

remember, something the better of that argument! You really wish me to sing, then?"

"To be sure I do," Jack assured him, smiling.

He cleared his throat, wagged his head once or twice impassively and trolled out:

"Belle meunière, en passant par ici,  
Ne suis-je t'y pas éloigné d'Italie. . . ."

From this graceful opening the song declined into the grossest filth; and it was easy to see, watching his face, why McQuarters, without understanding a word of French, had accused him of singing "sculduddery." John, though disgusted, could not help being amused by a performance which set him in mind now of a satyr and now of a mincing school-girl—*vert galant avec un sourire de cantatrice*—lasciviousness blowing affected kisses in the intervals of licking its chops. At the conclusion he complimented the singer, with a grave face.

Barboux bowed. "It has, to say true, a little more marrow in it than le Chameau's *rossignols* and *rosiers*. Hola, Chameau; the Englishman here agrees that you sing well, but that your matter is watery stuff. You must let me teach you one or two songlets——"

"Pardon, m'sieur, mais ça sera un peu trop—trop vif; c'est-à-dire pour moi," stammered the little hunchback.

Barboux guffawed. The idea of le Chameau as a ladies' man tickled him hugely, and he tormented the patient fellow with allusions to it, and to his deformity, twenty times a day.

And yet the sergeant was not ill-natured — until you happened to cross him, when his temper became damnable—but merely a big, vain, boisterous lout. John, having taken his measure, found it easy to study him philosophically and even to be passably amused by him. But he made himself, it must be owned, an affliction; and an affliction against which, since the boats had parted company, there was no redress. He was conceited, selfish, tyrannical, and inordinately lazy. He never took a hand with the paddle, but would compel the