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INTRODUCTORY

As many youthful readers may wonder who or what Munchausen is; and as even those who have heard of his adventures may be in doubt as to whether the hero ever existed; it seems well to state here that the family of Munchausen is well known in certain parts of Germany, and is one from which many eminent men have sprung. At the present day its name is borne by various officials in the civil service and by officers of high rank in the army.

Karl Friedrich Hieronymus, Baron von Munchausen, was born in Bodenwerder in Hanover, in May, 1720, and died in February, 1797. In 1737 he served in Russian campaigns against the Turks, and after his return acquired great notoriety by his exaggerated stories of adventure. A collection of stories attributed to him, was first published in England in 1785, under the title of *Baron Munchausen's Narrative of His Marvellous Travels and Campaigns in Russia*. It acquired great popularity and was translated into German the following year.

It is not definitely known who first issued these stories in book form, but it was probably the work of one Rudolph Erich Raspe, a scholarly and versatile author, but a great rogue, who had taken refuge in England from the arm of German law. He swindled Sir John Sinclair as a mining expert, and this exploit suggested his *Dousterswivel* to Sir Walter Scott. Eventually he died of fever in Donegal.

Munchausen's stories are so outrageous, and he asserts so strongly that they are all strictly true, that his name has become proverbial as a synonym of extravagant boasting. One thing is certain; many of the stories attributed to him are very old, and have, at times, appeared in French, Spanish, Welsh and Greek literature.

J.H.W.



BARON VON MUNCHAUSEN

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CHAPTER I

THE BARON'S ADVENTURES WITH A FOX AND A BOAR



Baron Munchausen had feasted his friends right well, and after supper he leaned back in his chair and took a deep draught of sparkling Rhine wine. Then, rubbing his hands together, he glanced round the banqueting-hall and said:

"So you want me to tell you of my adventures in the past. Ah! I was a fine, strapping young fellow in those days, full of strength and courage. If it please you, dear friends and comrades, each night when we have supped I will relate to you

all the strange adventures I passed through in my youth." His guests eagerly consenting, silence was proclaimed and the Baron began his story.

"One morning, looking from my bedchamber window, I noticed that a large pond, which lies close to my castle, was almost covered with wild duck. In my excitement I could hardly wait to dress myself properly, but, throwing on my garments and hastily seizing my gun and ammunition, I rushed headlong downstairs; in my haste I banged my head so lustily against the doorpost that sparks flew from my eyes. Unchecked by this little accident I rushed on till, under cover of bush and thicket, I reached the edge of the pond. As I was about to take aim, I discovered that when I had received that violent blow the flint must have fallen out of my tinder-box. I durst not move from where I was standing, but how could I manage without a flint "

"I at once resolved to make use of the accident I had just had with my eye. Opening the hammer, I laid my gun against my cheek and took aim, at the same time giving myself a violent blow in the eye. What I hoped and expected at once happened—sparks flew from my eye which kindled the powder in the gun. A loud report was heard, and with one shot I brought down five pair of duck, four wild geese, and a pair of water-hens!

"Ah, indeed, presence of mind leads to manly deeds, whether on land or sea, in, war, or in the chase.

"Once as I was walking through the forest, my gun slung over my shoulder, and carrying in my hand a large nail with which I intended to nail up a board in my wood-hut, I caught sight of a magnificent black fox standing near a tree. It would have been a thousand pities to riddle his costly skin with shot, but I must fire quickly for he had already scented me. A happy thought struck me; I stepped behind a tree, took the charge out of my gun, and slipped in the nail. Then I took accurate aim and, as I intended, the fox was uninjured but

unable to move from the spot, for I had nailed his brush firmly to the tree.

"I walked calmly up to him, drew out my hunting-knife, made a cross-cut on his head, and thrashed him till he ran out of his skin, escaping, as it were, in his shirt-sleeves. His comrades must have been amazed at the sight, and I myself was so overcome with laughter that I never even thought of sending a bullet after him. It is possible his skin may have grown again, or he may have perished from the winter cold and been devoured by his brethren.

"You may well laugh, but consider how lucky it was that I just happened to have a nail in my hand!



I RIVETED DOWN THE TUSKS.

"A few days after this I was returning from the chase with an empty gun, having used all my ammunition, when suddenly a raging boar rushed at me. Well, you know how unpleasant such an encounter may be, so I am sure none of you will think me a coward for hastily climbing the nearest tree: it was a young birch which could hardly sustain my

weight. The wild boar made a dash at the tree but a moment too late, for I had just drawn my legs out of his reach. But so violent was the onslaught, that his tusks penetrated the trunk of the tree and projected an inch through the other side. Without hesitation I slid down the tree-stem, picked up a flint the size of my fist, and riveted down the projecting points of the tusks. Then I went home, but returned the next morning with my servants, a cart, and a loaded musket. I did not ask the poor creature what sort of night he had spent, but put a bullet through his brain without further ceremony.

"You can imagine what a narrow escape I had, when I tell you that the head forester sent me word the beast weighed five tons—a good deal for a wild boar.

"And now, gentlemen, that is enough for to-day. Tomorrow night I promise you some more really remarkable hunting stories."

CHAPTER II

MORE OF THE BARON'S WONDERFUL HUNTING ADVENTURES

One day when I had used all my shot a stately stag passed before me, looking as unconcerned as if he knew my pouch was empty. Just you wait a bit, you shall have it, thought I, rapidly loading my gun with powder and a handful of cherry stones, for I had just eaten a couple of pounds of cherries. The stag gazed at me with mocking scorn—bang, and I fired straight between his antlers. He shook his head several times, made me a bow, turned his back and walked slowly into the depths of the forest. It was a pity I had no buckshot handy! At home I was the laughing-stock of my family, and whenever we had cherries some one would be sure to collect the stones and offer them me for my next stag hunt.

"At last the novelty of the jest wore off; but a year or two later as we were hunting in the same district, an enormous stag, with a cherry-tree quite ten feet high growing between his antlers, came towards me. Naturally the recollection of my shot with the cherry stones dawned on me, and I claimed first shot at my well-won property. I took steady aim at the stag, who fell with a crash to the ground, and then, you see, I had gained both meat and dessert, for the tree was covered with bunches of beautiful ripe cherries.

"One morning, as I equipped myself for the chase, I noticed that the cord, on which my powder-horn hung, was very thin, and almost worn through in two places. As I slung it on, I thought to myself, 'That won't last long!' Towards evening, as I was returning home, I passed a little lake on which about a dozen ducks were swimming. It was only possible to have a shot at one, and yet I fain would have secured the whole dozen, for I had invited a party of

gentlemen to dine with me the next day. I felt for my powder-horn, but it was gone; and I concluded that the cord must have snapped as I forced my way through a plantation of young firs. I had only one round of shot in my gun, and no more powder—besides, what would be the good of a single duckling to me?



A CHERRY TREE GROWING BETWEEN HIS ANTLERS.

"In this perplexity, I bethought me of a piece of bacon, left over from the provisions I had taken with me. Untwisting a dog-leash to four times its original length, and tying one end round a morsel of the bacon, I hid myself in the rushes and threw out my bait. To my delight the nearest duck swam up, swallowed the dainty, and I pulled her gently ashore; tying her to a tree, I proceeded to fish in the same manner till I had caught the entire thirteen. Then I passed the string through the beaks of all the birds and started to carrying them home. Just as I was reflecting that I really could not carry such a weight any further, the birds, who had recovered from their first fright, flapped their wings and rose in the air dragging me with them. At first I was rather alarmed, but I soon regained my

presence of mind and steered with my coattails towards home. I soon found myself hovering over the chimneys of my own house, and, using the ducks as ballast, I twisted their necks one after another, and descended gradually through the largest chimney till at last, to the great astonishment of the cook, who was just about to kindle the fire for supper, I stood safely on the kitchen hearth.

"Is not the above a striking example of good, luck combined with presence of mind?"



BETWEEN HER TUSKS SHE HELD A PIECE OF THE OTHER'S TAIL.

"One day in the depth of the forest, I perceived a wild pig and a sow running close behind each other. I raised my gun, but hesitated whether to aim at the pig or sow. At last I fired—the pig trotted on, but the sow stood motionless. I made a closer investigation, and found that the old sow was blind. Between her tusks she held a piece of the other's tail, which she had taken hold of in order to be led along, and this was what my bullet had hit—whereupon the young one had rushed away, leaving the blind mother helpless. Taking compassion on its plight, I seized the fragment of tail and led the poor

creature home, in order to show my wife the new kind of game I had brought her.

"I hardly think it likely that any one of you will have a similar experience.

"For two days I had been pursuing a hare. My dog always started her, and yet I could never get near enough to shoot.

"I have never believed in witchcraft, for I have seen too many wonderful things for that, but I must confess that this hare puzzled me. At length I managed to fire a successful shot; she fell, and what do you think I discovered?"

"Besides her four ordinary legs, this hare had four additional ones on her back. This was the explanation of her tremendous speed, for when her four ordinary feet were tired she threw herself on her back, like a good swimmer does, and fled on with four fresh feet.

"I must confess that I have never seen another similar hare, and that I should never have caught this one without my dog's assistance."

CHAPTER III

SOME ADVENTURES IN RUSSIA

Soon after my last hunting adventure I went on a journey through Russia, but I tarried so long in Warsaw that winter had already set in with unwonted severity when I continued my way northwards through Poland.

"I soon became so accustomed to the prevailing cold that I hardly felt it; but I thought it very strange that I should ride all day long without coming across a village, an inn, or even a single isolated house. I knew I was shaping my course due north, but according to the map I should be traversing a dense forest, whereas I found myself in the midst of a snowy desert without tree or house in sight.

"Tired out at nightfall I dismounted, and considered myself lucky to have as provision a large loaf, which I had really purchased for my horse and could now share with him. I discovered a kind of pointed tree-stump to which I fastened my horse, and then lay down on the snow a few paces off, using my saddle for a pillow. I was so exhausted that I instantly fell into a deep sleep, and did not wake till broad daylight. You can imagine my astonishment to find myself in the midst of a village, lying in a churchyard, and my horse nowhere to be seen; then I heard human voices near and a neighing somewhere above me. The peasants pointed upwards, and I beheld my horse hanging by his bridle to the summit of the church steeple! Matters now became quite clear to me; the whole village had been covered with snow, and what in the dark I had taken for a tree-stump proved to be the cross or weathercock of the church steeple. During the night the snow had melted, and I had gradually sunk down into the churchyard while still asleep.



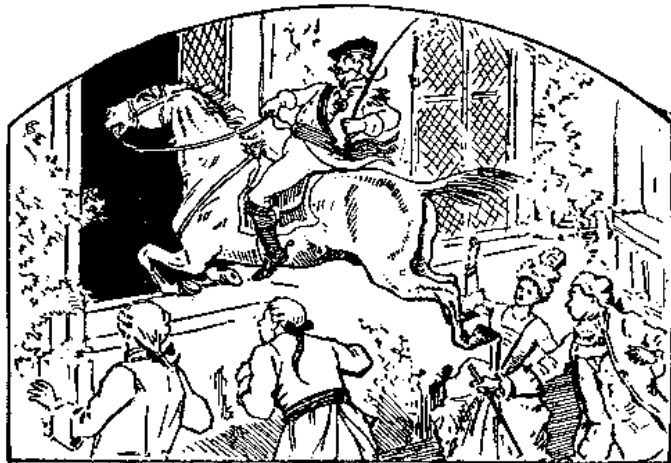
PICKING UP MY PISTOL, I SHOT THE BRIDLE IN TWO.

"My first thought was to release my horse from his uncomfortable position. Picking up my pistol, I shot the bridle in two; my trusty steed slipped gently down the church-tower and alighted near my feet. The landlord of the inn, a very worthy man, regaled us with a good breakfast; and while my Brownie was munching a double allowance of corn, he told me that such a deep snowfall was by no means uncommon in Poland, and that they usually had several such every winter. It was with great difficulty that I prevailed upon my host to accept a gold piece for his hospitality, and then, strengthened and refreshed, I pursued my way, which, Plover that the snow was melted, certainly lay through a dense forest.

"After a journey of a few days I arrived at the celebrated Count Pumstock's magnificent country estate, where I intended to make a short stay in order to recover from the fatigue of my travels.

"We were sitting at the tea-table, when the gentlemen were summoned into the courtyard to inspect a young thoroughbred horse, which had just arrived. Meantime I remained with the ladies in the drawing-room till sounds of distress made me start up.

"I hastened downstairs, and, to my astonishment, found all the gentlemen standing helplessly round a horse, so restive and unruly that not even the most resolute horseman dared mount or handle him. Seeing me approach, the Count called out in jest: 'Come, Nunchausen, here is a task for you!'



I FORCED HIM TO LEAP IN AT THE OPEN WINDOW.

"With one leap I was on the horse's back, took him by surprise, and, with the best display of horsemanship of which I was capable, soon reduced him to gentleness and obedience.

"In order to show this to the ladies and save them unnecessary trouble, I forced him to leap in at the open window of the tea-room and to walk, trot, and gallop several

times round; finally, I made him mount the tea-table and repeat the performance in miniature without breaking a single cup or saucer. This amused the ladies exceedingly, and the count was so delighted that he insisted on my accepting the horse from him as a present.



I MADE HIM MOUNT THE TEA-TABLE.

"I could have received nothing more welcome, since I was about to enter on my apprenticeship as a soldier in a campaign against the Turks. Our leader was the renowned Count Munnig, and, though I lay claim to no special share of glory, I may say without boasting that we all did our duty right nobly, and that the magnificent results of the campaign were entirely due to our efforts, although, as is usually the case, all the credit was given to the commander.

"I still had a few days to spare before joining my regiment, and I cannot complain that they were devoid of adventure. But I will reserve these tales till to-morrow night."

CHAPTER IV

FURTHER HUNTING EXPLOITS IN RUSSIA

The next day I went for a long ride on my new horse, and on my way home through the park I noticed a large animal near some sheds; however, as I was riding very quickly, and twilight had already begun, I failed to notice what it really was.

"On my return home I stabled my horse and hastened back to the park to discover if the animal I had seen were a dog or something else, and as I threaded my way among the still leafless trees the animal came bounding towards me with open jaws. In spite of the darkness, which was increasing every moment, I perceived that it was not a hound but a wolf which stood before me.

"Being quite unarmed, for I had left even my pistols in my saddle-bag, I was in great perplexity. The creature crept gradually nearer and nearer. It was useless to seek safety in flight; besides, in our family it is not customary to evade danger by running away from it. Instinctively, I clenched my fist and thrust it into the wolf's open jaws, pushing on and on for safety's sake, till my arm was in as far as my shoulder. But then I was at a loss what to do, and must confess that I did not find my situation, face to face with a wolf, a very pleasant one.

"We gazed at each other in a far from loving manner, and in the brute's squinting eyes I read its decision to spring at me the moment I withdrew my arm. Summoning all my strength, while the wolf howled and tried fruitlessly to bite, I seized him by the inner skin, turned him inside out like a glove, and flung him to the ground, where I left him. There he was found the next morning by one of the gardeners, who hastened to spread the tale, for naturally I had not mentioned

it, in fact, I took small account of the matter, though the others considered it an heroic deed.



I THRUST MY FIST INTO THE WOLF'S OPEN JAWS.



WE ARRIVED IN SAFETY AT THE TOWN.

"In winter, horse-riding is not customary in Russia, so I entrusted to my groom the two valuable horses, which had been given me by Count Pumstock, and went on my next expedition by sleigh. As I was traversing the last wood, which lies before the outskirts of the town, a gaunt and starving wolf ran full speed after me. He soon overtook the sleigh, and there was no chance of escape. Almost mechanically, I laid myself down flat in the sleigh, and let the horse gallop on. What I wished, but hardly dared to hope or expect, took place. The wolf leapt over me, and, falling furiously upon the horse, began to devour the hinder part of the poor animal, which ran the faster for its pain and terror. Unnoticed, I presently raised my head, and discovered with horror that the wolf had gradually eaten his way into the horse's body. I took advantage of this to fall upon him with my whip. This unexpected attack in the rear frightened him so much that he rushed forward with all his might, the horse's carcass fell to the ground, and there was the wolf harnessed in his place! By dint of whipping him continually we arrived in full career safely at the town, to the terror and surprise of all spectators. I came to a standstill before the Field-marshal's palace, and Count Munnig, who happened to be standing at one of the windows, nearly died with laughter at the sight."

