

could have happened to him. The door was open ; a half-cut loaf of maize-bread stood on the table, but there was no sign of Saint-Pé. Then I heard the scraping of a spade. Saint-Pé was behind the house, digging.

He put down his spade and shuffled up to me. And he began to repeat the whole of his elaborate lamentation—he was miserable ; he was poor ; life was hard ; he had no one to look after him ; he appealed to good, charitable folks to help him in his old age ; ‘and now,’ he concluded, ‘my dog, the old Pluton, the only thing that the good God had left to me, my dog, my dog, he is dead.’ He led me behind his house, and lifting his coat, all plastered with patches, uncovered poor Pluton’s corpse with his tail stretched behind him, stark and straight, as I had never seen it while he lived. ‘Et maintenant,’ said Saint-Pé proudly, pointing to the half-dug grave, ‘et maintenant, monsieur, je travaille.’ And once more, from the very beginning, he went through his lamentation, concluding with the appeal to the good, charitable folks to help him.

I asked him how it had happened. He jerked his head towards the hedge, beyond which stood Eudore’s house. ‘It was this morning, at day-break. A shot—paf!’ (And he imitated, dramatically, the gesture of shooting.) ‘And it was only one that he had taken—just one miserable little duck. Only one. I assure you, monsieur, he hadn’t had time to take more than one.’ And for the third time he repeated his lamentation.

Eudore came out of his house, and, seeing us, strolled up to the hedge and looked over. Saint-Pé went back to his digging. Eudore stood silent for several minutes; presently he said, half to himself—

‘Ça faisait pitié de voir une bête affamée comme ça.’

Then, turning to Saint-Pé, he called in patois—

‘Stop a minute ; I will dig for you.’

He pushed his way through a gap in the hedge, and taking the spade, dug out the grave. And when he had finished, Saint-Pé lifted the stiff carcass tenderly and placed it inside ; then shovelled the earth over it with his clumsy sabots.