"As you please, count; but neither sword nor pistol can force me to forego my pretensions. Here is my card."

"And mine."

This rapid altercation was thus brought to an end by the formal interchange of the names of the disputants. On one of the cards was inscribed: *Captain Hector Servadac, Staff Officer, Mostaganem.*

On the other was the title: *Count Wassili Timascheff, On board the Schooner "Dobryna."*

It did not take long to arrange that seconds should be appointed, who would meet in Mostaganem at two o'clock that day; and the captain and the count were on the point of parting from each other, with a salute of punctilious courtesy, when Timascheff, as if struck by a sudden thought, said abruptly: "Perhaps it would be better, captain, not to allow the real cause of this to transpire?"

"Far better," replied Servadac; "it is undesirable in every way for any names to be mentioned."

"In that case, however," continued the count, "it will be necessary to assign an ostensible pretext of some kind. Shall we allege a musical dispute? a contention in which I feel bound to defend Wagner, while you are the zealous champion of Rossini?"

"I am quite content," answered Servadac, with a smile; and with another low bow they parted.

The scene, as here depicted, took place upon the extremity of a little cape on the Algerian coast, between Mostaganem and Tenes, about two miles from the mouth of the Shelif. The headland rose more than sixty feet above the sea-level, and the azure waters of the Mediterranean, as they softly kissed the strand, were tinged with the reddish hue of the feriferous rocks that formed its base. It was the 31st of December. The noontide sun, which usually illuminated the various projections of the coast with a dazzling brightness, was hidden by a dense mass of cloud, and the fog, which for some unaccountable cause, had hung for the last two months over nearly every region in the world, causing serious interruption to traffic between continent and continent, spread its dreary veil across land and sea.

After taking leave of the staff-officer, Count Wassili Timascheff wended his way down to a small creek, and took his seat in the stern of a light four-oar that had been awaiting his return; this was immediately pushed off from shore, and was soon alongside a pleasure-yacht, that was lying to, not many cable lengths away.

At a sign from Servadac, an orderly, who had been standing at a respectful distance, led forward a magnificent Arabian horse; the captain vaulted into the saddle, and followed by his attendant, well mounted as himself, started off towards Mostaganem. It was half-past twelve when the two riders crossed the bridge that had been recently erected over the Shelif, and a quarter of an hour later their steeds, flecked with foam, dashed through the Mascara Gate, which was one of five entrances opened in the embattled wall that encircled the town.

At that date, Mostaganem contained about fifteen thousand inhabitants, three thousand of whom were French. Besides being one of the principal district towns of the province of Oran, it was also a military station. Mostaganem rejoiced in a well-sheltered harbor, which enabled her to utilize all the rich products of the Mina and the Lower Shelif. It was the existence of so good a harbor amidst the exposed cliffs of this coast that had induced the owner of the *Dobryna* to winter in these parts, and for two months the Russian standard had been seen floating from her yard, whilst on her mast-head was hoisted the pennant of the French Yacht Club, with the distinctive letters M. C. W. T., the initials of Count Timascheff.

Having entered the town, Captain Servadac made his way towards Matmore, the military quarter, and was not long in finding two friends

on whom he might rely—a major of the 2nd Fusileers, and a captain of the 8th Artillery. The two officers listened gravely enough to Servadac's request that they would act as his seconds in an affair of honor, but could not resist a smile on hearing that the dispute between him and the count had originated in a musical discussion. Surely, they suggested, the matter might be easily arranged; a few slight concessions on either side, and all might be amicably adjusted. But no representations on their part were of any avail. Hector Servadac was inflexible.

"No concession is possible," he replied, resolutely. "Rossini has been deeply injured, and I cannot suffer the injury to be unavenged. Wagner is a fool. I shall keep my word. I am quite firm."

"Be it so, then," replied one of the officers; "and after all, you know, a sword-cut need not be a very serious affair."

"Certainly not," rejoined Servadac; "and especially in my case, when I have not the slightest intention of being wounded at all."