CHAPTER V

THE BARON'S EXPLOITS IN BATTLE AGAINST THE TURKS

HE IS FINALLY TAKEN PRISONER

It was only natural that a man of such ready presence of mind as myself should at once be placed in command of a body of hussars. I met with great success in most of my expeditions, but the only striking incident I can call to mind is that connected with the capture of Oszakow from the Turks.

"Before the actual siege of the fortress was planned, I was sent on with my hussars as an advance guard, and saw the enemy coming against us enveloped in a cloud of dust. Nothing would have been easier than to wrap ourselves in a similar dust-cloud, but that would have been of no real help to us. Instead of that, I ordered my men to spread their flanks right myself led on straight against the enemy, to and left and raise a thick cloud of dust, while I gain a nearer view of their numbers and ascertain their intentions.

"The enemy believed we were far stronger than was really the case, for they could only see the centre of our forces, and imagined we possessed strong reinforcements to right and left. Disorder crept into their ranks, and with a loud 'Hurrah,' which quite drowned the Turkish cries of 'Allah it Allah,' we made a fierce onset against them and killed a large number. The rest of the Turkish forces we drove back not only to the walled town in their rear, but even through it and out at the opposite gates—a result which far exceeded our most sanguine expectations.



HIS THIRST SEEMED TO BE UNQUENCHABLE.

"Incited partly by the warlike courage of youth, and partly owing to the swiftness of my noble Lithuanian steed, I had far outstripped my men; at the opposite gates of the town I slew the last Turk as he sought to escape, and barred the gate with my own hands. Then I rode back into the market-place in order to collect my men, but judge of my astonishment when I discovered that not a single hussar nor even a trumpeter was in sight. 'They must be scouring the other streets, or what is become of them?' I thought. 'At any rate they cannot be far off, and will soon rejoin me.' In the meantime I walked my panting steed to a fountain in the market place to let him drink. His thirst seemed to be unquenchable, and he drank and drank without stopping. I watched him in astonishment for some

time, then, as I turned to see if any of my men were coming, what a sight met my eyes: the hind part of the poor creature, croup and legs, were missing, and the water ran out as it came in, without refreshing or doing him any good.

"How it could have happened was quite a mystery to me until my groom, who now appeared from the opposite side, explained why it was that I was quite alone and that half of my horse was missing. When I rushed into the town after the flying enemy, they had, unperceived by me, dropped the portcullis, which my gallant steed bore me at full speed to the entrance gate of the town, where I found the other half actively pursuing some fugitive Turks.



THE SPRIGS TOOK ROOT AND FORMED A BOWER.

"In my troop was an excellent farrier, who totally cut off my horse's hind part and separated me from my hussars, though, as you know, this had not hindered me from driving the enemy out of the town.

"I turned back immediately, and the half of sewed the two halves together with young laurel shoots, as he had nothing better at hand. This contrivance turned out very satisfactorily, for the wound soon healed, and the sprigs took root in the body, grew up, and formed a bower, so that both in this and the next campaign, I was able to ride in the shade of my own and my horse's laurels.

"I only mention the preceding incident because in consequence of my great exertions in battle the muscles of my right arm retained the movement, and I had to wear the arm in a sling for some time to prevent myself from doing my own soldiers a mischief. The consequence was, that one day when I was out scouting I was taken prisoner, in my helpless condition, by a band of Turks.

"To-morrow night you shall hear of my strange experiences during my captivity."

CHAPTER VI

THE BARON'S ADVENTURES IN CAPTIVITY

HE IS RELEASED AND RETURNS TO RUSSIA

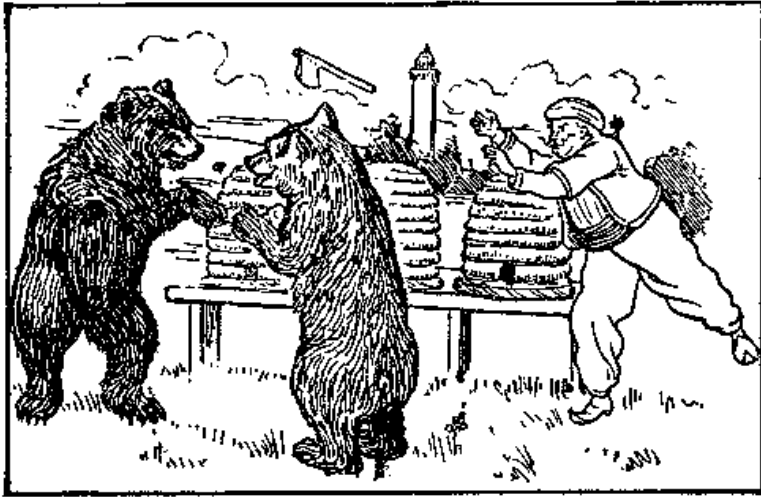
Instead of being exchanged as prisoner of war with some Turk in an equally high position, I was taken to Constantinople, and there sold as a slave. My daily task—a somewhat humiliating one for a gallant colonel of hussars—was to take care of the Sultan's bees. Every morning I had to drive them to pasture, guard them all day long, and drive the whole swarm back to their hives at night.

"One evening I missed two of my favorite bees, and after some search I discovered two bears trying to tear them to pieces for the sake of the honey they carried. I had no other weapon in my hand but a silver hatchet, which is the badge of the Sultan's servants, and this I threw at the bears. I failed to hit them, but they were terrified and ran away; what became of them I do not know, but at any rate I had rescued my bees. But I was in great dismay to find that by an unlucky turn of my arm I had sent my hatchet up in the air, and it continued rising higher and higher till it reached the moon, where it stuck. How could I recover it and what ladder would reach so high?

"Then it occurred to me that a few days ago the head-gardener had given me a Turkey bean, plucked from the grave of the Prophet. I made haste to plant it, remembering that these beans grow very quickly and run up to an astonishing height.

"I had scarcely planted the bean when it sprang up, and grew so fast under my very eyes that in a few hours it had actually fastened itself to one of the moon's horns. All I had to do now was to climb up by it into the moon, where I arrived safely after a toilsome ascent of some hours.

"My next task was to find my hatchet, and this was a troublesome piece of business, for up in the moon everything has the brightness of silver. However, I found it at last, lying on a heap of chopped straw.



I THREW THE HATCHET AT THE BEARS.

"I now thought of returning, but alas! The terrible heat of the sun had dried up my bean so that it was quite useless for descent. Helpless and disconsolate, I sat down on the heap of straw and looked about me. Suddenly I caught sight of what I took to be a large diamond, but going nearer I found it to be a ball of crystal attached to the end of a walking-stick to serve as a handle. Picking up the stick, I walked further into the regions of the moon. Here I felt the heat so much that I rid myself of all superfluous garments—my moustache had already been consumed by the heat, and I had the appearance of a stripling of seventeen.

"I perceived no remarkable difference betwixt the earth and the moon, except that here the atmosphere was so bright that all objects were reflected in it as in a mirror.

"Entering the confines of a city, I perceived a large number of men in Eastern garb, sitting in solemn consultation under a sort of canopy in the market-place. In their midst stood a dwarfish-looking being, violently shrieking and gesticulating. I was about to approach and address the moon inhabitants, when suddenly the little man rushed at me, snatched the stick with the crystal ball from my hand, and ran away with it at full speed. I rushed after him crying, 'Stop, thief!' while the others looked on, but made no attempt to help either of us.

"At length I lost sight of the little man, and I desisted from the pursuit, seeing it was hopeless. I was about to resume my wanderings, when there emerged from a wood six gigantic fellows, each armed with a heavy iron club. Seeing me they raised a shout and advanced towards me, brandishing their clubs. I did not wait to see what would happen next; terror lent wings to my feet, and I fled for dear life.

"I could only conclude, on thinking it over afterwards, that I must have had in my possession some treasure of which the dwarf was custodian, and seeing it in my hands he had repossessed himself of it with scant ceremony, and had then sent six of his men to capture or kill the supposed thief.

"At the rate of a mile a minute I soon far out-stripped my pursuers, and found myself at last near the very heap of straw on which my hatchet was still lying. I sat down on the edge of the moon and set my wits to work to discover a means of reaching the earth again, for I can assure you I had no wish to meet with any more of the moon-men.

"The only material at hand being the chopped straw, I twisted a rope of this as long and as well as I could make it. This rope I fastened to one of the moon's horns, and slid down to the end of it. Here I held myself fast with the left hand, and with the hatchet in my right I cut the long end of the upper part, which, when tied to the lower end, helped me down farther. This continual splicing and tying of the rope did not improve its quality, and when I was still several miles up in

the clouds my rope suddenly broke, and I fell to the earth with such violence that I was completely stunned. When, after some time, I recovered my senses, I found myself in a hole at least nine fathoms deep, made by the weight of my body falling from so great a height. Now I detest exaggeration of any kind, and the report that I dug steps with my fingernails is utterly false. Besides, why should I have done so when I had my hatchet, and it was so much easier to dig a few hundred steps with this? By the time I had ascended to earth by means of the steps my moustache had completely grown again.

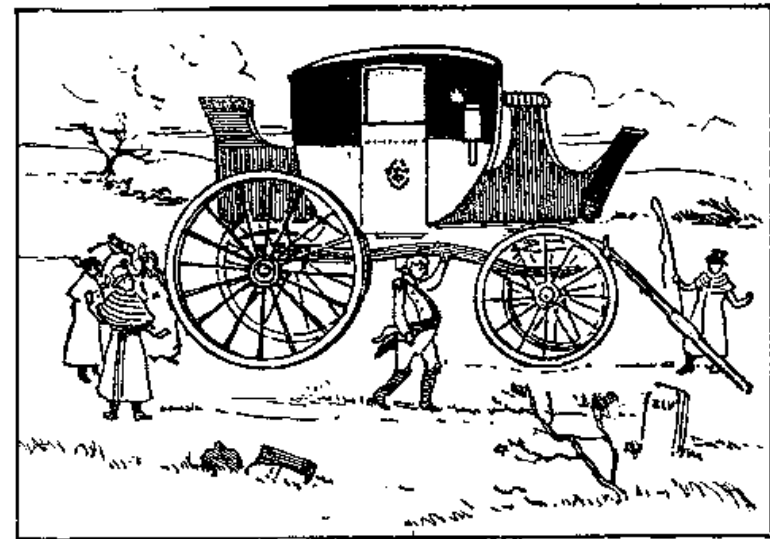


I CUT THE LONG END OF THE UPPER PART.

"After this the Sultan treated me very kindly, and showed me many marks of favor, but, nevertheless, I pined for freedom. This I obtained sooner than I had expected, for peace was concluded about this time between Russia and Turkey, and I was exchanged amongst other prisoners of war. I did not guess when I took my leave of the Sultan that I should soon return to Constantinople, but in a very different capacity. I travelled by coach, as befitted my rank, not on foot with the other released prisoners.

"On this journey we had to go through an extremely narrow lane, and in order to prevent any accident I ordered my postilion to give a signal with his horn, that we might not encounter another vehicle. He blew with all his might, but could make no sound; this was inexplicable, and annoying, too, for soon after several heavy wagons laden with timber came towards us.

"There was only one means of extricating ourselves from this difficulty. I jumped out of the carriage, unharnessed the horses, and took it, wheels and all, on my shoulders. Then I jumped over a hedge about nine feet high (which, considering the weight of the coach, was rather difficult) into a field, and came back again to fetch the horses. After the wagons had passed on, I took first the carriage and then the horses back into the road in the same manner.

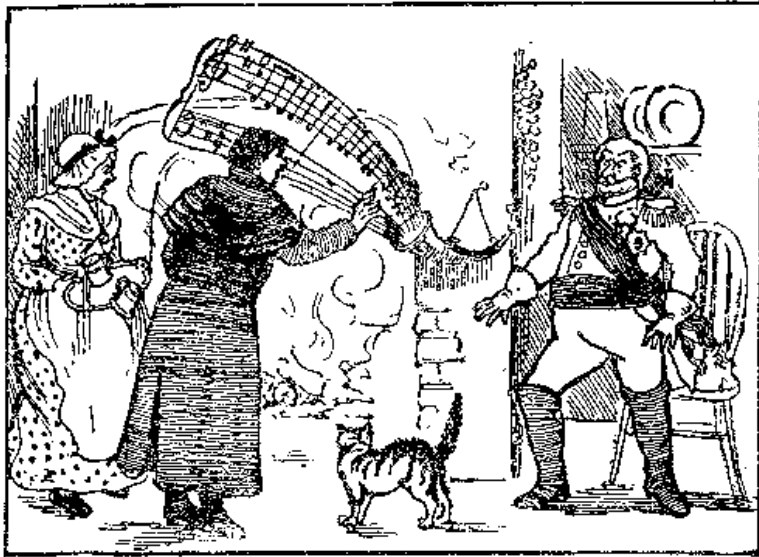


I TOOK IT ON MY SHOULDERS.

"When we arrived at the next inn, the postilion and I sat down to take some refreshment; he hung his horn, with his hat, on a peg near the kitchen fire. Suddenly we heard a loud *tarantara*, and then followed all the signals that the postilion

had blown into his horn, which had been frozen by the cold and was now thawing!

Then we heard a variety of tunes, all of which the honest fellow had tried to entertain us with on the journey, and had likewise been frozen in the horn.



WE HEARD A VARIETY OF TUNES.

"This brings to an end the short account of my Russian travels, but before I begin the recital of my further and even more wonderful adventures I will beg any of the company who entertain any doubt of my veracity to leave. I can only assure my friends here present that the tales which follow are as strictly founded on fact as those I have already related."

CHAPTER VII

THE BARON GIVES AN ACCOUNT OF HIS FIRST TRAVELS

The adventures of my youth were not less strange than those of my riper years, so to-night, dear comrades, I will tell you of my earliest travels.

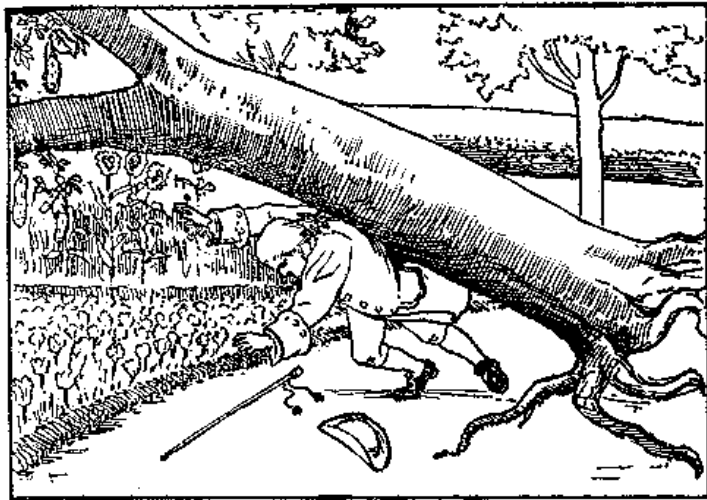
"When I was neither man nor boy, but between both, a cousin of my mother's obtained permission from my parents for me to accompany him on a voyage to the island of Ceylon, where his uncle at that time was governor.



AN OLD COUPLE GATHERING CUCUMBERS.

