

tail otherwise than tight under his belly ; and whenever I met him alone, or skulking along behind his master, he never failed to greet me with an interminable, complicated series of grovelling, Japanese-like obeisances.

And, as I have said, the two came to the house every Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday, and while Pluton sneaked off to rummage obsequiously for refuse in the scullery, Saint-Pé mumbled out the whole lamentation of his woes, as lugubriously, as elaborately, as if he were a complete stranger. Four sous per visit was my allowance to Saint-Pé ; and when he had pocketed them somewhere amid those mysterious patches of his coat, he would clump away down the drive, noisily praying to the Virgin for the future repose of my soul.

Eudore and Saint-Pé were neighbours, and Eudore hated Saint-Pé after his obstinate, uncompromising fashion, and never altogether forgave me for encouraging the old impostor. 'C'est de la canaille,' he would repeat sullenly, when, to tease him, I related Saint-Pé's doings, 'c'est comme des *lagas* ; ça vit sur les gens.'

But if, in Eudore's opinion, Saint-Pé was a worthless parasite, Pluton was a cursed thief. One night Eudore had missed five of his young ducks, and he had shouted across the hedge to Saint-Pé that the very next time he would shoot that cur of his dead on the spot. At which threat Saint-Pé shrugged his bony shoulders, and Pluton retreated inside the house, grovelling more obsequiously than ever.

'Il est malin,' Saint-Pé confided to me the next morning. 'Il trouve . . . ce qu'il trouve — et ça ne paraît point — regardez.' And, indeed, despite the five young ducks, Pluton looked more starved than before.

II

One Tuesday, about the time of the sowing of the maize, Saint-Pé never appeared, and on the Thursday I missed him again. So at sunset, when I had done my work, I strolled up to his house, wondering what