Incredulous as they naturally were as to the assigned cause of the quarrel, Servadac's friends had no alternative but to accept his explanation, and without farther parley they started for the staff office, where, at two o'clock precisely, they were to meet the seconds of Count Timascheff. Two hours later they had returned. All the preliminaries had been arranged; the count, who like many Russians abroad was an aide-de-camp of the Czar, had of course proposed swords as the most appropriate weapons, and the duel was to take place on the following morning, the first of January, at nine o'clock, upon the cliff at a spot about a mile and a half from the mouth of the Shelif. With the assurance that they would not fail to keep their appointment with military punctuality, the two officers cordially wrung their friend's hand and retired to the Zulma Cafe for a game at piquet. Captain Servadac at once retraced his steps and left the town.

For the last fortnight Servadac had not been occupying his proper lodgings in the military quarters; having been appointed to make a local levy, he had been living in a gourbi, or native hut, on the Mostaganem coast, between four and five miles from the Shelif. His orderly was his sole companion, and by any other man than the captain the enforced exile would have been esteemed little short of a severe penance.

On his way to the gourbi, his mental occupation was a very laborious effort to put together what he was pleased to call a rondo, upon a model of versification all but obsolete. This rondo, it is unnecessary to conceal, was to be an ode addressed to a young widow by whom he had been captivated, and whom he was anxious to marry, and the tenor of his

muse was intended to prove that when once a man has found an object in all respects worthy of his affections, he should love her "in all simplicity." Whether the aphorism were universally true was not very material to the gallant captain, whose sole ambition at present was to construct a roundelay of which this should be the prevailing sentiment. He indulged the fancy that he might succeed in producing a composition which would have a fine effect here in Algeria, where poetry in that form was all but unknown.

"I know well enough," he said repeatedly to himself, "what I want to say. I want to tell her that I love her sincerely, and wish to marry her; but, confound it! the words won't rhyme. Plague on it! Does nothing rhyme with 'simplicity'? Ah! I have it now: 'Lovers should, whoe'er they be, Love in all simplicity.' But what next? how am I to go on? I say, Ben Zoof," he called aloud to his orderly, who was trotting silently close in his rear, "did you ever compose any poetry?"

"No, captain," answered the man promptly: "I have never made any verses, but I have seen them made fast enough at a booth during the fete of Montmartre."

"Can you remember them?"

"Remember them! to be sure I can. This is the way they began:

'Come in! come in! you'll not repent
The entrance money you have spent;
The wondrous mirror in this place
Reveals your future sweetheart's face.'

"Bosh!" cried Servadac in disgust; "your verses are detestable trash."

"As good as any others, captain, squeaked through a reed pipe."

"Hold your tongue, man," said Servadac peremptorily; "I have made another couplet. 'Lovers should, whoe'er they be, Love in all simplicity; Lover, loving honestly, Offer I myself to thee.'"

Beyond this, however, the captain's poetical genius was impotent to carry him; his farther efforts were unavailing, and when at six o'clock he reached the gourbi, the four lines still remained the limit of his composition.

Chapter 2

CAPTAIN SERVADAC AND HIS ORDERLY

At the time of which I write, there might be seen in the registers of the Minister of War the following entry:

SERVADAC (*Hector*), born at St. Trelody in the district of Lesparre, department of the Gironde, July 19th, 18—.

Property: 1200 francs in rentes.

Length of service: Fourteen years, three months, and five days.

Service: Two years at school at St. Cyr; two years at L'Ecole d'Application; two years in the 8th Regiment of the Line; two years in the 3rd Light Cavalry; seven years in Algeria.

Campaigns: Soudan and Japan.

Rank: Captain on the staff at Mostaganem.

Decorations: Chevalier of the Legion of Honor, March 13th, 18—.

Hector Servadac was thirty years of age, an orphan without lineage and almost without means. Thirsting for glory rather than for gold, slightly scatter-brained, but warm-hearted, generous, and brave, he was eminently formed to be the protege of the god of battles.