"We sailed from Amsterdam with despatches from their High Mightinesses the States of Holland. The only circumstance which happened on our voyage worth relating was the wonderful effect of a storm, which had torn up by the roots a great number of trees of enormous bulk and height, in an island where we lay at anchor to take in wood and water;

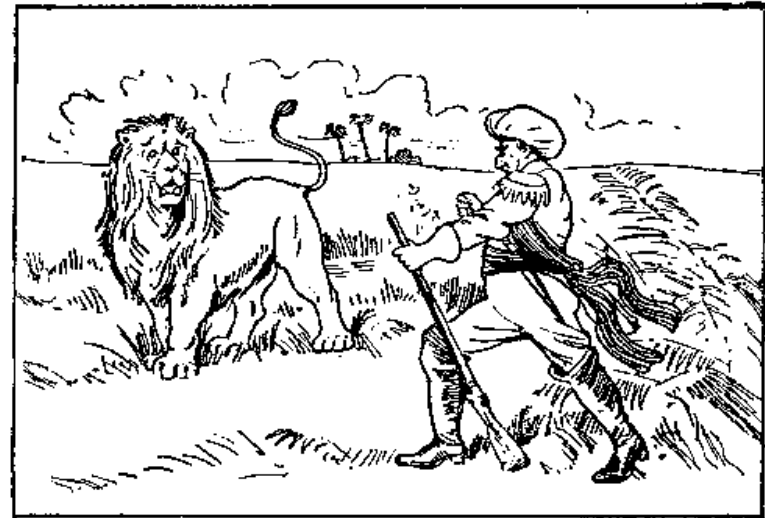
some of these trees weighed many tons, yet they were carried by the wind so amazingly high that they appeared like the feathers of small birds floating in the air, for they were at least five miles above the earth. However, as soon as the storm subsided, they all fell perpendicularly into their respective places, and took root again, except the largest, which happened, when it was blown into the air, to have a man and his wife, a very honest old couple, upon its branches, gathering cucumbers (in this part of the world that useful vegetable grows upon trees). The weight of this couple, as the tree descended, overbalanced the trunk, and brought it down in a horizontal position: it fell upon the chief man of the island, and killed him on the spot; he had quitted his house in the storm, under an apprehension of it falling upon him, and was returning through his own garden when this fortunate accident happened.—The word fortunate, here, requires some explanation.—This chief was a man of very avaricious and oppressive disposition, and though he had no family, the natives of the island were half-starved by his oppressive and infamous impositions.



IT FELL UPON THE CHIEF MAN.

"The very goods which he had thus taken from them were spoiling in his stores, while the poor wretches from whom they were plundered were pining in poverty. Though the destruction of this tyrant was accidental, the people chose the cucumber gatherers for their governors, as a mark of their gratitude for destroying, though accidentally, their late tyrant.

"After we had repaired the damages we sustained in this remarkable storm, and taken leave of the new governor and his lady, we sailed with a fair wind for the object of our voyage.



I SAW A GIGANTIC LION APPROACHING.

"In about six weeks we arrived safely in Ceylon, where I had a singular hunting adventure. After we had been there a few days, I was invited by the governor's eldest son to accompany him on a shooting expedition along the coast. He was a strong, athletic man, and being used to the climate walked on unconcernedly, whereas I was so exhausted by the heat, that I lagged behind and finally was forced to sit down and rest in the shade of a clump of trees. I say *forced*, because the heat was such as to melt the leaden buttons of my jacket,

and my gun was so hot that I feared every moment lest the powder inside should ignite.

"After a short rest, I continued my way alone, and soon came to the bank of a rushing stream, where I was about to sit down again, when I thought I heard a rustling sound behind me. I turned round and was petrified with horror to see a gigantic lion approaching, with the evident intention of devouring me.



THE LION JUMPED CLEAN OVER ME INTO THE CROCODILE'S JAWS.

"I had not even a moment for reflection; my gun was only loaded with bird-shot, and I had no other about me. I hardly hoped to wound or even frighten the lion with such ammunition, but I fired immediately, without waiting till he was within range. The majestic animal shook his head several times, uttered a loud roar, and prepared to spring. I turned to fly and—my flesh creeps even now at the recollection of it—there, on the bank, lay a huge crocodile with his terrible jaws extended ready to swallow me!

"Imagine, gentlemen, the horror of my situation—behind me the lion, before me the crocodile, on my left a rushing torrent, and on the right an abyss full of poisonous snakes! I gave myself up for lost, and fell to the ground in an almost fainting condition, expecting nothing better than to meet with a horrible death from one or other of these formidable animals.

"After waiting a few seconds, I heard a violent but unusual noise, different from any that had fallen on my ears before. I ventured to raise my head, and what do you think had happened?

"The lion had, in his eagerness, jumped clean over me into the crocodile's jaws; the head of the one stuck in the throat of the other, and they were struggling to extricate themselves. I quickly sprang to my feet, drew out my hunting-knife, and with one blow severed the lion's head, so that the body fell at my feet. Then, with the butt-end of my gun, I rammed the head further into the throat of the crocodile, and destroyed him by suffocation.

"Soon after my victory over these two formidable creatures, my friend returned to see what game I had brought down by the shot he had heard. He was astounded at my booty, especially when we measured the crocodile, which was just forty feet in length.

"As soon as we had related this extraordinary adventure to the governor, he sent a wagon and servants to

bring home the two carcasses. To him, as our host, I presented the lion's skin, and he was greatly delighted with the gift. The hide of the crocodile I had stuffed in the usual manner, and it now forms one of the chief attractions in the museum at Amsterdam, where the superintendent relates the story to all spectators, with harrowing additions.

"One of these is that the lion jumped right through the crocodile, but as soon as the head appeared Monsieur the Famous Baron (as he is pleased to call me) cut it off, and three feet of the crocodile's tail as well, whereupon the crocodile turned round, snatched the knife out of my hand, and swallowed it so greedily that it pierced his heart and killed him!

"I need not tell you how annoyed I was by these exaggerations. In this age of doubt people who do not know me might possibly be led to disbelieve the real facts, when they are mixed up with such absurd inventions."

CHAPTER VIII

HOW THE BARON BECAME A SECOND JONAH

On the return journey to Europe we had already doubled the Cape of Good Hope, when I begged the captain to let me land on the little Island of St. Helena. 'What do you want there?' I asked the captain. 'Nothing but to visit the rocky island,' I replied. To please me he complied with my request; and although there is nothing of special interest to be seen, I cannot help feeling that this little Island of St. Helena will one day become of great political importance, though I cannot tell you how or why.

"Just as I was leaving the island, we were hailed by an English ship and, after ascertaining the name of our vessel and its destination, the English captain requested to be allowed to come on board. He proved to be an old friend of my cousin's, and after he had taken his leave my guardian told me that, at the Englishman's request, he had undertaken to deliver some important papers to the commander of the fleet in the West Indies.

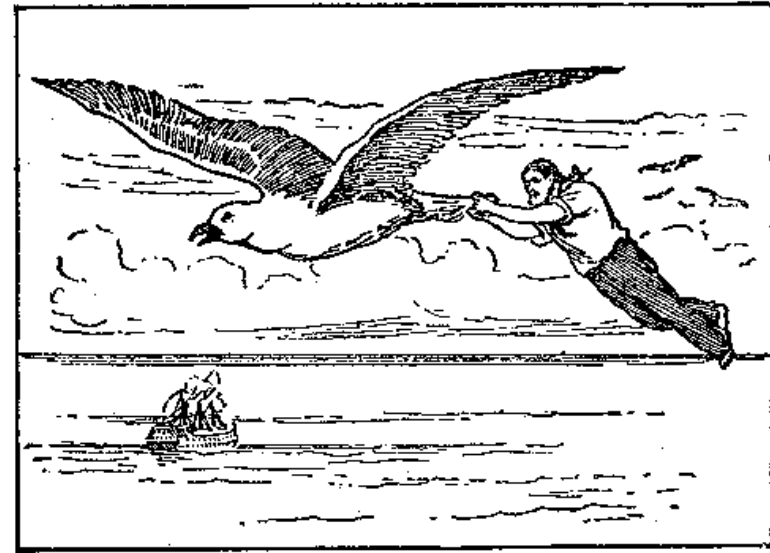
"I was by no means displeased to have our voyage thus prolonged, for I was anxious to pass through the Gulf Stream and convince myself that all the tales I had heard about it were really true. The weather was exceedingly warm, and on sunny days the water was so hot that we had only to dip eggs or meat in it and draw them out properly cooked.

"The most surprising thing of all was that large shoals of fish swam gaily round the ship, but as soon as they were caught and exposed to the air they died immediately, and, since they were ready cooked, could be eaten at once, and tasted delicious. The question of how it was possible that completely cooked fish could swim about in the boiling sea-

water puzzled us for some time. At length the explanation occurred to us that the water only became hot by degrees, and that the fish gradually accustomed themselves to the higher temperature; but, naturally, when exposed to the cooler air, the heat struck inwards and killed them. So there was nothing so very wonderful in it after all.

"We had one very remarkable adventure when we were sailing eastwards from Newfoundland; our ship struck with great force against something which we all took to be a rock. But no rock was marked on our chart and, upon heaving the lead, we could find no bottom even at five hundred fathoms. The most incomprehensible circumstance was that we not only lost our rudder, but our bowsprit broke in the middle, and all the masts were split from top to bottom. One poor fellow, who was aloft furling the mainsail, was flung at least three miles from the ship before he fell into the water; fortunately he saved his life by seizing hold of the tail of a large sea-gull and guiding it close to the ship, when we were able to take him on board. So great was the shock, that all the people between decks were thrown violently against the floors above them; my head was bent quite out of place, and it was some months before it regained its natural position.

"Whilst we were all in a state of amazement at the unaccountable confusion in which we were involved, everything was explained by the sudden appearance of a huge whale, which had been basking in the sun, asleep, within a few feet of the surface of the water. The monster was so annoyed with the disturbance which our ship had caused him, that he beat in all the gallery with his tail, and almost at the same instant took the sheet-anchor which was suspended from the prow, between his teeth, and swam with the ship at least an hundred miles in thirteen hours. We were close on the American mainland, when fortunately the cable broke and, by the impetus we had received, we were carried safely to the mouth of the river St. Lawrence.



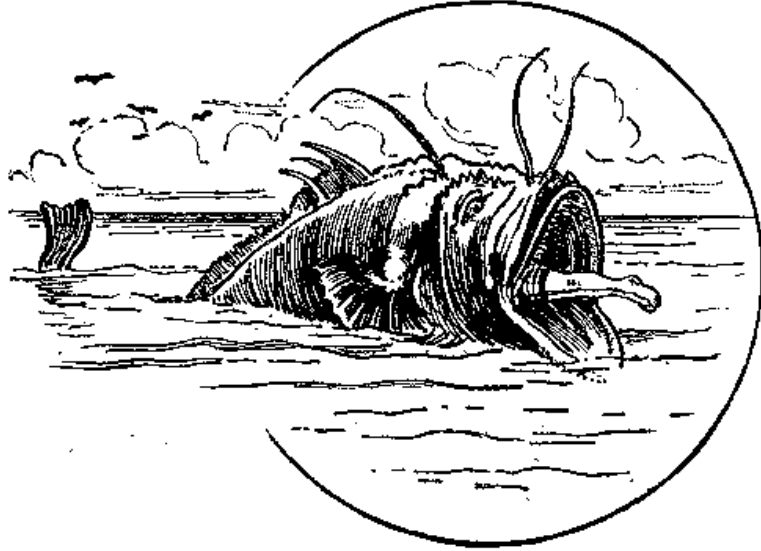
HE SEIZED THE TAIL OF A LARGE SEA-GULL.

'Here we repaired the damages our ship had sustained, and when, some time after, we passed the spot where we had struck, we found the whale floating dead on the water; the body measured, without exaggeration, at least half a mile in length! As we could take but a small quantity of such a monstrous animal on board, with much difficulty we cut his head off, where, to our great joy, we found our anchor attached to about forty fathoms of cable, sticking in a hollow tooth on the left side of the jaw.

"We continued our voyage, and once more I fell into great danger. On a hot summer morning, when we were becalmed, I was enjoying a swim in the sea, when suddenly an immense fish with jaws widely extended, made towards me.

"It was impossible to escape, since fish swim far more quickly than human beings, and I was too far from the ship to cry for help. I therefore made myself into as small a compass as possible, in order to avoid hurting myself against the

monster's formidable rows of teeth, and dived down his mouth. The space inside was but narrow and as dark as night, but the warmth was by no means unpleasant.

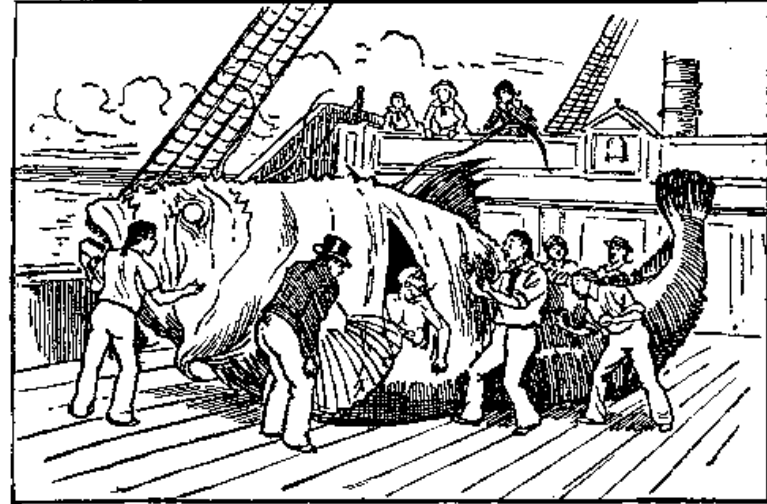


I DIVED DOWN HIS MOUTH.

"My movements gave my host severe indigestion, and he sought by all possible means to get rid of me. Perceiving this, I started performing Scotch reels and Irish jigs, though I did not much feel in a dancing mood. This pleased the fish so little that he uttered piercing cries and threw his body half out of the water. The crew of an Italian merchant ship, which happened to be sailing past, had their attention drawn to this sight, and in a few minutes the fish was skillfully harpooned. I became aware of this from the fact that all the creature's movements had ceased. The sailors hauled him on board, and I heard them discussing how they should cut open the fish in order to secure the largest quantity of oil.

"As I understood Italian very well, this conversation made me somewhat uneasy, for it was very probable I might be injured by the great knives with which they were about to

cut up the fish. I crouched down in the middle of the body and waited as calmly as I could, but with great uneasiness, for the sailors to begin their carving operations.



I TORE OPEN THE WALLS OF MY PRISON.

"Fortunately for me they began at the left side, and directly I perceived the first gleam of light I began to sing in a melodious voice an Italian song. I had scarce uttered the first few words when the sailors burst into shrieks of terror, and all, except the cook, fled to the remotest end of the ship. I tore open the walls of my prison, and the sailor's shrieks turned to cries of joy when they saw me emerge from the fish.

"They hastened to bring me food and supply me with clothing, for both of which you may be sure I was exceedingly thankful. The actual time I had been imprisoned was only seven hours, but it seemed longer by reason of my strange situation and the bad air."

CHAPTER IX

THE BARON MEETS THE SULTAN AGAIN AND IS SENT BY HIM TO CONDUCT DELICATE NEGOTIATIONS IN ARABIA

My rescuers took me with them to Italy, and thence I returned to Vienna. Here I received an official appointment to carry despatches of the highest importance to the Sultan. I was received with great ceremony at the Turkish court and I handed my credentials to an interpreter, in order that he might explain to the Sultan the purport of my visit. The interpreter had scarcely begun to translate my words when, to the great astonishment of every one present, the Sultan hastily interrupted him and, advancing to me with outstretched hand, exclaimed: 'Why, Munchausen, such old acquaintances have no need of an interpreter. You are heartily welcome, my dear fellow.'

"Such a reception from his Majesty produced a great impression on all the ambassadors present, and I received the most flattering attention from the whole court. My intercourse with the Sultan was indeed changed from the time when I was a slave in the Imperial gardens and had to look after his bees.

"About this time the political relations between Turkey and Arabia were rather in confusion, and the Sultan one day complained to me of the difficulty in finding some one of sufficient tact to unravel the complications which had arisen.

"It is possible that I may have looked somewhat conscious, for the Sultan smiled and said jestingly: 'Well, Munchausen, why do you look at me as if you intended to hint that I had forgotten *you*? Come what have you to say on the matter?'

