

High Adventure

I should have made a last *nirage* to the left, in which case I should have piled up against a summer pavilion in the mayor's garden. Like all French mayors of my experience, he was a courteous, big-hearted gentleman.

After getting his breath, — he was a fleshy man, and had run all the way from his house, — he said, "Now, my boy, what can I do for you?"

First he placed a guard around the wreckage of my machine; then we had tea in the summer pavilion, where I explained the reason for my sudden visit. While I was telling him the story, I noticed that every window of the house, which stood at one end of the garden, was crowded with children's heads. War orphans, I guessed. Either that or the children of a large family of sons at the front. He was the kind of man who would take them all into his own home.

Having frightened his cows, — they must have given cottage cheese for a week afterward, — destroyed his fences, broken his apple trees, accepted his hospitality, I had the amazing nerve to borrow money from him. I had no choice in the matter, for I was a long way from Verdun, with only eighty centimes in my pocket.