For the first year and a half of his existence he had been the foster-child of the sturdy wife of a vine-dresser of Medoc— a lineal descendant of the heroes of ancient prowess; in a word, he was one of those individuals whom nature seems to have predestined for remarkable things, and around whose cradle have hovered the fairy godmothers of adventure and good luck.

In appearance Hector Servadac was quite the type of an officer; he was rather more than five feet six inches high, slim and graceful, with dark curling hair and mustaches, well-formed hands and feet, and a clear blue eye. He seemed born to please without being conscious of the power he possessed. It must be owned, and no one was more ready to confess it than himself, that his literary attainments were by no means of a high order. "We don't spin tops" is a favorite saying amongst artillery officers, indicating that they do not shirk their duty by frivolous pursuits; but it

must be confessed that Servadac, being naturally idle, was very much given to "spinning tops." His good abilities, however, and his ready intelligence had carried him successfully through the curriculum of his early career. He was a good draughtsman, an excellent rider—having thoroughly mastered the successor to the famous "Uncle Tom" at the riding-school of St. Cyr— and in the records of his military service his name had several times been included in the order of the day.

The following episode may suffice, in a certain degree, to illustrate his character. Once, in action, he was leading a detachment of infantry through an intrenchment. They came to a place where the side-work of the trench had been so riddled by shell that a portion of it had actually fallen in, leaving an aperture quite unsheltered from the grape-shot that was pouring in thick and fast. The men hesitated. In an instant Servadac mounted the side-work, laid himself down in the gap, and thus filling up the breach by his own body, shouted, "March on!"

And through a storm of shot, not one of which touched the prostrate officer, the troop passed in safety.

Since leaving the military college, Servadac, with the exception of his two campaigns in the Soudan and Japan, had been always stationed in Algeria. He had now a staff appointment at Mostaganem, and had lately been entrusted with some topographical work on the coast between Tenes and the Shelif. It was a matter of little consequence to him that the gourbi, in which of necessity he was quartered, was uncomfortable and ill-contrived; he loved the open air, and the independence of his life suited him well. Sometimes he would wander on foot upon the sandy shore, and sometimes he would enjoy a ride along the summit of the cliff; altogether being in no hurry at all to bring his task to an end. His occupation, moreover, was not so engrossing but that he could find leisure for taking a short railway journey once or twice a week; so that he was ever and again putting in an appearance at the general's receptions at Oran, and at the fetes given by the governor at Algiers.

It was on one of these occasions that he had first met Madame de L——, the lady to whom he was desirous of dedicating the rondo, the first four lines of which had just seen the light. She was a colonel's widow, young and handsome, very reserved, not to say haughty in her manner, and either indifferent or impervious to the admiration which she inspired. Captain Servadac had not yet ventured to declare his attachment; of rivals he was well aware he had not a few, and amongst these not the least formidable was the Russian Count Timascheff. And although the young widow was all unconscious of the share she had in the matter, it

was she, and she alone, who was the cause of the challenge just given and accepted by her two ardent admirers.

During his residence in the *gourbi*, Hector Servadac's sole companion was his orderly, Ben Zoof. Ben Zoof was devoted, body and soul, to his superior officer. His own personal ambition was so entirely absorbed in his master's welfare, that it is certain no offer of promotion—even had it been that of *aide-de-camp* to the Governor-General of Algiers— would have induced him to quit that master's service. His name might seem to imply that he was a native of Algeria; but such was by no means the case. His true name was Laurent; he was a native of Montmartre in Paris, and how or why he had obtained his patronymic was one of those anomalies which the most sagacious of etymologists would find it hard to explain.