"I merely shrugged my shoulders, and the Sultan continued: 'Let us climb to the top of this tower. As you see, it has three hundred and sixty-five steps, and we shalt not be overheard up there. I will entrust you with a secret.'

"I ascended the steps with a single bound, but had to wait a long time before the Sultan, who was somewhat corpulent, reached the summit. Even when he had managed the ascent, he was so out of breath that half an hour elapsed before he could pronounce a single word. I waited patiently, gazing meanwhile at the magnificent view, which extended in every direction.

"To my great regret I cannot repeat the secret which the Sultan confided to me. I am sure you must know that there are secrets in the diplomatic world to repeat which might kindle a general European war. Let it suffice then that this secret was an exceedingly dangerous one, and the Sultan made me swear the most sacred oath not to reveal to any one its exact nature. I am therefore only at liberty to say that I accomplished my task to the Sultan's entire satisfaction, and that, later on, he sent me on a somewhat similar journey to the Shah of Persia, the details of which I will give you another time.

"On this expedition I was disguised for safety's sake as an Arab chieftain, and though the Arabs I had to treat with were fine, handsome fellows I far outshone them all, and excited their envy by the beauty of my milk-white charger, the Sultan's gift, and the dexterous way in which I managed it.

"The evening before I started I was sitting with the Sultan in a little arbor on the sea-shore, and when all the details of my negotiations in Arabia had been arranged the conversation turned upon my former services in the Prussian army, and I related to his Majesty an adventure I had at the storming of some fortress, the name of which I cannot for the moment recall. I have never before thought the incident worthy of note, but the Sultan found it so amusing that you may perhaps also care to hear it.



WHEN THE WORD FIRE WAS GIVEN I SPRANG ONTO THE CANNON BALL.

"It was of the highest importance that we should know what was taking place inside the town, but there was no suitable person we could send as a spy. I therefore set myself to devise another means of reaching the town, and one day, as I was standing before one of our largest cannons, an inspiration came to me which I proceeded to put into immediate execution.

"Without revealing my plan to any one, I waited till the word 'Fire' was given, and the gunner applied the match to the touch-hole; then I sprang on to the cannon-ball intending to let it bear me inside the fortress, but when I was half-way there it occurred to me that I was acting very rashly. 'It is all very

well,' thought I, 'to get inside the fortress, but how shall I get out afterwards? And what will happen to me in there?'

"I knew that if I were taken as a spy I should be hanged on the nearest gallows—an ignominious end for one who bore the proud name of Munchausen!

"As these thoughts passed through my mind, I perceived a bullet directed from the fortress against our camp passing a few feet from me. Without further hesitation I leaped on it, and returned to our army, without, it is true, having accomplished my project, but at least safe and sound.

"I should like to have seen that, Munchausen,' cried the Sultan, laughing so that the tower rocked beneath us. 'That must have been a smart piece of work!'

"Indeed, it was, your Highness,' I replied, 'and I am glad it turned out so well, for I nearly met with an accident. The cannon-balls were so smooth that it was extremely difficult to keep my balance. Fortunately, I was both young and agile!'

"The next morning I set out in great state with a numerous retinue, as be seemed my position as ambassador. The Sultan himself accompanied me to the sea-shore, and as we parted he shook my hand, whispering, 'We must have no more of your light-hearted jests, Munchausen, remember what is at stake!'

"My only answer was to cross my arms on my breast and bow in silence, but the Sultan knew what that meant, and was graciously pleased to watch us till we were out of sight.

"On the way I had an opportunity of adding five very useful servants to my already numerous train. I have travelled many hundred miles in my time, but never have I come across such men as I met in those few days.

"A few miles from Constantinople I perceived a very slight, thin man running straight towards us with great rapidity, although he had a leaden weight of at least fifty

pounds attached to each foot. Seized with astonishment, I called out to him: 'Where are you going, friend, so fast, and why are you hindered by those weights at your ankles?'

"I come of a family of rapid runners,' answered the young man. 'Unlike all other people we never get a stitch from running, and I have hung on these weights to moderate my speed. I left Smyrna about two hours ago, where I was servant to a great prince. This morning he gave me the task of running after yesterday and bringing it back. I found this impossible, and when, exhausted by my fruitless efforts, I returned to the palace at midday the prince dismissed me from his service and banished me from the country. I took a piece of bread in my hand, filled my pockets with apples, hung these weights on my feet, and then started on my journey—for I wanted to check my speed, as I only wished to reach Constantinople to-day. I shall be there in a few minutes, and can then look out for a new place.'

"I was delighted with this man, and asked him if he would enter my service. He assented, and I engaged him on the spot. I gave him a horse to ride, but every now and then he would dismount, run on ahead for a couple of miles, and return before the rest of us had advanced many yards; this he did simply so as not to get out of practice.

"The same afternoon I met two more men, equally wonderful. The first of these was a great country lad, whom we found lying on the ground with his ear to the turf.

"What are you doing there, my lad?' I asked?

"I am listening to hear the grass grow,' he replied.

"And can you hear it?'

"Oh, yes; it is easy enough if you know how to listen.'

"Enter my service, then, my good fellow. I may find your fine ear of great service to me.'

"The listener quickly sprang up and followed me.

"An hour later I came across a sportsman firing apparently into the blue sky, which stretched all around us.

"What are you aiming at, my friend?' I cried out. 'I can see nothing but sky before you.'

"Oh,' said he, 'I am trying a new gun, which I have just bought. There was a sparrow on the spire of Strasbourg Cathedral which I have just shot. It is a fine weapon.'

"Those who know my passion for sport will not be surprised to hear that I threw myself into the arms of this excellent shot and implored him to enter my service, to which he gave a ready assent.

"Some time afterwards, in the neighborhood of Mount Lebanon, we came across a short, thick-set, little fellow, pulling at a rope which was wound round a whole forest of cedars.

"What are you doing there, friend?' I asked in great surprise.

"I came to cut down some wood for building,' he replied; 'but I have left my hatchet at home, so I am trying to get the trees without it as well as I can.'

"As he said this he gave a tremendous pull, and brought down the whole forest, which measured quite a square mile round, as if it had been a bundle of reeds. You can imagine I engaged him at once in my service, and have never regretted doing so.

"About a week later, as we were crossing a plain, a furious whirlwind arose, which threatened to blow us all into the air. To the left of the road were seven windmills, the sails of which were turning more swiftly than the swiftest wheel of a good spinner, and on the right stood a fat man, who held his forefinger pressed against his right nostril. As soon as he perceived our distress, he turned towards us, took off his hat and bowed respectfully. The wind fell as if by magic, and the seven mills stood still.

"'What's this,' I cried out in astonishment, 'are you Old Nick himself?'

"'I beg your pardon, your honor,' replied the fat man. 'I was blowing a little for my master, the miller, and for fear of blowing the windmills down altogether I had stopped one nostril.'

"'Indeed, and what payment do you get from your master?'

"He named a trifling sum, and when I promised him ten times as much, the blower quitted his mills and followed me.

"My mission for the Sultan was soon accomplished, and even more successfully than he had ventured to hope. Immediately after its conclusion, I dismissed my retinue and sent them with despatches to the Sultan, merely retaining my five new servants, whom I resolved should accompany me on a long projected journey up the Nile."

CHAPTER X

THE BARON'S EXPEDITION UP THE NILE

AND HIS BET WITH THE SULTAN

My journey to Egypt was accomplished safely, but as I had kept my plans a profound secret, no one had warned me of the annual overflowing of the Nile, of which all of you gentlemen must undoubtedly have heard. The boatmen I had hired, having convinced themselves that we had taken an ample supply of provisions, said nothing, and for some days everything went well with us.

"On the fifth day, I noticed that the river was turning a peculiar reddish color and had begun to overflow its banks. The following day the Nile began to rise most amazingly and, before sunset, had spread over the whole country for many miles on each side. An hour later my bark became entangled in something I at first took for weeds and rushes, but as the light became stronger I found we were surrounded by almond-trees, the fruit of which was perfectly ripe and grew in great profusion.

"On taking soundings, we found that we were at least sixty feet from the ground, and unable to proceed or go backward. In a few hours a violent wind arose and upset the boat, which filled with water and sank together with all our provisions. Fortunately we all saved ourselves (eight men and two boys) by clinging to the branches of a tree; here we remained for over five weeks, subsisting upon almonds and water.

"At last the water fell and we were able to descend to the ground, where we found our boat lying about two hundred yards from the spot where it had sunk. Part of the provisions had been spoiled by water, but the rest was intact, and a meal,

which we hastily improvised, tasted excellent after our monotonous fare of almonds. According to our calculations, we must have been carried about one hundred and seventy-three miles over garden walls and hedges.

"In some days, after a very toilsome journey on foot, two reached the river, which was now confined to its banks. We were kindly entertained by a Bey, who generously provided us with a boat of his own; with this we reached Alexandria in six days, and thence took ship for Constantinople. I had a great deal of trouble in persuading our boatmen to accept a present of money, for they protested they were sufficiently compensated by having spent six weeks in the company of the renowned Munchausen and shared his privations and dangers. You see what an advantage it is to be the owner of a celebrated name.

"Now it certainly will not surprise you, my friends, to hear that after the brilliant way I had executed the Sultan's commission, I was in higher favor than ever at the Turkish court. In fact, his Majesty could not live without me; I was invited to dine and sup with him every day, and I must own that the Commander of the Faithful keeps one of the best tables in the world, as far as eating goes at least; as for drinking, the followers of Mahomet are forbidden to touch wine. Consequently, no wine is served at table; but a Turk often drinks in secret, and is frequently a good judge of wine. This was the case with his Majesty, the Sultan, and many a time I have had the privilege of partaking of a flask of wine in his private apartments.

"One day the Sultan made me a sign to follow him thither, whispering, 'Munchausen, I have something special to show you to-day. I know you Christians are good judges of wine, and you shall tell me truly what you think of this. It is the last bottle of some Tokay given me by an Hungarian magnate, who regarded it as priceless.'

"Saying this, his Majesty filled his glass and mine. 'Well,' he said, 'how do you like it?'

"'It is fairly good,' I replied, 'but, if your Majesty will forgive my saying so, I can assure you that I have drunk wine at Vienna, in the Emperor's palace, compared to which this is but poor stuff.'

"'But, my dear fellow, this is genuine Tokay.'

"'Yes, your Majesty, but there is much better Tokay than this. What would your Majesty wager that I do not in an hour's time offer you a bottle of Tokay from the Imperial cellars, which will far surpass the wine you are drinking?'

"'Munchausen, you are mocking me, and I do not permit such a liberty; I have always believed you to be a reasonable and truthful man, but this time I am afraid you are exaggerating.'

"'Well, your Majesty, will you accept the wager? If I do not carry out what I have promised, you may cut off my head. That is *my* stake—now, what is *yours*?'

"'I will take your wager,' replied the Sultan. 'But if the wine is not here on the stroke of four, it will cost you your head, for I do not allow even my best friends to jest with me. If, however, you fulfil your promise, I will give you as much gold, silver, and precious stones from my treasury as the strongest man can carry.'

"'That is a bargain,' I said, and, calling for pen, ink, and paper, I wrote to the Empress Maria Theresa as follows:

"'Your Majesty has doubtless inherited with the empire the wine-cellars of your illustrious father. May I venture to beseech your Majesty to send by the bearer of this a bottle of the Tokay I so often drank with the late lamented Emperor? And may I ask for the very best, as it is required for a wager?'

"'I take the opportunity to assure your Majesty of the profound respect with which I have the honor to remain, etc., etc.'

"As it was already five minutes past three, I gave the note unsealed to my swift runner, who took the weights off his feet and set out at full speed for Vienna. This done, the Sultan and I sat down to finish our bottle of wine, while we were waiting for a better one. The clock struck a quarter past three; half-past three; a quarter to four. Then I began to be a little uneasy, especially as the Sultan glanced at the bell-rope from time to time, as if he were about to summon the executioner. He allowed me, however, to go into the garden for a little fresh air, attended by two armed slaves, who were ordered not to let me out of their sight. The hand of the clock marked five minutes to four—I was in despair.

"Suddenly I bethought me of my shooter and my listener, and sent for them at once. The listener lay down with his ear to the ground and announced, to my consternation, that my runner was miles away and evidently fast asleep, for he heard him snoring. My brave shooter quickly ran up a lofty terrace and cried out: 'It is quite true. The lazy fellow is lying under an oak near Belgrade, fast asleep with the bottle by his side. Wait a moment, and I'll wake him up.'



MY RUNNER ARRIVED WITH THE BOTTLE.

"He took aim immediately, and discharged his gun full at the oak-tree. A shower of acorns, leaves, and twigs fell on the sleeper, who naturally sprang up, seized the bottle, and arrived with it and an autograph letter from Queen Maria Theresa in the Sultan's apartment, at fifty-nine and a half minutes past three!

"The Sultan made a sign for my guards to leave, and, having tasted the bottle, of wine, clasped me in his arms and smacked his lips. 'Munchausen,' said he, 'you must forgive me if I do not share this bottle with you. You have more influence at Vienna than I, and can easily get another.'

"Then he locked the bottle in a cupboard, put the key in his pocket, and rang for his treasurer. This official at once appeared and the Sultan, who never broke his word, said to him: 'You are to let my friend, Baron von Munchausen, take from my treasury as much gold, silver and precious stones as the strongest man can carry. Go!'

"The treasurer bowed low to his master and beckoned me to follow him. I sent for my strong man, and bade him bring with him a thick hempen cord. Then together we entered the treasury, and filled many sacks with its precious contents; these sacks my porter tied together and lifted on his shoulder. We hurried off at once to the port, engaged the largest merchantman I could find, and made ready to sail without delay.

"Meanwhile, the treasurer hastened to the Sultan and related with tears how my servant had carried off almost the entire contents of the treasury. This seemed to the Sultan beyond a joke, and he regretted his foolish bet. He at once ordered his Lord High Admiral to follow me with the entire Turkish fleet, and make me understand that it was not thus our wager was meant.

"Meantime, we had made good our escape, and were on the point of entering the Mediterranean, when we perceived numerous Turkish ships bearing down on us with all sails set.

"Fortunately, my blower came to the rescue and, saying consolingly, 'Have no fear, your honor. We will soon blow them back whence they came,' placed himself in the stern of the ship in such a manner that one nostril was turned towards the Turkish fleet, and the other to our own sails. Then he blew with such violence that the pursuing ships were driven back with masts and rigging all destroyed, while our vessel reached the coast of Italy in a few hours.

"To-morrow night, I will undertake to show you that the motto, 'Lightly come, lightly go,' could be well applied to what happened to me and my treasure."



IT GALLOPED ALONG WITH INCREDIBLE SPEED.

CHAPTER XI

THE BARON'S FATHER AND THE SEA-HORSE

MUNCHAUSEN DISTINGUISHES HIMSELF AT THE SIEGE OF GIBRALTAR

I told you last night how I fled to Italy with my Turkish treasure. When I arrived at Brindisi I should have been by rights the richest private gentleman in all Europe, but beggars of all kinds, gamblers and rogues, took care that I should be relieved of most of my property in a few weeks, and the rest was taken from me by brigands, who stripped me of everything I possessed. Fortunately for me, in the woollen garment I wore next my skin was a secret pocket, containing a handful of pearls and other precious stones, which escaped the covetous eyes of the brigands. When I reached Rome, I sold my remnant of treasure to a jeweler for one hundred thousand gold pieces, and I must say that he had by far the best of the bargain. I then divided the money among my five servants, and dismissed them from my service, retaining for myself only a small sum for travelling expenses.

