

had not forgotten the writer who had abused him; consequently, an answer was sent to the latter, saying that he must abstain from visiting Ferney. Gibbon expected such a reply; but, like a true Englishman, he held on, and did not think himself conquered. A few weeks passed. A new request was sent to Ferney, and the same answer returned. But obstacles excite the courage of high-minded beings. Gibbon is determined to see Voltaire. But he must find a new method. The way of negotiation cannot be pursued, he must carry the place by storm or by cunning. He resolved upon the latter method, for the first among philosophers was not practicable.

Therefore, one sunny morning, Gibbon filled his pockets with guineas, took his travelling stick, and set out for Voltaire's dwelling. Ferney is but a few miles from Geneva. Gibbon was to arrive early at the gates of the castle. And now, while he is on the road, we will give you the portrait of the hero of our story.

Gibbon was of an ugliness difficult to describe; his enormous head, abundantly adorned with red hair—such as belongs to the most of Albion's children—was sunk down between two shoulders, more worthy of belonging to some quadruped than to a member of the human race. His fallow eyes glistened, it is true, with an extraordinary lustre, by which great men are always known; but this brightness was greatly lessened by the inconceivable thickness of his eye-brows, which shaded the greater part of the upper portion of his face. Add to this a very round nose, with immense open nostrils; then a violet-colored mouth and a square chin; the whole covered with wrinkles, and encased in a horrible thick garland of red and yellow whiskers: and you will have, with great exactitude, the seducing portrait of our friend Gibbon. As to the fantastic hump, whose sinuous circumference occupied the place of three quarters of his spine, we will not say a word, nor of the strange inequality of his legs, which were miraculously placed almost in the middle of his clavicular bones.

Thus exquisitely shaped, Gibbon arrived at Ferney and rang the door of the park. The porter hastened to open, and was about to plunge the key into the lock, when, O, fatal moment for Gibbon! he was recognized. And sure enough, who could mistake him? The description of our unfortunate hero had been given to Voltaire, at the request of the latter, by the Republic of Geneva, and all the domestics of the castle knew it. So Gibbon could not preserve his *incognito*. He must think of retreating; but no, he is an Englishman, and will stand against the enemy. While the porter gives way to the cruel pleasure of repeating the orders of his master, and of examining the whimsical features of the stranger, the latter puts his hand in his pocket and makes his numerous guineas jingle; he takes them out, and displays them on his hand in the sun, and shows them to the astonished porter. This time adieu to Voltaire's orders; Gibbon will triumph. British gold has corrupted the porter's fidelity: the gates are mysteriously opened. Gibbon enters.... But his campaign does not end with the first victory; true, the first step is taken, perhaps the most difficult one; but the next required greater courage and more skill; will Gibbon be able to overcome the difficulties which attend it? The reader will judge from the sequel.

The porter, when he yielded to the generosity of our Englishman, had not assured him that he could have an interview with his master. He had only agreed to let him come within the gates of the park and enter his lodge. Gibbon was to find out the way to see M. de Voltaire. In vain he ransacks his brain; in vain he strikes his forehead; in vain he scratches his head; no idea came to his mind; however, he must quit this critical position; but how shall he do so?

Voltaire owned a little English horse, of which he was very fond. He would permit no one but himself to feed him; it was he who daily filled the manger with the most tender hay; he who gave him to drink in a silver bucket which he had had made expressly for that object by one of the silversmiths of Ferney. For more gold, the porter will go and let loose the horse and will lead him to the great avenue of the park, leaving Gibbon to make as much of the disobedience as he can.

It was still early, as we have said, when the hero of our history arrived at Ferney, and the shutters of the castle were tightly shut; everything seemed to favor this hazardous enterprise; no inconsiderate witness was there to reveal Gibbon's conspiracy. When the bargain was struck and the gold paid, Gibbon hastens to the park, and hides himself behind a large tree. The porter, on his part, goes straight to the stable, unties the colt, and runs off to his lodge. The fresh morning air, and his unexpected liberty, act simultaneously on the petulant organization of the animal. He springs into the garden, jumping about, frisking and skipping in the midst of the flowers, neighing, and throwing the sand and gravel about with his feet. But suddenly a window is opened with a crash, and Voltaire's face is seen, white and trembling with the greatest rage..... Unfinished oaths and sentences are uttered; he curses his servants, sends them all to the evil one, and says he will drive them all away. At his voice the domestics of the castle run to him to see what is the matter, and wish to stop the horse; but Voltaire forbids their moving, and especially their touching him. He says he will himself come down and lead the animal to the stable, and endeavor to appease, by his paternal kindness, the impetuous disposition, which cannot fail to become fatal to his young disciple. And saying this, he runs down the steps, and follows the colt, calling it by its name, and coaxes it to return to its stable. But during all this time, Gibbon, hidden behind his tree, was able to examine the features of the great writer whom he had so long desired to see. What was his astonishment when he saw the celebrated author of the "Henriade," the immortal writer of tragedies, the prince of philosophy and infidelity, fantastically accounted in a long red morning gown, his head covered with a tremendous wig "à la Louis XIV.," surmounting a ridiculous night-cap, which Madame Denis had taken care the day before to ornament with a large yellow ribbon. Great man! is it indeed you who are thus appearing, before the eyes of your antagonist, the celebrated Gibbon; before him, who, having ridiculed you as historian, will not fail to abuse you as philosopher! But it was not philosophy, history, Gibbon or scandal, that now occupied his mind! Voltaire was far from thinking of all these trifles; his horse had escaped; the morning dew would wet its hoofs, which might be broken against the stones. But alas! Voltaire little thinks that while he is trying to prevent his horse from catching cold, his cunning will be found in fault.... He continues his race, and soon finds himself opposite to the tree, from behind which Gibbon has been examining all his proceedings. All at once the Englishman leaves the tree and walks with a firm step up to Voltaire, and with the phlegmatic nonchalance for which his countrymen are distinguished, announces his name, and declares that he will now return content to his country, since he has had the luck of seeing the great man.

Voltaire, stupified at the ugliness of our hero, and at the impudence of his proceeding, lost his wits, forgot his horse, and ran away as fast as he could towards the house, without even answering a word to the treacherous Gibbon. Several minutes elapsed: our Englishman, proud of his victory, has not yet left the park. Like a conqueror, he takes the liberty of surveying the field of battle which his enemy has just abandoned. However, he was thinking of returning to Geneva, when he was overtaken by a liveried servant, who bows to him, and begins by begging his pardon for the singularity of the message which he was about to deliver; but said his master commanded, he must obey.

Gibbon, curious to know the object of this errand, requests the domestic to explain it.

"My lord sends me to Mr. Gibbon," said he, "to demand twelve guineas for having seen the *beast*."

"Here, my friend," replied the Englishman, "here are twenty-four: and tell your master that I have paid in advance for seeing him again; I will here await your return."

The servant goes to deliver our hero's answer, and soon returns to Gibbon: but this time with a real invitation from Voltaire to spend the remainder of the day at Ferney, and to partake of the dinner of the chateau.