Born on the hill of Montmartre, between the Solferino tower and the mill of La Galette, Ben Zoof had ever possessed the most unreserved admiration for his birthplace; and to his eyes the heights and district of Montmartre represented an epitome of all the wonders of the world. In all his travels, and these had been not a few, he had never beheld scenery which could compete with that of his native home. No cathedral—not even Burgos itself—could vie with the church at Montmartre. Its race-course could well hold its own against that at Pentelique; its reservoir would throw the Mediterranean into the shade; its forests had flourished long before the invasion of the Celts; and its very mill produced no ordinary flour, but provided material for cakes of world-wide renown. To crown all, Montmartre boasted a mountain—a veritable mountain; envious tongues indeed might pronounce it little more than a hill; but Ben Zoof would have allowed himself to be hewn in pieces rather than admit that it was anything less than fifteen thousand feet in height.

Ben Zoof's most ambitious desire was to induce the captain to go with him and end his days in his much-loved home, and so incessantly were Servadac's ears besieged with descriptions of the unparalleled beauties and advantages of this eighteenth *arrondissement* of Paris, that he could scarcely hear the name of Montmartre without a conscious thrill of aversion. Ben Zoof, however, did not despair of ultimately converting the captain, and meanwhile had resolved never to leave him. When a private in the 8th Cavalry, he had been on the point of quitting the army at twenty-eight years of age, but unexpectedly he had been appointed orderly to Captain Servadac. Side by side they fought in two campaigns. Servadac had saved Ben Zoof's life in Japan; Ben Zoof had rendered his master a like service in the Soudan. The bond of union thus effected

could never be severed; and although Ben Zoof's achievements had fairly earned him the right of retirement, he firmly declined all honors or any pension that might part him from his superior officer. Two stout arms, an iron constitution, a powerful frame, and an indomitable courage were all loyally devoted to his master's service, and fairly entitled him to his *soi-disant* designation of "The Rampart of Montmartre." Unlike his master, he made no pretension to any gift of poetic power, but his inexhaustible memory made him a living encyclopaedia; and for his stock of anecdotes and trooper's tales he was matchless.

Thoroughly appreciating his servant's good qualities, Captain Servadac endured with imperturbable good humor those idiosyncrasies, which in a less faithful follower would have been intolerable, and from time to time he would drop a word of sympathy that served to deepen his subordinate's devotion.

On one occasion, when Ben Zoof had mounted his hobby-horse, and was indulging in high-flown praises about his beloved eighteenth arrondissement, the captain had remarked gravely, "Do you know, Ben Zoof, that Montmartre only requires a matter of some thirteen thousand feet to make it as high as Mont Blanc?"

Ben Zoof's eyes glistened with delight; and from that moment Hector Servadac and Montmartre held equal places in his affection.

INTERRUPTED EFFUSIONS

Composed of mud and loose stones, and covered with a thatch of turf and straw, known to the natives by the name of "driss," the gourbi, though a grade better than the tents of the nomad Arabs, was yet far inferior to any habitation built of brick or stone. It adjoined an old stone hostelry, previously occupied by a detachment of engineers, and which now afforded shelter for Ben Zoof and the two horses. It still contained a considerable number of tools, such as mattocks, shovels, and pick-axes.

Uncomfortable as was their temporary abode, Servadac and his attendant made no complaints; neither of them was dainty in the matter either of board or lodging. After dinner, leaving his orderly to stow away the remains of the repast in what he was pleased to term the "cupboard of his stomach." Captain Servadac turned out into the open air to smoke his pipe upon the edge of the cliff. The shades of night were drawing on. An hour previously, veiled in heavy clouds, the sun had sunk below the horizon that bounded the plain beyond the Shelif.

The sky presented a most singular appearance. Towards the north, although the darkness rendered it impossible to see beyond a quarter of a mile, the upper strata of the atmosphere were suffused with a rosy glare. No well-defined fringe of light, nor arch of luminous rays, betokened a display of aurora borealis, even had such a phenomenon been possible in these latitudes; and the most experienced meteorologist would have been puzzled to explain the cause of this striking illumination on this 31st of December, the last evening of the passing year.

But Captain Servadac was no meteorologist, and it is to be doubted whether, since leaving school, he had ever opened his "Course of Cosmography." Besides, he had other thoughts to occupy his mind. The prospects of the morrow offered serious matter for consideration. The captain was actuated by no personal animosity against the count; though rivals, the two men regarded each other with sincere respect; they had

simply reached a crisis in which one of them was *de trop*; which of them, fate must decide.