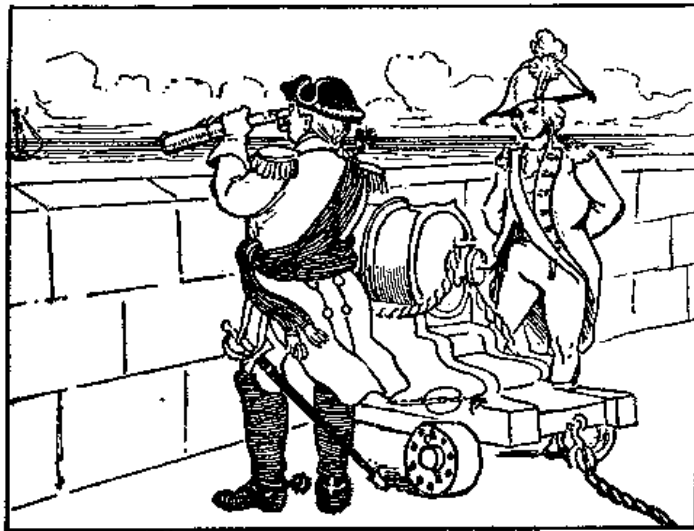
"Among the treasures I was robbed of by the brigands (which, however, they cast away as worthless, and I regained) was the famous sling with which King David slew Goliath. My father owned this sling before me, and it did him good service once in England, as you shall hear by the following tale.

"He was walking one day along the coast at Dover, thinking of his projected journey to Germany, and wondering which ship he should go by, when he was suddenly attacked by a raging sea-horse. My father groped in his pockets, and finding no other weapon than the sling, took it out, stooped for a couple of pebbles, of which there were plenty at his feet, and slung them both so dexterously at the animal that each stone

put out an eye. My father now mounted the horse, which lost its ferocity together with its sight, and rode to the saddler's, using the sling as a bridle. There he purchased a saddle, and placed it on the horse, and rode through the sea to Calais in about an hour and ten minutes. It did not swim, but galloped along the sea-bottom with incredible speed, scattering millions of curiously shaped fish before it.

"At Calais my father sold the sea-horse to the host of the Three Cups for the small sum of two thousand dollars, and the speculative inn-keeper exhibits it to the present day, making far more profit than by his inn.

"The sea-horse is not (as commonly believed) a marine monster, but closely resembles the ordinary animal, except that it has web-feet, and fins instead of mane and tail. My father had a picture of himself riding the sea-horse across the channel painted by a celebrated artist in Paris. You may possibly have seen the picture, for it hangs in my bedchamber.



HE TOOK ME FOR A STROLL ALONG THE RAMPARTS.

"To return to myself, I determined to expend my small stock of money on a voyage to Gibraltar, there to visit my old friend, General Elliot. He received me with joy, and took me for a stroll along the ramparts to examine the state of the garrison and the operations of the enemy. I had brought with me an excellent telescope, which I had purchased in Rome from an English captain who was in straits for money. Looking through it, I perceived that the enemy were about to discharge a thirty-six pounder at the very spot where we were standing. I rushed toward our nearest cannon, a forty-eight pounder, and placed it exactly facing that of the enemy. I watched carefully till I saw the Spanish gunner apply a match to the touch-hole, and then I too gave the word 'Fire.'

"Both reports rang out at the same instant, and the two cannon-balls met half-way with amazing force. Ours, being the heavier, caused the enemy's ball to recoil with such violence as to kill the man who had discharged it; it then passed through the masts of three ships which lay in a line behind each other, and flew across the Straits of Gibraltar some miles into Africa. Our own ball, after repelling the other, proceeded on its way, dismounted the very cannon which had just been employed against us, and forced it into the hold of the ship, where it fell with so much force as to break its way through the bottom. The ship immediately filled and sank, with about a thousand Spanish sailors and a considerable number of soldiers on board, who were all drowned.

"For this service General Elliot offered me a commission, which I politely declined. But my name was mentioned in the military journal, and all the soldiers were ordered to present arms whenever I passed.

It has never before been revealed who was the real saviour of Gibraltar, and I trust to, your discretion to let the following veracious account go no further.

"Some six or eight weeks later, as I was sitting at breakfast with General Elliot, a bomb-shell suddenly crashed through the window and fell on the table. I took it up before it

burst, pulled out the fuse, and walked with the shell in my hand to the top of the rock. Near the enemy's camp I perceived a crowd of people, and by the aid of my telescope I discovered that a gallows had been erected, and two English officers, who had gone into the hostile camp as spies, had been taken prisoners and were about to be hanged.



A BOMB-SHELL CRASHED THROUGH THE WINDOW.

"'Wait a bit!' I cried, 'I have a word to say in this matter,' and, as it was too far to throw the stone with my hand,

I took David's sling from my pocket, put a new fuse into the shell, which I then hurled from the sling into the midst of the crowd. The shell burst as it fell and destroyed every one save the two prisoners, who had just been strung in the air. One of the pieces of the shell flew with such force against the foot of the gibbet, that it fell down on top of the hangman and killed him. The two English officers fell half strangled to the ground, but the one retained his presence of mind sufficiently to release himself and his comrade from their hempen cravats. Then both sat up and looked round them: everybody in their vicinity was dead, but from the camp rushed crowds of people uttering cries for vengeance. The Englishmen had naturally no desire to await this infuriated mob, but rushed at full speed to the sea-coast, seized a Spanish boat with two men in it, and made them row to one of our ships which was lying near.

"This was the only time I ever made use of the sling, and being then very old it was quite destroyed. The greater part flew away with the shell, and the little piece which remained in my hand now lies in the family archives, together with other interesting relics. The next time you honor me with a visit, I shall be very happy to show them to you."

CHAPTER XII

MORE OF THE BARON'S ADVENTURES AT SEA

When Captain Phipps (the present Lord Mulgrave) went on a voyage of discovery to the North Pole I accompanied him—not as an officer, but as a friend. We passed Spitzbergen safely, nothing but sea and sky and immense icebergs, some of them three times as high as our masts. I took my telescope and began gazing at the objects round us, for I consider it very helpful to look round from time to time when travelling in order to miss nothing of interest

"On the nearest iceberg, which was about a mile away, I saw two large polar bears apparently engaged in a deadly fight. I immediately took my rifle and walked across the ice, but the ascent to the summit was exceedingly toilsome and dangerous. At times I was obliged to leap over immense chasms, at others, I had to crawl over a surface as smooth as a mirror, and it took me some time to reach the bears, who after all were only at play. I at once began to calculate the value of their skins, for each bear was as large as a well-fed ox. Unfortunately, as I was about to fire, my right foot slipped and I fell on my back. I lost consciousness owing to the violence of the blow, and when I came to my senses again, in about half an hour, I found myself in a very unpleasant situation.

"One of these monstrous animals had turned me upon my face, and had just seized my leathern belt between his teeth in order to carry me off! Heaven only knows where the brute would have dragged me, had I not pulled out my hunting-knife—this very one you see here—seized his left hind paw, and chopped off three of the toes; he at once relaxed his grip and roared most horribly. I hastily picked up my rifle, which

was lying a couple of paces off, and shot the bear through the heart.



I LEAPED OVER THE IMMENSE CHASMS.

"The sound of the shot roused several thousand of these white bears who had been sleeping on the ice about half a mile away. Then all came at full speed in my direction, and I set my wits to work, for I knew I was lost unless I could hit on a means of escape.

"In about the same time as is taken by an expert hunter to skin a rabbit I stripped off Master Bruin's fur coat and enveloped myself in it, placing my head immediately under his. The whole herd gathered round me directly, and I grew hot and cold with fright. However, my disguise turned out admirably, for the bears evidently took me for one of themselves, and even invited me to join in their games. I imitated their gestures and movements as well as I could, planning meantime how to escape from their unwelcome society.

"Suddenly I remembered hearing an old army surgeon say that a wound in the spine was instant death. I determined

to try the experiment and, taking up my knife again, I struck the largest bear in the neck near the shoulders.



I IMITATED THEIR MOVEMENTS AS WELL AS I COULD.

"I am sure you must think that was a very rash thing to do, and you are quite right, for had the creature survived my blow I should without the slightest doubt have been torn to pieces. But the stroke was a fatal one, and the bear fell dead at

my feet without a groan. I resolved to kill all the others in the same manner, and this I easily accomplished, for although the bears saw their companions fall they had no idea there was anything wrong. When the whole herd lay dead before me, I felt myself a second Samson, having slain my thousands.



WE FINISHED THIS BUSINESS BY SUNSET.

"To cut my story short, I went back to the ship and summoned the greater part of the crew to assist me in skinning the bears and carrying the pelts and hams on board. We finished this business by sunset, and the captain's only regret was that his share in the day's doings had been so small.

"My next sea voyage was made with Captain Hamilton to the East Indies, and I took with me a valuable pointer, whose scent was most extraordinarily keen. One day, when by our calculations we were at least three hundred miles from land, my dog pointed. In great astonishment I mentioned this fact to the captain and officers, asserting that we must be near land, for my dog smelt game. This occasioned general laughter, but my confidence in my dog was undiminished, and

I therefore offered to wager the captain an hundred guineas that we should find game within half an hour. The captain, a rare good fellow, laughed heartily, and whispered to the ship's surgeon: 'Munchausen is out of his senses. I cannot accept such a wager.'

"The doctor replied in an audible whisper, 'Indeed, captain, he is as sane as you or I, but he puts greater confidence in his dog's scent than in the opinion of all the officers on board. He will certainly lose, but he richly deserves to do so.'

"'But I scarcely think the wager would be fair on my side,' objected the captain. 'However, I could always return him the money afterwards.'



MY DOG POINTED.

"My dog's behavior in the meantime had confirmed me still more in my opinion, and when I proposed the wager for the second time Hamilton accepted it. We had scarcely shaken hands on the wager, when some of the sailors, who had been fishing in the stern, drew an exceedingly large shark out of the

water. My dog became very excited, and I merely remarked, 'Here is the game.' And sure enough, when the shark was cut open we found no less than six brace of live partridges inside it!

"They had been so long in that situation, that one of the hens was sitting on seventeen eggs, one of which was just hatching when the shark was opened! This young one we brought up with a litter of young kittens, and the old cat became as fond of it as of any of her own young. During the whole voyage we were plentifully supplied with fresh eggs and young tender partridges. I won my wager, and my trusty dog was supplied with bones for dinner every day."

CHAPTER XIII

THE BARON DOES THE SHAH A GREAT SERVICE,

AND IS REWARDED WITH A MAGNIFICENT WHITE HORSE

To-day, my friends and comrades, I will tell you about what was perhaps the greatest service I have ever performed for any one in my life. I have never spoken of this before, although it is recorded in detail in the astronomical records of Persia..

"After the adventures at sea, which I related to you yesterday, I resolved to visit the Shah of Persia. Several adventurous spirits joined me, and at their head I was enabled to perform various important services for the Shah as we marched towards his capitol. On the frontier we were stopped by a Persian patrol and questioned concerning our intentions. I had scarcely mentioned my name and rank and said that it was our intention to visit his Highness, the Shah, when all the Persians bared their heads, and in the Persian language gave humble greeting to his Excellency, the Lord Baron of Munchausen.

"Two days later we entered Teheran, where we heard to our great regret that the Shah and all his court had left three days previously for Shiraz. We received everywhere a royal welcome, and so many joined our troop that I entered Shiraz in about a week's time at the head of nearly an hundred thousand men.

"From day to day the Shah received official tidings of our march from the mayors and other officials of every town on our route, and also read all the details of our journey in the

Persian Mercury. When we approached Shiraz he came to meet me at the head of a long train of officials, and when he was close to us, he dismounted from his horse and embraced me. Afterwards he decorated me with the Persian Order of the Sun, and one that was made especially for me—a representation in fine gold of the Rose of Shiraz: these were, he said, a slight acknowledgment for the services which I had rendered as ambassador to his dear friend and ally, the Sultan of Turkey. As a further mark of favor, the Shah bade me address him as 'Brother'—a mark of condescension never before vouchsafed to an unbeliever—but I made the condition that this familiar name should be kept for our private interviews, and that in public I might be allowed to address him as, 'Your Highness,' or 'Most Mighty Emperor of the Earth.'



ALL THE PERSIANS BARED THEIR HEADS.

"Some weeks after our arrival in Shiraz, I was fortunate enough to have the opportunity of performing a special service for his Majesty, the Shah. You must know that the Shah has a passion for the moon, which almost amounted to idolatry. One evening when the full moon was shining brightly overhead, he and I were walking up and down a leafy avenue fragrant with roses, and the Shah was chanting one of the lovely songs of the late poet, Hafiz, when he suddenly broke off in the middle and, seizing my arm, cried out in a voice of anguish, 'Look at the moon—it is covered with spots of rust!'

"'No, no,' I replied, soothingly, 'those are not spots of rust. In our country we call this phenomenon an eclipse of the moon, and it takes place when, the moon being at its full, the shadow of the earth falling on the bright disc, causes—'

"'My dear brother,' he interrupted me, 'you are a fool, although a learned one! They are specks of rust resulting from damp weather. Ask the court astronomer, and you will see that I am right.'

"What was the use of my asking, but the whole night long I lay awake, wondering how I could dissipate this dark superstition by the light of knowledge.

"At last I thought, 'All well, other countries, other manners. If such is the belief in this country, I must acquiesce in it.'

"I left the palace before daybreak and went to look for our ship's carpenter, who had accompanied me to Shiraz. We busied ourselves for some hours in drawing plans for machinery to lower the moon, in order to remove the supposed specks of rust.

"At the usual hour I sought an audience with his Imperial Majesty, and humbly announced that in a few days I should be prepared to lower the moon and remove the rust.

"'Munchausen,' cried the Shah in ecstasy, 'if you can accomplish this, by the beard of the Prophet, I will make you the highest in rank of all the nobility in the country!'



WE POLISHED IT UNTIL IT WAS AS BRIGHT AS BEFORE.

"On the same day we collected three companies, each consisting of one hundred men, to pound sand, and an equal number of sand-sifters; these six hundred men had nothing to do but prepare sand to clean and polish the moon. The erection of the machinery we had designed was at once begun and,

exactly a fortnight after the eclipse of the moon, the first trial was made with complete success. While the civilized world consoled itself with the belief that the moon was invisible for a few days previous to the appearance of the so-called new moon, we, in Shiraz, had brought down the old fellow from the sky, found a large number of flecks of rust on its surface, and polished it till it was as bright and shining as before. This operation now takes place in Persia regularly once a month.

"I hope you gentlemen will remind me one day to show you my Persian orders and the magnificent white charger, which the Shah insisted on my accepting as a parting gift. I rode this noble animal for twenty years, and even after his death, so loath was I to part with him that I had him stuffed. This horse was so exceptionally swift, that when I first returned home and had to pay visits to all my neighbors, he would carry me from thirty to forty miles in an afternoon and gallop after hares between one estate and another.

"Once I was pursuing a hare which ran straight across the high road. A coach containing two beautiful ladies just then passed down the road between me and the hare. My horse immediately leapt through the coach, the windows of which were wide open, with such impetus that I scarcely had time to take off my hat and beg the ladies' forgiveness for the liberty I had taken before we were fifty yards off.

"I remember, too, a rather amusing encounter I had about that time. I am sure you must all remember one of my former playmates, fat Will Huber. I had not seen him for a great many years, and met him quite by chance as he was coming home from the corn-market in the neighboring town, where he often had to go since he had taken over his father's mill. He had dismounted from his wagon and was waddling slowly along in the twilight, when I came up behind him and said, 'Good evening, Will!'

"'Gracious heaven!' he exclaimed in amazement, 'the deceased Lord of Munchausen!'

"'Nonsense,' I said, angrily, 'I am no more dead than you are your own father!'



MY HORSE IMMEDIATELY LEAPT THROUGH THE COACH.

"'Indeed you are dead! Seventeen years ago I saw you lying on your deathbed, and I was present at your funeral; I remember all we youngsters receiving a cake covered with sugar. You must have molded away long ago, Baron!'

"'Wait a moment, Will! I will show you whether I have moldered away or am still living!'

"With these words I gave him such a box on the ears that the sound re-echoed. He fell to the ground stunned, and I let him lie there, for, thought I, naught never comes to harm.

"Some days later I rode past the mill, and saw fat Will sitting contentedly on a bench humming a song.

