

away, it will fill me with disgust, this interior of yours, and I shall be compelled, irresistibly compelled, to fix up for myself a little exterior. Thus, I shall have an establishment within and an establishment without—and won't the money fly then!" But the governor refuses to listen to anything. He doesn't see that I can't do without a pretty little wife, pretty and nice in the Parisian style; that is to say, original, bright, a trifle mischievous, with a spice of devilry in her, a wife that would be looked at in the streets and would have opera glasses leveled at her in the theatre, one who would do me credit and give me a certain distinction. I must be able to carry on my bachelor life with her as long as possible. And then there is something else which I can't say to the governor. He is called Chamblard—not his fault; only the consequence is that I am called Chamblard too, and it is not altogether easy to push yourself in society with such a name. A lovely, thoroughly lovely wife is the best passport you can have. Look at Robineau. He has just been elected at the little club in the Rue Royale. It is not exactly the Union nor the Jockey, but all the same you can't get into it for the asking. And why did Robineau get in?"

"The Lord knows."

"Because he has married a delightful wife, and this delightful wife is a first-class skater. All the papers had some gossip about the exquisite, the charming the ideal wife. Robineau. She came to the front all at once, and then Robineau came to the front as well. He was elected at the club six weeks after. Now, the governor does not understand the importance of these things. It is all Hebrew to him. But still, as he had absolutely cut off the supplies, I was obliged to knock under and consent to an interview with Number Two."

"And what was Number Two like?"

"What was she like, my dear fellow! She is the daughter of a merchant at Antwerp—made in Belgium! We had tried the provinces, and now we went abroad. Evidently the governor does not like Parisians. My mother came from Châtellerault, and she was a saint if there ever was one. Well, at the Opera Comique last night, in Paris, they showed me Number Two—a great blonde, stupid, masculine Flemish creature—A Rubens! A regular Rubens! Imagine a giantess, a colossal woman, taller by a head than I am. It would be physically impossible to get her into a stage box, and they are the only ones I care about. When we came out of the theatre I told the governor that I liked Number Two no better than Number One. I said I had had enough and would not even see Number Three. We had some words over it. When the gov-

ernor left me he banged the door, shouting: 'Not another. You shall you get from me.' And I knew he meant it, too. I went to bed, though not to sleep. Try as I might, I could see no escape from the big claws of the Antwerp woman—when all of a sudden, about three in the morning, there came a sudden flash of light. I conceived an idea which I ventured to call a stroke of genius."

"I haven't a doubt of it."

"A stroke of genius! I knew that you were leaving to-day for Marseilles, early in the morning; so I bolted in English fashion, and without taking the governor into my confidence. And by at the first stop, at Laroche—I've been looking in the time-table—I mean to send my father this telegram."

With an air of triumph Raoul drew a paper from his pocket.

"It's all ready—listen! 'To M. Chamblard, S. Rue de Rougemont, Paris: Laroche Station.—I have left with Maurice by the Marseilles express. I am going to make a journey round the world. It won't take me more than six months. I have engaged a berth in the Irrawaddy by telegram. Leave to-morrow for Singapore. Anything rather than the Flemish alliance. Good-by. Your affectionate son—awfully sorry to leave you—Raoul Chamblard'. There, now, isn't that a capital dispatch?"

"Not so bad; but you don't mean it seriously?"

"I do, though! I shall start if I don't get an answer from the governor before I reach Marseilles. But I shall get one; and that for two good reasons. My governor is logical and will say: 'What good am I doing myself by this? Instead of getting into mischief with the white beauties of Paris, he will be doing it with the yellow ones at Singapore. The second and the last reason is that he worships me and can't do without me, and the little bit of sentiment at the end of my telegram will go straight to his heart. I'll tell you how all this will come about. My message leaves Laroche at 12.20, and the governor will get it at 12.30. I bet you 10 louis that I shall find at Dijon or at Macon, in the station telegraph office, a message addressed to me, saying 'Come back, Antwerp match dropped.' It will be in nigger phrase will the governor's telegram, because he is methodical, and leaves out useless words. Is it a bet?"

"No, I should lose."

"That you would. Have you any papers?"

"Yes."

They read three or four dailies. It took them a quarter of an hour, and as they read they exchanged a word now and then about the new ministry, the races at Auzeuil, Yvette Guilbert—especially about Yvette Guilbert. Young Chamblard had been to

hear her the evening before last, and he hummed the teg.

Un fiacre allait trotinant
Cahin, cahin

Hu dial Hop ia!

Un fiacre allait trotinant
Jaune avec un cocher blanc.

The Chasseur d'Afrique had to confess that he had never heard Yvette Guilbert sing "Le Fiacre," and young Chamblard raised his arms in astonishment.

"Never heard 'Le Fiacre'? And you have been three months on leave. What did you come to Paris for? I know it by heart."

He began to hum it again. As he hummed, his voice became gradually slower and weaker, he sank back in his seat and was soon peacefully asleep, like the overgrown baby that he was.

Suddenly he awoke with a start. The train had pulled up at Laroche. Young Chamblard ran to the telegraph, and the clerk stolidly counted the words. "Take your seats, going on!" Chamblard had only just time to spring on the foot-board of his carriage.

"Whew! That's done" he said to the Chasseur d'Afrique. "What do you say to breakfast?"

"By all means breakfast!"

They went together to the dining car. It was a regular journey, for there were two drawing-room cars between them and the restaurant, and these two cars were both crammed.

The express was dashing along at full speed, pitching as it went, and one needed to have one's sea legs on. Then a vehement gust of wind caught the train, buried it in clouds of dust and made the gangways anything but easy to pass.

They pressed through the first car, the first gangway and the first squall of wind with considerable difficulty. They managed the second car, and Chamblard, who was leading the way, found it as much as he could do to open the door of the second gangway. It resisted his efforts under the pressure of the wind, but yielded at last; and then Raoul received simultaneously a blinding whirl of dust in his eyes and in his arms a golden-haired young damsel, who cried: "Oh, I beg your pardon!" He also cried: "Oh, I beg your pardon!" while at the same moment he was run into by the Chasseur d'Afrique, who, blinded like his friend by the dust, exclaimed: "Get on, Raoul! Get on!"

The two gangway doors were closed, and the trio were shut up in the little corridor at the mercy of the wind,—young Raoul, young Maurice, and the young damsel, with the golden hair. "Her 'Beg your pardon!' was followed by 'M. Maurice!' which elicited a 'Mlle. Marthe!' The young damsel with the golden hair knew the chasseur, and, perceiving that she was almost in the arms of an un-