At eight o'clock, Captain Servadac re-entered the gourbi, the single apartment of which contained his bed, a small writing-table, and some trunks that served instead of cupboards. The orderly performed his culinary operations in the adjoining building, which he also used as a bed-room, and where, extended on what he called his "good oak mattress," he would sleep soundly as a dormouse for twelve hours at a stretch. Ben Zoof had not yet received his orders to retire, and ensconcing himself in a corner of the gourbi, he endeavored to doze—a task which the unusual agitation of his master rendered somewhat difficult. Captain Servadac was evidently in no hurry to betake himself to rest, but seating himself at his table, with a pair of compasses and a sheet of tracing-paper, he began to draw, with red and blue crayons, a variety of colored lines, which could hardly be supposed to have much connection with a topographical survey. In truth, his character of staff-officer was now entirely absorbed in that of Gascon poet. Whether he imagined that the compasses would bestow upon his verses the measure of a mathematical accuracy, or whether he fancied that the parti-colored lines would lend variety to his rhythm, it is impossible to determine; be that as it may, he was devoting all his energies to the compilation of his rondo, and supremely difficult he found the task.

"Hang it!" he ejaculated, "whatever induced me to choose this meter? It is as hard to find rhymes as to rally fugitive in a battle. But, by all the powers! it shan't be said that a French officer cannot cope with a piece of poetry. One battalion has fought— now for the rest!"

Perseverance had its reward. Presently two lines, one red, the other blue, appeared upon the paper, and the captain murmured: "Words, mere words, cannot avail, Telling true heart's tender tale."

"What on earth ails my master?" muttered Ben Zoof; "for the last hour he has been as fidgety as a bird returning after its winter migration."

Servadac suddenly started from his seat, and as he paced the room with all the frenzy of poetic inspiration, read out: "Empty words cannot convey All a lover's heart would say."

"Well, to be sure, he is at his everlasting verses again!" said Ben Zoof to himself, as he roused himself in his corner. "Impossible to sleep in such a noise;" and he gave vent to a loud groan.

"How now, Ben Zoof?" said the captain sharply. "What ails you?"

"Nothing, sir, only the nightmare."

"Curse the fellow, he has quite interrupted me!" ejaculated the captain. "Ben Zoof!" he called aloud.

"Here, sir!" was the prompt reply; and in an instant the orderly was upon his feet, standing in a military attitude, one hand to his forehead, the other closely pressed to his trouser-seam.

"Stay where you are! don't move an inch!" shouted Servadac; "I have just thought of the end of my rondo." And in a voice of inspiration, accompanying his words with dramatic gestures, Servadac began to declaim:

"Listen, lady, to my vows — O, consent to be my spouse; Constant ever I will be, Constant"

No closing lines were uttered. All at once, with unutterable violence, the captain and his orderly were dashed, face downwards, to the ground.

Chapter 4

A CONVULSION OF NATURE

Whence came it that at that very moment the horizon underwent so strange and sudden a modification, that the eye of the most practiced mariner could not distinguish between sea and sky?

Whence came it that the billows raged and rose to a height hitherto unregistered in the records of science?

Whence came it that the elements united in one deafening crash; that the earth groaned as though the whole framework of the globe were ruptured; that the waters roared from their innermost depths; that the air shrieked with all the fury of a cyclone?

Whence came it that a radiance, intenser than the effulgence of the Northern Lights, overspread the firmament, and momentarily dimmed the splendor of the brightest stars?

Whence came it that the Mediterranean, one instant emptied of its waters, was the next flooded with a foaming surge?

Whence came it that in the space of a few seconds the moon's disc reached a magnitude as though it were but a tenth part of its ordinary distance from the earth?

Whence came it that a new blazing spheroid, hitherto unknown to astronomy, now appeared suddenly in the firmament, though it were but to lose itself immediately behind masses of accumulated cloud?