"Well, Will,' said I, 'do you believe now that I am alive, or shall I dismount and refresh your memory again?'

"Oh, no, no! I believe everything you say, everything!' said he, fearing what might follow.

"That is well and I am satisfied. I have plenty of equally striking proofs at the service of any who are insolent enough to doubt the truth of any of my statements."

CHAPTER XIV

THE BARON'S WONDERFUL WAISTCOAT

HE PAYS A VISIT TO MOUNT ETNA

"Dear friends and comrades," began the Baron the next evening, as he entered the assembly somewhat late, "you must be kind enough to excuse my tardy appearance and also my receiving you in hunting costume—it is the fault of my waistcoat. As you see, it is made of leather, the hide of my wonderful dog, Boaster, of whom I am sure you have, often heard me talk. He was shot by a blundering sportsman who fired at him instead of a covey of partridges. I saw the mishap from a distance of about thirty paces, and when in dismay I rushed to the spot, the poor creature's eyes were already closed in death. He was just able to raise a paw in greeting and give one farewell bark before his spirit departed for the happy hunting-grounds. It is true the was only a dog, but what a dog. Several of you here knew him, therefore I need say nothing further.

"He was to me more than a mere dog; I have never since possessed or even known another like him. At first I intended to have him stuffed, but then I wished to have him nearer me than that, so I had a waistcoat made from his skin, that I might always carry part of him next my heart when I went hunting.

"A very strange thing happened with regard to this. The first time I wore this waistcoat, just as I was crossing a clover field in which there might be some partridges, I felt something tugging in the region of my heart. This oppression increased with every step I took, till at last I was forced to stand still in order to draw breath. At last it became so unbearable that I could not move at all, when suddenly one of

the buttons flew off my waistcoat and landed about fifteen paces away to the left. About a dozen partridges flew up; I fired, and five of them fell at once to the ground. Picking them up and putting them in my game bag, I walked on.

"In a few minutes the feeling of oppression and the subsequent springing off of a button were repeated, and this happens every time I am near any game. The starting of every partridge, quail, or hare costs me a button, but this button always procures me a certain shot. You can see that there used to be two rows of eleven buttons each on my waistcoat, and that now only three are left. Next week I shall have the buttons renewed for the ninth time. What do you think of this proof of my dog's fidelity even after death?

"It is true that I am an old man now, but the recollection of my faithful dog always makes me sad. Come, fill up your glasses, comrades, and I will tell you another of my adventures, which just occurred to me as I was walking along.

"Some years ago I was on a visit to Sicily at a time when Mount Etna had begun to erupt and was casting up flames and ashes daily. At Catania I joined a party of English ladies and gentlemen and rode with them to the Casa Inglese (English House), where we spent the night. In the morning the mule-drivers and guides advised us to turn back, because the eruption of stones and lava had increased. The whole party, with the exception of myself, followed this advice, but I continued the ascent with a light heart, and reached the summit in about three hours' time. I walked three times round the edge of the crater, which looks like an enormous funnel; the view over sea and land is magnificent, but I was far more interested in investigating the interior of the mountain, and at last I made up my mind to jump down into the abyss. I soon found myself in a warm berth, and my body bruised and burnt by the hot cinders, which were continually flying round me; but to draw back now was impossible.



I WAS IN THE PRESENCE OF VULCAN AND HIS CYCLOPS.

"Glowing cinders and stones rushed upwards, as I sank downwards with ever-increasing speed. Perhaps I became used to the heat and fell asleep, at any rate I lost consciousness for some time. At last I reached the ground, and the shock of the fall and the noisy clamor round me soon restored me to my senses. Opening my eyes, I found to any great astonishment that I was in the presence of Vulcan and his Cyclops. It is true then, though no one believes it, that Vulcan has his forge in

the interior of Mount Etna. All, one needs to travel to find out all kinds of curious things!

"You can imagine the astonishment of Father Vulcan and his sooty companions at my sudden appearance.

"When I had introduced myself with proper ceremony, Vulcan limped to a cupboard and took out plaster and ointment, which he applied to my wounds with his own hand. His remedies were indeed wonderful, for not only did they heal me completely in a moment, but also restored all the burnt places in my clothing!

"A young Cyclops brought me a basin of warm seawater to complete my toilet, and then my host led me into the presence of his consort, Venus, who was a wonderfully preserved woman considering her age of some thousands of years.

"There are two things I have keenly regretted ever since; first, that I did not ask from which firm I could obtain the wonderful ointment or the recipe from which Vulcan prepared it, and secondly, that I omitted to find out what means Venus used to preserve her beauty. I have some aunts who would be very grateful for the information, though they are by no means as old as Venus.

'Both Vulcan and his wife treated me with the greatest kindness, though the lady never conversed with me without a mocking smile and a certain look of compassion on her lovely face as if she were always thinking, 'I am really sorry for you, poor earthworm!' I must admit that I was often annoyed by the gracious condescension of a heathen goddess. As for Vulcan, he was the embodiment of kindness and affability, conducting me in person over his subterranean kingdom. He showed me the different work-shops where the Cyclops forged various implements for ordinary use: in one were joiners' or cabinet-makers' tools, in another ploughs and other agricultural implements, and other contained files and saws, or all kinds of instruments of warfare. I also noticed various passages

branching right and left, all closed by heavy iron doors on which was written in flaming letters, 'To Mount Vesuvius,' or, 'To Mount Hekla,' or the name of some other active or extinct volcano. On one of these doors was the word 'Stromboli,' and under it in forty-eight different languages, 'No admittance.'

"Where does that lead to?' I asked.

"Oh,' replied Vulcan, indifferently, as he walked on, 'that is a little workshop in which many things are made that people are not allowed to see, and therefore we grant no admittance.' Then he muttered something to himself which I could not quite hear, but I fancied I caught the words, 'Man-traps and spring-guns.'

"The same afternoon I asked Venus, in the course of conversation, whether she had often been inside Stromboli.

"Never,' she replied, 'the entrance is forbidden. I only know that my husband does his private work there, including among other things the thunder-bolts for Father Zeus.'

"I skilfully turned the conversation to other subjects, but determined to find out the secret of this workshop at the earliest opportunity. The next day Vulcan was called away for a short time to settle a dispute among the work-people, and I crept softly to the forbidden door. Although it was not locked, I hesitated for some time to open it; at last I did so, and was just about to close it behind me, when a fearful clasp of thunder pealed forth, and in eight-and-forty different languages the warning flamed out on the wall, 'Man-traps and spring-guns!'

"I stopped for a moment, undecided whether, in spite of the warning, I should not walk down the magically illuminated passage, when suddenly a rough hand seized me by the collar and (though I hardly like confessing it), I was soundly belabored by the Cyclops.

"At last, with the words 'Hold, enough,' Vulcan rescued me from the claws of his dependents, but only to drag me into

a dark passage, and holding me at arm's length over a gloomy well, cast me into it, saying angrily, 'Ungrateful mortal, as a punishment for your prying curiosity, return to the world of misery from whence you came.'

"I fell and fell with ever-increasing rapidity, till the horror of my mind deprived me of all reflection. Suddenly I was aroused by falling into a large body of water illumined by the rays of the setting sun! I soon reached the surface and had to rely on my swimming capacities for escape. But in which direction should I swim? Any other in my place would have despaired, but I only gazed calmly round me—nothing but sky and sea, the latter unpleasantly cold after the mild temperature of Vulcan's shop. At last I perceived a huge iceberg about five miles away. I swam up to it, and, my limbs being stiff with cold, climbed with great difficulty to the summit. On the other side of the iceberg I saw a canoe containing five savages and one European, all busily engaged in catching seals. I hailed these men as loudly as I could, and then, having attracted their notice, slid rapidly down the smooth and slippery side of the iceberg into the sea close to the canoe. I was helped on board, and, in answer to my question, the European—a Dutchman—told me that he was the sole survivor of a crew, which had been wrecked on a hitherto undiscovered island in the Pacific—all the others had been drowned.

"Everything now became quite clear to me; what I had taken for a well must have been a shaft through the centre of the earth, and I had passed from Mount Etna straight into the South Seas! My only regret was that I had noticed so little on the journey. If any one of you should imitate my leap into Mount Etna, I sincerely trust that you will be far more particular in your observations than it was possible for me to be."

CHAPTER XV

THE UNDISCOVERED ISLAND OF TAIHATLIBIATI

THE BARON'S ARRIVAL AND ESCAPE FROM IT

The Dutchman, whose name was Jan van Fessel, steered towards the undiscovered island and told me on the way that it was called Taihatlibiati by the natives and was governed by a very good-natured prince, who had a special liking for roast foreigners after they had been fattened for some months on fruit. He himself had been fed up, but shortly before he was fit for eating there had been a shower of meat pies, some of which he had eaten, and the prince in great annoyance had given orders that, in a month's time, he should be fattened again, and then roasted immediately.

"Nay, Jan,' said I, somewhat incredulously, 'you can tell that tale of the shower of meat-pies to any one else, but not to me. I am the renowned Baron von Munchausen, and have travelled over the whole world, but nowhere does it rain pastry.'

"Indeed, your Excellency,' asserted the honest Dutchman, 'this kind of rain often occurs in the island of Taihatlibiati. On the mountains of the island are found a number of bread-trees of a peculiar kind, bearing a small fruit, which looks and tastes exactly like a meat patty; when half ripe, these fruits are blown off by the wind and strewn like hailstones over the plain.'

"Later on I convinced myself of the existence of these trees, which are quite unknown to botanists of the civilized world.

"During the foregoing conversation we had reached the island on whose shore sat the prince to whom the Dutchman introduced me by all my titles. The prince bowed graciously, and then whispered to his prime minister, 'Let him be fattened at once'—a truly inviting prospect for me!

"One very remarkable circumstance was that, although my reputation had not penetrated to the island on account of its not yet being discovered, the plant-world knew my celebrity well, for as we walked towards the prince's palace, which turned out after all to be only a mud hut, all the trees bowed respectfully before me, as if they wished to give fitting greeting to his Excellency von Munchausen.

"This circumstance impressed the prince so much, that he whispered to his prime minister, 'You need not hurry about Munchausen's fattening.' When the Dutchman interpreted these words a weight fell from my heart, which I will show you one day in my cabinet of curiosities. It is striped red, white and blue like the Dutch flag, and, although I have had it cut down, it still weighs about thirty-two pounds. I carried this stone home with me as a curiosity, although my way of traveling rendered it rather difficult to transport.

"At a few hundred paces distance from the prince's palace there stood a group of twelve large trees, covered with fruit the size of a child's head. On the three tallest of these trees were suspended three men head downwards, and you can imagine how strange it looked when these trees also bowed to me. I inquired what crime these men had committed to deserve so severe a punishment. With the assistance of the friendly Dutchman I found out that these three men had been to foreign lands, and on their return had deceived everybody by describing places they had never seen, and relating things which not only had never happened, but were quite beyond the bounds of possibility. After hearing this, I considered the horrible punishment well deserved, for nothing is more detestable than a traveller who does not adhere strictly to the truth in his stories.

"I cannot give you any further information about the native customs, as my stay in the island was embittered by the prospect of being fattened on fruit and served up as a roast joint. In order to avoid, if possible, this fate, I sought a private interview with Jan van Fessel the evening of the self-same day. He was enchanted with my proposal that we should escape from the island together, but seemed very dejected to think that we did not know at all where Taihatlibiati was situated, seeing that it has never really been discovered. 'We shall never be able to find our way back to Europe again,' was his concluding remark. However, I soon reassured him on that score, by pointing that it did not matter in the least which direction we took as long as we avoided a southerly one, and that all we had to do was to find some civilized people who could show us the right way. We then discussed the possibility of building and equipping a boat in secret, and when I asked about the various kinds of native wood, and more especially concerning the trees on which the natives were hanging, which I imagined from their appearance must be a kind of tulip-tree. 'I do not know if they belong to that species,' answered Jan, 'but as far as I have seen, the fruit is a kind of gourd or rather hollow bladders like little balloons. The fruit is always plucked half-ripe, as otherwise the sunshine expands the air in the bladders so much, that these trees are torn out of the earth by their roots and carried far away by the wind.'

"All at once I was seized with one of my brilliant ideas and cried out joyfully as I embraced him, 'Fellow countryman, we are saved! When is this fruit plucked?'

"'In a few days' time, I expect.'

"'Indeed, and what is done with the gourds?'

"'I have been told that a few dozen are always tied together and laid in the sun; the heat causes them to swell and become light, and then they fly away into the air. The day on which this takes place is kept as a feast day here, and is called "The Flight of the Gourds."'



I SAW FROM AFAR THAT JAN FEEL INTO THE SEA.

"I knew enough now for my purpose, and began making experiments, while Jan laid in a supply of provisions. We divided the food between us, filled our pockets, and when in the course of a few days the little bladders, in bundles of a dozen each, were placed in the sun to dry, I secretly fastened eight or ten bundles to my girdle; Jan did the same, and the balloons expanded so quickly that we were raised in the air almost at the same moment, and carried far out to sea by a boisterous west wind. Here we were separated, but I saw from afar that Jan sank deeper and deeper, and at last fell into the

sea, but was at once fished out by the crew of a passing ship. I learned afterwards that he reached home safely, and was appointed taxidermist to the Natural History Museum in Amsterdam or Leyden, where he remains to this day, and can easily be asked to confirm the truth of my story.

"I myself underwent some anxious moments, for I could not make up my mind whether to cut off a few dozen bladders and also let myself drop into the sea or not. It seemed very doubtful if I could overtake the ship, which was scudding along before the wind with all sails set, and my chance of doing so diminished every second. Suddenly I was caught up by one of those terrible cyclones, which prevail in that sea, and whirled about for three days and three nights with such violence that I was glad to have my heavy stone as ballast, and that the provisions I carried secured me from the risk of starvation. At last, becoming dizzy, I lost consciousness and fell into the sea. The cold water restored me to my senses, and I saved myself by the marvelous swimming feat of overtaking a ship, which was sailing about seventeen miles ahead. This vessel proved to be a Turkish man-of-war, and, once on board, I thought that all my troubles were at an end. But the same evening as we sat over a glass of sailor's grog (which was so stiff that we could not drink it, but had to cut it up with our knives and eat it with spoons) and I began to relate my adventures on the undiscovered island and the effects of the whirlwind, some of my listeners pulled wry faces as if they doubted the truth of my story, although I told it as simply and straightforwardly as I have to you. The captain was even thoughtless enough to whisper to his neighbor, 'I don't believe such a storm ever took place!' Well, he was only a poor heathen, and punishment quickly followed on his rash words.

"When we crept into our bunks, the wind was blowing from the south, and the heavens were bright and cloudless, but we had scarcely fallen asleep, when we were awakened by a most unpleasant tossing of the ship, which reeled like a drunken man, first to the right, and then to the left. This was

caused by a violent wind blowing alternately three minutes from the west, and then the same length of time from the east, a phenomenon I had never experienced before, and which is extremely unpleasant.

"At last, at break of day, the wind veered round to the north and blew very stormily. All at once a horrible crash was heard, and the main-mast, which had become loosened during the night, fell overboard, smashing the whole compass to atoms as it did so. Now a voyage without compass is like blindfolding a traveller by land, and placing him before four cross-roads without a sign-post. It was as hopeless for us to try and find our way as it would have been for him.

"The storm raged for a whole month. In the daytime a dim twilight prevailed, and the nights were black as pitch; we saw neither sun, moon, nor stars, for thirteen weeks. We could gauge the violence of the storm by seeing the masts snapped off one after another, and for weeks at a time our rudderless wreck was hurled from the crest of one wave straight through the air on to the crest of another, which was very remarkable considering that this ship with its seventy cannon and crew of about five hundred men, even without its masts and tackle, weighed some thousands of tons.

"At last the wind subsided, but the sea was still in such an uproar that, even after the cessation of the storm, the waves continued mountain high, and carried our wrecked vessel slowly in one particular direction.