What phenomenon was this that had produced a cataclysm so tremendous in effect upon earth, sky, and sea?

Was it possible that a single human being could have survived the convulsion? and if so, could he explain its mystery?

Chapter 5

A MYSTERIOUS SEA

Violent as the commotion had been, that portion of the Algerian coast which is bounded on the north by the Mediterranean, and on the west by the right bank of the Shelif, appeared to have suffered little change. It is true that indentations were perceptible in the fertile plain, and the surface of the sea was ruffled with an agitation that was quite unusual; but the rugged outline of the cliff was the same as heretofore, and the aspect of the entire scene appeared unaltered. The stone hostelry, with the exception of some deep clefts in its walls, had sustained little injury; but the gourbi, like a house of cards destroyed by an infant's breath, had completely subsided, and its two inmates lay motionless, buried under the sunken thatch.

It was two hours after the catastrophe that Captain Servadac regained consciousness; he had some trouble to collect his thoughts, and the first sounds that escaped his lips were the concluding words of the rondo which had been so ruthlessly interrupted; "Constant ever I will be, Constant"

His next thought was to wonder what had happened; and in order to find an answer, he pushed aside the broken thatch, so that his head appeared above the *debris*. "The gourbi leveled to the ground!" he exclaimed, "surely a waterspout has passed along the coast."

He felt all over his body to perceive what injuries he had sustained, but not a sprain nor a scratch could he discover. "Where are you, Ben Zoof?" he shouted.

"Here, sir!" and with military promptitude a second head protruded from the rubbish.

"Have you any notion what has happened, Ben Zoof?"

"I've a notion, captain, that it's all up with us."

"Nonsense, Ben Zoof; it is nothing but a waterspout!"

"Very good, sir," was the philosophical reply, immediately followed by the query, "Any bones broken, sir?"

"None whatever," said the captain.

Both men were soon on their feet, and began to make a vigorous clearance of the ruins, beneath which they found that their arms, cooking utensils, and other property, had sustained little injury.

"By-the-by, what o'clock is it?" asked the captain.

"It must be eight o'clock, at least," said Ben Zoof, looking at the sun, which was a considerable height above the horizon. "It is almost time for us to start."

"To start! what for?"

"To keep your appointment with Count Timascheff."

"By Jove! I had forgotten all about it!" exclaimed Servadac. Then looking at his watch, he cried, "What are you thinking of, Ben Zoof? It is scarcely two o'clock."

"Two in the morning, or two in the afternoon?" asked Ben Zoof, again regarding the sun.

Servadac raised his watch to his ear. "It is going," said he; "but, by all the wines of Medoc, I am puzzled. Don't you see the sun is in the west? It must be near setting."

"Setting, captain! Why, it is rising finely, like a conscript at the sound of the reveille. It is considerably higher since we have been talking."

Incredible as it might appear, the fact was undeniable that the sun was rising over the Shelif from that quarter of the horizon behind which it usually sank for the latter portion of its daily round. They were utterly bewildered. Some mysterious phenomenon must not only have altered the position of the sun in the sidereal system, but must even have brought about an important modification of the earth's rotation on her axis.

Captain Servadac consoled himself with the prospect of reading an explanation of the mystery in next week's newspapers, and turned his attention to what was to him of more immediate importance. "Come, let us be off," said he to his orderly; "though heaven and earth be topsy-turvy, I must be at my post this morning."

"To do Count Timascheff the honor of running him through the body," added Ben Zoof.

If Servadac and his orderly had been less preoccupied, they would have noticed that a variety of other physical changes besides the apparent alteration in the movement of the sun had been evolved during the atmospheric disturbances of that New Year's night. As they descended the steep footpath leading from the cliff towards the Shelif, they were unconscious that their respiration became forced and rapid, like that of a

mountaineer when he has reached an altitude where the air has become less charged with oxygen. They were also unconscious that their voices were thin and feeble; either they must themselves have become rather deaf, or it was evident that the air had become less capable of transmitting sound.