"'Whither are we drifting?'" asked all in intense anxiety; and, indeed, it was high time that we reached land in order to take in fresh supplies, for our provisions had fallen very low. Just as the last rations were being divided, the sky cleared and a light breeze sprang up laden with a peculiar aroma. We all sniffed at this strange perfume, which resembled that of oranges, but yet was something quite different. Suddenly an idea, began to dawn on me, but not quite sure, I merely remarked: 'It smells like roast beef and Havana cigars.'

"'Yes, yes,' exclaimed an hundred voices, 'that's just what it is.'

"We lived for a whole week on this nourishing air, while we drifted slowly along. On the eighth day we came in sight of land, and, to our great astonishment, this turned out to be the town of Havana, which is situated at the extreme north of the island of Cuba—hence the perfume of tobacco.

"The same evening as I sat smoking a costly Havana cigar, I began to relate to the tobacco-planters some of my various adventures, more especially those I had experienced lately. To my great annoyance, loud shouts of laughter arose among my audience, and some stood on their heads, others turned summersaults, and others again smoothed their hair, saying mockingly: 'These tales really make one's hair stand on end!'

"Naturally, I left the Assembly without another word, and took ship the same evening for Europe, unable to endure any longer the company of men who could not distinguish between lying brag and the simple truth.

"With this, gentlemen, I will close my narrative for to-day, thanking you all for the kind attention with which you have hitherto followed the recital of my adventures."

CHAPTER XVI

REMARKABLE DEGREES OF COLD

A trustworthy friend once told me that when he was sailing in the Arctic regions the cold was so intense that if any one brought a lighted wax or tallow candle on deck it froze immediately, flame and all! I have never actually seen this myself, and should be inclined to discredit the story had I not experienced cold equally intense in Russia. It is easy enough to shake one's head unbelievably because something or other seems impossible, but as the proverb says, 'Live and learn.'

"One very severe winter in Russia I was out hunting for bears. The cold was so bitter that at every shot I fired the flint of my gun flew into several pieces. I had just shot a gigantic she-bear when the same thing happened, and before I had time to take a fresh flint-stone out of my pouch I heard a terrible roar close to me, and, turning my head in the direction of the noise, I beheld the mate of the dead bear making towards me with its fore-paws outstretched and wide open jaws. As I had no desire to be embraced by the newly made widower, and my gun was for the moment useless, I climbed hastily up the nearest tree in order to be prepared to shoot again. In a few moments I had reached a high branch, and, sitting down comfortably on it, I soon loaded my gun. I then hastily set about screwing in a fresh flint, when suddenly the screw-driver fell from my benumbed hands to the ground. There I sat defenseless, expecting every moment that Bruin would climb the tree after me. Fortunately his attention was attracted first by his murdered companion, and he walked straight up to her to find out why she was lying in a pool of blood on the snow. He pushed the stiffened corpse with his muzzle, sniffed at it several times, and then felt it with his formidable claws. Finding this of no avail, he turned the body over and tried to make it stand upright—all, of course, in vain.

"This took some little time, and I employed it to repossess myself of my screw-driver. I could not descend from the tree to regain it, but the freezing cold was my help. In my pocket I had a piece of bread, left over from my early breakfast; this I chewed up, pushed the end of my dog-leash through it, and let down the piece of bread, which clung firmly round the leash, on to the spot where the screw-driver was lying. In a second the two froze together, and I hurriedly drew up the line with the bread, my screw-driver and a lump of ice, all sticking to the end of it.



I HURRIEDLY DREW UP THE LINE.

"You can easily guess what followed. I put a new flint into my gun, and sent a shot through the bear's heart, which forthwith stretched him lifeless on the ground beside his mate.

"I was unfeignedly glad at the lucky ending of this adventure, for you can imagine that I was almost in despair, as I sat on the branch listening to the bear mourning over his dead, and vowing deadly vengeance against me."

CHAPTER XVII

A STORY TOLD BY THE BARON'S NEPHEW

At the next meeting of his boon companions the Baron came in with a young man, whom he introduced to the company as his nephew, Walter. This nephew, he said, was staying with him for a few days, and he particularly wished to present him to his friends as several of them had known the young man's Twin brother, Albert, at the university.

"Come, Albert," cried a young lawyer, "why do you allow your uncle to pass you off as your brother, Walter, whom I have never seen, where as you and I were at college together?"

"Because this youth really is Walter," answered the Baron for him, "although he is as like his twin brother as two peas."

The lawyer left his seat and approached the pair, but maintained stoutly on close inspection that the young man was his friend and former fellow-student, Albert, whom he knew intimately.

"No indeed, my dear fellow, on my word of honor as a soldier this is not your friend Albert, but his brother, Walter. However, since the intimate friend of the one brother still persists in declaring that Albert, whom he has never seen, is his former fellow-student, we will ask my nephew to relate how he and his twin brother have been constantly mistaken for one another all their lives."

"Yes, gentlemen," said Walter, "from our earliest youth we have been taken for one another, because we were so much alike that even our parents could not distinguish between us. We were always dressed in different colored clothes from babyhood, and as blue was the tint chosen for me, I was called

'Boy Blue,' and Albert, who has always been devoted to forestry, wore green frocks, and received the nickname of 'Boy Green.' As we grew older we dressed alike, and I will tell you one of the numerous jests we were enabled to play owing to our great similarity.

"Last autumn we went on a walking tour through the Harz district, and after a week's journey we spent the night at a little village called Wernig. The next morning when the barber we had ordered came into the house, I was still in my bedchamber, while Albert was waiting for him in the dressing-room. My brother sat down to be shaved, and, when the barber had made his face quite smooth, he came into the bedroom for a moment to, wash off the lather. I seized the opportunity to enter the room in my shirt-sleeves, and seat myself in my brother's empty chair with the remark, 'now, my good man, do shave me properly; I cannot go about all Sunday with a beard half an inch long!'



NOW MY GOOD MAN, DO SHAVE ME PROPERLY.

"The barber shook his head, and, coining nearer, said: 'Why, sir, I shaved you well just a moment ago, and—' but he got no further. Pale with fear and astonishment, he prepared the lather again and soaped my face vigorously. As he shaved me he murmured, 'I have never seen a beard grow so quickly in my life! it almost makes one believe in witchcraft.'

Whatever will my wife say when I tell her such a wonderful thing as this?"

"When he had finished I asked him the amount of his fee, but when I pressed double the amount into his hand, the honest fellow wished to return me half of it. Naturally, I refused to take it, for he had well earned his money. Still full of astonishment the barber took his departure, and as he went out I heard him say, 'That 's stranger than any story I've ever heard told!'"

The audience laughed heartily at the tale, but the Baron said with a contemptuous smile, as he stroked his smooth chin:

"I do not consider the hoax anything very wonderful Walter, since, after all, it only rests on the wonderful resemblance between you, and you were two people. I once threw a barber into much greater confusion unaided, and I will relate to you had it came about.

"One of my friends, who emigrated to America, discovered there a marvellous pomade for promoting the growth of the hair and beard, and some years ago he sent me a present of seven large boxes of the preparation. As I have never worn a beard, and therefore had no need of it I sent the boxes up into a lumber-room, and my clever John put them on the window-ledge, just where they would catch the strongest rays of the noonday sun. I did not trouble about the stuff for a long time, thinking it was sure to be some American fraud, but one day, happening to enter the room where it was kept, I found the floor covered almost knee-deep with a, frothy liquid. The heat of the sun had melted all the fat in the boxes, and it had run out. But the strength had been retained in what was left; and naturally had greatly increased and become concentrated. I immediately tested it by dipping my forefinger into a pot and smearing my upper lip. I felt a slight pricking sensation, but nothing more. The next morning I hardly recognized myself when I perceived the bushy dragoon's moustache, which had grown overnight! A few days later I greatly perplexed the barber at Bodenbergl by a trick I played

on him. This man used to shave me nearly every day, and one morning when he had just finished I went out into the next room and rubbed a little of the wonderful pomade on my face. After a minute I came back with a fresh beard already sprouting, and angrily showed the barber, who had already packed up all his things, the result of his work. In great astonishment he commenced shaving me over again—I repeated this trick seventeen times the same morning, till the barber was almost too exhausted to move his arms, and his razors were quite blunt!



I USED IT ALL ON A WHITE PONY.

"I am sorry I cannot show you how it was done, as I have not the smallest remnant of the magic pomade left. I used it all on a white pony which I bought in Holland and it produced such a fine crop of hair that he looked like a curly poodle, and created universal astonishment when he came running after me with his long hair streaming in the wind.

"Toby, my groom, was not best pleased with the rapid results of the pomade, for long locks grew from the palms of his hands, and on his right cheek, which he had accidentally touched while rubbing the pony. However, he profited considerably by exhibiting himself for money in various towns. Perhaps some of you may remember seeing him, although it is a good many years ago since the affair happened."

CHAPTER XVIII

THE BARON'S VOYAGE IN A BALLOON

When I was in the service of the Turks, I frequently used to row myself about in a pleasure-boat on the Sea of Marmora. One morning, when I was admiring the beauty of the cloudless sky, I observed a dark speck in the air, which bore no resemblance to a bird. Fortunately, I had my fowling-piece with me, without which I never move if I can help it. I fired three or four times at the dark speck, but it was beyond the range of my bullets, or else I should certainly have hit it, for I am an unerring shot. I then loaded my gun with five times the amount of powder and three bullets, in order to shoot farther. My boat swayed to and fro, but such a trifle makes no difference to a good shot. I fired my over-loaded gun, and the recoil was so violent that I fell senseless to the bottom of my boat. When I re-opened my eyes, the mysterious object was rapidly descending, and I perceived it was not a bird, but a balloon.

"I was now able to judge at what an immense height it must have been, for the balloon was as large round as the cupola of the Great Mosque of Constantinople, and from it was suspended a car larger than my boat. This huge object came nearer and nearer and finally fell with a splash, which was heard all over Constantinople, into the water close to my boat. The noise was like the explosion of a powder-magazine, and I was only thankful that the monstrous thing had fallen a little distance from my boat and not right on top of it.

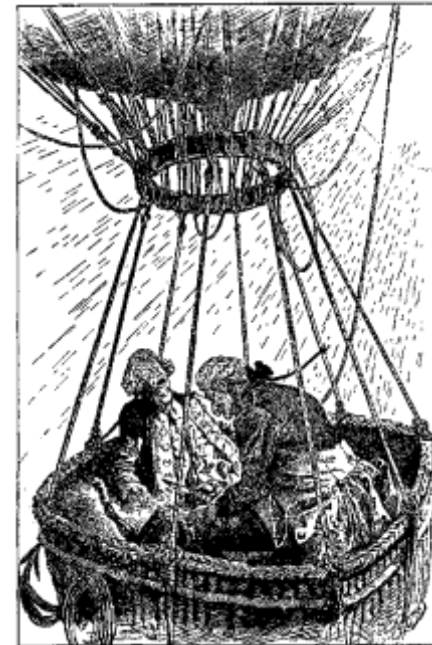
"When the wash of the water had somewhat subsided, I rowed nearer and found, seated in the car, a starved-looking Englishman, named Mr. Smith, who hailed me with exaggerated politeness as his deliverer. The poor fellow was an aeronaut by profession, and five days previously had left New York with two assistants, intending to cross the Falls of

Niagara; but as they approached the Falls they were met by a strong west wind, which carried them towards the Atlantic. The travellers tried to open the valve, in order to let out the air and descend, but the connecting cord was broken, and they were unable to do so before they had left the mainland of America behind them. Mr. Smith then advised his two men to let themselves down by a strong parachute, which they had with them, before they were carried right out to sea. This advice was followed, and the descent safely accomplished on the coast of Newfoundland, while the aeronaut himself refused to abandon his air-ship, and drifted out to sea, trusting that the wind would carry him as far as Europe. But the balloon had been driven hither and thither by contrary winds, and even when the starving traveller, whose provisions had long been exhausted, saw land once more beneath him, he was powerless to descend. Had not my bullets made a rent in the silk, causing the air to rush out and the car to sink, the poor man must inevitably have perished of hunger and exhaustion.

"Out of gratitude he wished to make me a present of the balloon, but I refused the gift as I could make no use of it. Seeing, however, that he was anxious to make me some return for saving his life, I consented to accompany him on a short trip, which he assured me I should find very pleasant. My new friend at once set about repairing the hole in the balloon, and on the following day announced that he was prepared to start. He stepped into the car, accompanied by a large Persian dog, which he had purchased on account of its rarity; then, cutting the rope by which the air-ship was fastened to a rock, we shot upwards with the speed of an arrow. At first the movement was too quick for me, but I soon became accustomed to it, and was delighted at the magnificent vista of land and sea, which opened out before our eyes. We mounted higher and higher, and in an hour the whole of Europe lay spread beneath us like a map; still higher, and we were gazing across Asia as far as China and Japan. It was most interesting and instructive, and I forgot all else as I drank in the enchanting view. At last I was struck by the anxious expression on my guide's face, and he

confessed (for the heat was increasing every moment) that he had never before ascended so high, and in his haste he had probably filled the balloon with too much gas. The heat became intense, and the balloon swelled and crackled ominously, but we still continued to rise.

"'We are several miles high now,' whispered my friend, 'but I do not think we shall come to any harm unless a seam gives way.'



I AT ONCE SET TO WORK TO SKIN IT.

"'Are we really several miles high?' I asked, doubtfully. 'Indeed we are,' replied the aeronaut. 'I estimate that we are from fifteen to twenty miles above the sea, because the enormous heat shows that we have approached much nearer the sun, and the earth looks like a flat plain, without hills or valleys.'

"I advised him to open the valve, so that some of the gas might escape and enable us to descend, but he said that he had already pulled the cord which was attached to the valve several times, and that it must have stuck fast. At that moment, the dog, which had hitherto lain quietly in the bottom of the car, stood up and began to howl most piteously. Gradually his cries grew weaker, and at last died away altogether, because the air became so thin that even we men could hardly manage to speak, try how we would. We continued to rise, and at last we could only manage to communicate with one another by signs. Trusting to my greater strength, I took the valve-cord from my companion's hand and pulled it with all my might. The valve did not open, but the thick cord snapped right across. I fell to the bottom of the car still clutching the piece of cord, and when I was able to stand up again and look round, I discovered that the Englishman lay unconscious, and the dog was dead. The heat was unbearable and my thirst was intense, but my first thought was to help my poor friend. I looked around in despair, but we had drunk all our wine a long time before, and cast the bottles overboard. My gaze fell on the dog, and I at once set to work to skin it. This done, I forced my friend to swallow a little of the blood, and I did likewise, which strengthened us both considerably. Our lives were saved, but our ascent must cease at any cost, for we were now close to the sun, and the heat was past endurance. Resolutely I seized my gun and fired into the balloon. The air was too thin for any report to be heard, but the shot had penetrated the bladder and made several small holes through which the air slowly escaped, and the balloon began to sink.

"The air soon grew colder, and we felt ravenously hungry. To the best of my belief I had never tasted dog's flesh before, but I was so hungry that I had almost resolved to eat some raw. To our great joy we found the dog completely roasted, and I can assure you that I have tasted much worse meat. While the shade of the balloon had protected us to some extent, the dog had been lying exposed to the sun and had gradually roasted in its own fat! During our meal we rapidly

descended to earth, and soon landed on a date-palm, so that our dessert was easily provided. After consuming several pounds of dates, we climbed down the tree and found close at hand a spring of fresh water, in which we were glad to bathe our blistered limbs. Wearied with our exertions of the day we then stretched ourselves on the mossy edge of the spring, and were soon fast asleep.

"The next morning we were roused by the approach of a caravan of Arabian merchants, who told us that we had landed on an oasis in Arabia, which lay on the direct route to Jerusalem. Thither they were journeying, and would be glad of our company and protection. We gladly consented, and on the way, with the assistance of one of the merchants, I made myself an excellent pair of boots out of the dog's skin, and have worn them constantly for the last eleven years."