The weather, which on the previous evening had been very foggy, had entirely changed. The sky had assumed a singular tint, and was soon covered with lowering clouds that completely hid the sun. There were, indeed, all the signs of a coming storm, but the vapor, on account of the insufficient condensation, failed to fall.

The sea appeared quite deserted, a most unusual circumstance along this coast, and not a sail nor a trail of smoke broke the gray monotony of water and sky. The limits of the horizon, too, had become much circumscribed. On land, as well as on sea, the remote distance had completely disappeared, and it seemed as though the globe had assumed a more decided convexity.

At the pace at which they were walking, it was very evident that the captain and his attendant would not take long to accomplish the three miles that lay between the gourbi and the place of rendezvous. They did not exchange a word, but each was conscious of an unusual buoyancy, which appeared to lift up their bodies and give as it were, wings to their feet. If Ben Zoof had expressed his sensations in words, he would have said that he felt "up to anything," and he had even forgotten to taste so much as a crust of bread, a lapse of memory of which the worthy soldier was rarely guilty.

As these thoughts were crossing his mind, a harsh bark was heard to the left of the footpath, and a jackal was seen emerging from a large grove of lentisks. Regarding the two wayfarers with manifest uneasiness, the beast took up its position at the foot of a rock, more than thirty feet in height. It belonged to an African species distinguished by a black spotted skin, and a black line down the front of the legs. At night-time, when they scour the country in herds, the creatures are somewhat formidable, but singly they are no more dangerous than a dog. Though by no means afraid of them, Ben Zoof had a particular aversion to jackals, perhaps because they had no place among the fauna of his beloved Montmartre. He accordingly began to make threatening gestures, when, to the unmitigated astonishment of himself and the captain, the animal darted forward, and in one single bound gained the summit of the rock.

"Good Heavens!" cried Ben Zoof, "that leap must have been thirty feet at least."

"True enough," replied the captain; "I never saw such a jump."

Meantime the jackal had seated itself upon its haunches, and was staring at the two men with an air of impudent defiance. This was too much for Ben Zoof's forbearance, and stooping down he caught up a huge stone, when to his surprise, he found that it was no heavier than a piece of petrified sponge. "Confound the brute!" he exclaimed, "I might as well throw a piece of bread at him. What accounts for its being as light as this?"

Nothing daunted, however, he hurled the stone into the air. It missed its aim; but the jackal, deeming it on the whole prudent to decamp, disappeared across the trees and hedges with a series of bounds, which could only be likened to those that might be made by an india-rubber kangaroo. Ben Zoof was sure that his own powers of propelling must equal those of a howitzer, for his stone, after a lengthened flight through the air, fell to the ground full five hundred paces the other side of the rock.

The orderly was now some yards ahead of his master, and had reached a ditch full of water, and about ten feet wide. With the intention of clearing it, he made a spring, when a loud cry burst from Servadac. "Ben Zoof, you idiot! What are you about? You will break your back!"

And well might he be alarmed, for Ben Zoof had sprung to a height of forty feet into the air. Fearful of the consequences that would attend the descent of his servant to *terra firma*, Servadac bounded forwards, to be on the other side of the ditch in time to break his fall. But the muscular effort that he made carried him in his turn to an altitude of thirty feet; in his ascent he passed Ben Zoof, who had already commenced his downward course; and then, obedient to the laws of gravitation, he descended with increasing rapidity, and alighted upon the earth without experiencing a shock greater than if he had merely made a bound of four or five feet high.

Ben Zoof burst into a roar of laughter. "Bravo!" he said, "we should make a good pair of clowns."

But the captain was inclined to take a more serious view of the matter. For a few seconds he stood lost in thought, then said solemnly, "Ben Zoof, I must be dreaming. Pinch me hard; I must be either asleep or mad."

"It is very certain that something has happened to us," said Ben Zoof. "I have occasionally dreamed that I was a swallow flying over the Montmartre, but I never experienced anything of this kind before; it must be peculiar to the coast of Algeria."

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