CHAPTER XIX

THE BARON'S ADVENTURES WITH A HUGE CANNON

AND A FISH STORY

"Honored friends and comrades," said the Baron at the next meeting, "I am alone again to-day, as my nephew has deserted me. His brother has sent an urgent message for him to return, and my wife has gone with him. I therefore invite all you gentlemen to dine with me to-night at the inn at my expense. I am celebrating to-day the silver wedding of a very old friend of mine, and I trust you will not only favor me with your company, but allow me also to present to you a new acquaintance. But before we dine, permit me to finish the story of my pleasure trip, the effects of which I suffered from for some time afterwards.

"When we reached Jerusalem, Mr. Smith took ship direct for London, and I returned to Constantinople. The Sultan was greatly distressed at my mysterious disappearance, and had sent criers through all the principal streets' of the town, to announce that he would give a thousand gold pieces to any one who could either produce or bring news of the lost Baron.

"These tidings reached me on my journey, and, directly I arrived in Constantinople, I sent a messenger to the royal audience-chamber to announce the arrival of a gentleman who brought news of the lost Baron. His Majesty at once appeared, bringing with him a purse containing the thousand gold pieces. You can judge by this how much His Majesty valued me.

"My dear Munchausen,' he exclaimed, with rapture, 'how delighted I am to see you once more! Where have you been hiding?'

"Close to the sun,' said I.

"Strolling through the park together, I recounted to the astonished Sultan all the details of my adventure, and bemoaned my exhaustion and loss of strength. We were standing by the celebrated brass cannon, probably the largest in the world, which carried a marble ball of eleven hundred pounds' weight, and requires three hundred and thirty pounds' weight of powder.



I LIFTED THE BRAZEN MONSTER WITH ONE HAND.

"I suppose you could not lift that cannon?, said the Sultan, smiling.

"I have no objection to trying,' I replied, lifting the brazen monster with one hand.

"Oh well, that's easy enough,' said the Sultan, 'but I will wager you that you cannot carry it an hundred paces.'

"I hesitated a moment, but my pride was roused, and, throwing off my coat and waist-coat, I seized the cannon in both hands, balanced it on my left shoulder, and carried it the required distance. Then, still holding the cannon, I ran to the water's edge, plunged in, and swam out into the sea.

"Take heed what you are doing,' cried the Sultan; 'you will not be able to hold out long!'

"What will Your Highness wager that I do not swim to the opposite shore?' I cried.

"Sixty thousand double ducats,' was his answer.

"I made no reply, but merely swam on, and, using my utmost exertions, soon reached the coast of Asia. Somewhat wearied, I rested on the shore until the Sultan's chief minister arrived in an eighteen-oared galley, bringing the message that his master was delighted at my success, and offered me four times the amount if I would restore the cannon to its former place. Much can be accomplished for such an enormous reward, and I felt imbued with fresh strength. Assuring the minister that the Sultan should have my answer directly, I swung my arm, seized the cannon, and threw it towards the European coast. But I had miscalculated my strength. Unfortunately, the heavy cannon slipped a little in my hand just as I was about to discharge it, and fell, together with my prospect of a substantial reward, into the sea, where it still lies to the present day.

"I dared not venture to show myself in Constantinople again, for a price had been set on my head. I therefore exchanged clothes with a poor laborer, and made my escape

that very night on a vessel bound for Venice. Since this fiasco I have never ventured on Turkish soil again.

"But here comes our hostess with the new acquaintance I promised to introduce to you. Allow me to present to you a very delicate kind of salmon-trout, which is only to be found in the Lake of Constance. Exactly twenty-five years ago I was staying at Basle in order to be present at the wedding of one of my friends. The wedding feast was to be given at a large inn, and when I went there a week before the ceremony to make the final arrangements, I found the landlady complaining bitterly that she was unable to obtain any of these salmon-trout in time for the wedding day. I asked her to describe to me exactly what these were, and, although I am not particularly fond of fishing, I went to the Lake of Constance, and in three days had caught a whole barrel full of these fish. But how could I return in time? I discovered to my horror that I had made a mistake in the date, and that the wedding was to take place that very morning. I determined at all costs to be back in time with my fish, so seating myself on the cask, I floated down the Rhine. On the way I caught nineteen large salmon, which I harnessed to my cask of fish, and now we spun along so swiftly, that I reached Basle within two hours. The only danger I encountered was when passing the falls of Schaffhausen, when my improvised boat was nearly upset, but I escaped with a wetting, and earned the grateful thanks of the whole wedding-party. To-day, in celebration of his silver wedding, my friend has sent me a dozen salmon-trout and a cask of wine, I call upon you all, my friends, to charge your glasses and drink to the long life of the happy pair, to the assembled company, and to the veracity of all tales of adventure!"

Thus the hours sped along, and when the Baron took leave of his guests, he announced that he was going away for some time, as he had promised to accompany his friends at Basle on a long tour through Switzerland.

CHAPTER XX

AN ADVENTURE IN SWITZERLAND

"Well, Munchausen," said the Head Forester, on the eve of the Baron's departure, "have you ever been to Switzerland before?"

"Dozens of times," replied the Baron. "I know every inch of that glorious country. I will tell you a little incident which took place on my first visit there, but before beginning, as we shall not meet again for some time, I take the opportunity of thanking you all for the kind attention with which you have always listened to, my simple narratives.

"A good many years ago, eleven of my friends and myself, accompanied by a guide named Basil Trueman, climbed the 'Jungfrau,' the ascent of which had never before been attempted. We reached the summit with some difficulty, our guide being rather hampered in his movements by his little son, whom he had brought with him. It is a custom of the Swiss guides and chamois hunters to take their little ones up on the mountains as soon as they can walk at all, in order to accustom them to climbing from their earliest years. It is by no means uncommon to see children of two and three years old, with their tiny alpenstocks and snowshoes, accompanying strangers up the mountains.

"Though little Basil was six years old this was his first climb, as he had been too sickly hitherto. It was unfortunate that the poor little fellow had had no practice, for after the first half hour he could not keep pace with us. We decided to carry him in turns, and as there were twelve of us it could easily have been managed, only they all quarrelled as to who should be the first. I made an end to the dispute by hoisting the little fellow on my shoulders, and on we went. This answered very well, and little Basil was delighted at this new way of

climbing, but as we got higher the cold became intense, and at last the boy froze fast on to my shoulder, just as if he were growing there.

"The ascent was interesting, though very fatiguing. We climbed for two days and two nights, hewing steps in the smooth ice for the greater part of the way. At last we reached the summit and revelled in the enchanting view on every side. My little rider was so firmly frozen that he had to be cut from me with knives, and when we placed him on his feet, his legs were so numb that he swayed backwards and forwards on them. Then he lost his footing, slipped, and a loud cry of horror broke from thirteen throats as he rolled with the speed of a falling stone down the steep declivity. Each time he turned over, a fresh layer of snow clung to his body, and at last we only saw an immense snowball rolling down the mountain-side. With the aid of our field-glasses we followed the gigantic lump of snow, till with a final leap it fell into a terrible abyss never trodden by man!

"We all stood petrified with horror, till Trueman and I called out simultaneously, 'After him!' Our companions tried to dissuade us from the daring feat of sliding down a distance of thirteen thousand feet, but we persisted in the attempt. We bound ourselves firmly together with ropes, and started to descend. I will not inflict you with the heartrending details. Suffice to say, sorely bruised but with limbs unbroken we reached the bottom in an hour, and beheld the gigantic snowball with its human kernel fixed amid the branches of a withered tree. Fortunately Trueman had his ice-axe and with infinite difficulty we succeeded in cutting down the tree. We then turned our attention to the snowball and found it frozen in as many layers as an onion. These layers we carefully removed one by one though we despaired of finding the boy alive. At last after some hours' toil, a faint cry was heard, and the child crept out of the snowy covering which had protected him during his terrible fall. The father's joy was indeed touching, and fully repaid me for my arduous exertions. Strange to

relate, little Basil was quite unhurt, but when he emerged from the snow which had kept him warm, he froze quite stiff. We carried him home and on the way had one or two narrow escapes from avalanches. The child had to stop in bed a fortnight before he was completely thawed! We fed him with hot goat's milk every two hours, and thus saved his life. In his delirium he called continually on his 'noble deliverer,' as he termed me.



WE SAW AN IMMENSE SNOW BALL.

"It will be a great pleasure for me to see him again as a grown man, and press him to my heart. And now farewell, my dear friends and comrades, till my return from the land of snow and glaciers. May Heaven grant we all meet again!"

CHAPTER XXI

SOME OF THE BARON'S ADVENTURES IN AMERICA

AND THE STORY OF THE BEAR THAT WAS TAKEN FOR A GENERAL

About a year later, Baron Munchausen walked unexpectedly into the room which had been the scene of so many of his narratives. He was greeted boisterously by the assembled company and overwhelmed with questions such as, where had he been, what adventures had he experienced, why had he stayed away so long, and countless others. Smiling, the Baron replied:

"My dear friends and comrades, I find the only way to manage when one is so belabored with questions is to pick out one and reply to that alone, otherwise there is no end to the talking. I will therefore only reply to the questioner who asked me where I have just come from. Do not be surprised if I tell you from the land of the Indians, from America. Ah, that does surprise you, as I can see from your amazed expressions.

"Yes, gentlemen, I come from America, and I have travelled through every district in it during the last year, while my wife was paying a long visit to her aunt in Paris.

"America is indeed a marvellous country. I should like to have been there before it was discovered, and while it was still in its primitive state. But at the present day this country has reached such a high state of civilization, that a simple citizen of the old world can scarcely credit the marvels the sees every day there. I myself experienced a proof of speed so miraculous as to be almost incredible. The cultivated part of the country is traversed by high roads, and on one side of them

are laid two endless lines of iron rods, along which long rows of waggons are driven merely by the power of steam! These iron ways were invented in 1650, and ever since the year 1767 their use has become almost universal in America. They are called railways, and will soon be introduced into Europe. The most wonderful thing about them is the rapidity of movement of the vehicles, which are known as trains. At intervals of from five to ten miles there are stopping-places, called stations, each ruled by a petty prince, who bears the title of station-master.

"A train was waiting one day at a certain station, and I was standing by one of the carriage doors preparatory to getting in, when an exceedingly rude or drunken station-master came along and tried to make me get into another compartment, which contained a number of negroes, on the ground that I belonged there. We came to high words over the affair, and I had just raised my arm intending to clinch my argument by a sound box on his ears, when the whistle sounded and the train was off. As my arm descended we had already gone six miles and had arrived at the next station, where my hand struck against the cheek of the unoffending station-master, who was standing near! I was Obligated to beg the poor man's forgiveness, and apologies are what I particularly detest.

"Many other things are different in America from here—the people, the animals, and even the elements. It is impossible to form any idea of the magnitude of an American storm. I went on a visit to a friend in Illinois, who had emigrated to America some twenty years previously and started farming on a large scale, but without conspicuous success. During my stay there a terrible storm arose, which tore up all the buildings and tossed the heavy wooden beams into the air like feathers. Naturally, all the inmates of the farm, including sixty negroes and forty Indians, were carried away too, and we noticed that two: stone wells on the estate were torn out of the ground. The hurricane carried us about ten miles and set us down on a plain, where we found all the

animals and the various parts of the buildings in good condition. We at once set to work to rebuild, and within a week the new farm was ready for occupation. The most remarkable thing was the reappearance of the two stone wells, which had been torn up and planted here by the wind. Yielding to an irresistible impulse, I walked up to the pump-handles and pulled them vigorously, with the stream at once gushed out.



MY HAND STRUCK THE STATION-MASTER.

"What has happened, Munchausen?" cried my friend. 'Is it possible that the water in the wells has been carried here too?'

"But I stepped back hastily, for the liquid was not water but *petroleum*, which is almost universally used in America for lamps, as it burns with a brighter flame than any other oil. No one had known hitherto of the existence of this petroleum spring, which of course was now the property of my friend, and when I was in New York a few months later, I was delighted at receiving a letter from him, in which he said that the spring was working day and night, and that he was on the road to becoming a millionaire. Here you see exemplified the truth of the old proverb: 'It's an ill wind that blows nobody good.'

"In the West Indies I once experienced almost as violent a storm as this one. A friend of mine was leaving his house one stormy day when the wind unbuttoned his waterproof cloak from top to bottom. He turned round quickly to enter his house again, when the wind buttoned his cloak again, but it carried off his hat, and did not return it! You see for yourselves that this strange tale must be true, however improbable it sounds, or else how could it possibly have happened?"

With these words the Baron opened the door and walked out. His audience, somewhat surprised at his hasty departure, listened with regret to his rapid footsteps. But soon they heard him return, muttering in vexed tones:

"I have forgotten something."

Then he walked in and said:

"Excuse me, gentlemen, I have been on the point of asking you twenty times if I ever told you a tale about my friend, General Konski, whose acquaintance I made in Warsaw?"

All shook their heads, and the Baron, walking up to the table, began somewhat hurriedly, still standing:

"This general offered his services to his country at the beginning of the Russo-Turkish war, and was given the

command of a large body of troops. He encamped on the Turkish border, a few miles away from a small town. I with my hussars was quartered in a neighboring village awaiting further orders. Early one morning as I was roaming through the woods, I met a peasant driving a cart containing some empty sacks. He was going out in search of filberts, of which his master's wife was extremely fond, and as I had nothing in particular to do I offered to accompany him.

"We found an abundance of these nuts, which are not much to my taste. Naturally, we had to leave the cart while we plucked the filberts, but we returned at intervals and stuffed them in the sacks. We had already half filled the sacks and were busily engaged at some distance from the cart, when we heard a strange noise, and looking up, saw a gigantic bear, which, scenting its favorite nuts, had climbed on the waggon, and was calmly sitting there scooping out handfuls of nuts from the nearest sack and putting them in his mouth.

"The peasant opened his eyes and mouth to their fullest extent, and I cried out: 'Fool that I was to leave my gun in the cart,' for the bear was standing close by us, and as I spoke he calmly looked round and helped himself to some more nuts.

"The peasant was speechless with horror, but he soon recovered his senses and called out to his horse in Walloon, 'Hi there! Gee up!' The horse at once began to trot down the road, and the bear, who did not care for the jolting, commenced growling ominously.

"This was of course the best means of inciting the terrified brute to greater speed, and when the smooth high road was reached, he galloped madly to the camp, with the bear standing upright in the cart and giving vent to the most fearful growls. Now the troops were at that moment awaiting the arrival of General Konski, who had arranged to come over and inspect them that morning, and were drawn up in martial array. Hundreds of spectators were present, gazing eagerly at the brilliant sight.

"A cloud of dust was seen on the highway. The trumpeters sounded a loud blast and all stood prepared to salute. As the cloud of dust drew nearer and the sound of wheels was distinctly heard, the commanding officer cried, 'Here is the general!' and gave the signal. A thousand voices shouted simultaneously, 'Three cheers for General Konski! Hip, hip, hurrah!'



THREE CHEERS FOR GENERAL KONSKI!

"In the midst of the shouts the horse galloped up and fell exhausted to the ground. Among the half-filled sacks stood the bear, growling ferociously!

"Exerting all our strength, the peasant and I had raced after the triumphal procession, but naturally I had far outstripped him. I came up quite out of breath, and overtook the cart just as it came to a standstill. With one hand I gripped the monster's short tail, and as I did so the voices cried once more, 'Hurrah for the general!'

"Then I gave the tail a violent jerk, which dashed the bear to the ground and broke his neck and all his ribs. All the music and shouting came to an abrupt end, and a dead silence prevailed, only broken by the officer's exclamation: 'Surely, Baron Munchausen, this is not His Excellency, General Konski!'

"No, sir; this is a bear and some filberts!" When the laughter of his listeners had subsided, the Baron concluded with a courtly bow, and added as he turned to go: "To the best of my belief, the bear was stuffed as a punishment for having tried to pass himself off as the general, and is to be seen at Kiev to the present day. Should any of you chance to go there, you will doubtless find him in the Natural History Museum."

With these parting words the Baron concluded his veracious adventures and bade the assembled company "Good-night."