GUSTAVE
FLAUBERT

BOUVARD AND PÉCUCHET, PART 1

Gustave Flaubert

Bouvard and Pécuchet, part 1

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Gustave Flaubert
Bouvard and Pécuchet: A Tragi-comic Novel of Bourgeois Life, part 1

CHAPTER I.
Kindred Souls

As there were thirty-three degrees of heat the Boulevard Bourdon was absolutely deserted.

Farther down, the Canal St. Martin, confined by two locks, showed in a straight line its water black as ink. In the middle of it was a boat, filled with timber, and on the bank were two rows of casks.

Beyond the canal, between the houses which separated the timber-yards, the great pure sky was cut up into plates of ultramarine; and under the reverberating light of the sun, the white façades, the slate roofs, and the granite wharves glowed dazzlingly. In the distance arose a confused noise in the warm atmosphere; and the idleness of Sunday, as well as the melancholy engendered by the summer heat, seemed to shed around a universal languor.

Two men made their appearance.

One came from the direction of the Bastille; the other from that of the Jardin des Plantes. The taller of the pair, arrayed in linen cloth, walked with his hat back, his waistcoat unbuttoned, and his cravat in his hand. The smaller, whose form was covered with a maroon frock-coat, wore a cap with a pointed peak.

As soon as they reached the middle of the boulevard, they sat down, at the same moment, on the same seat.

In order to wipe their foreheads they took off their headgear, each placing his beside himself; and the little man saw "Bouvard" written in his neighbour's hat, while the latter easily traced "Pécuchet" in the cap of the person who wore the frock-coat.

"Look here!" he said; "we have both had the same idea – to write our names in our head-coverings!"

"Yes, faith, for they might carry off mine from my desk."

"'Tis the same way with me. I am an employé."

Then they gazed at each other. Bouvard's agreeable visage quite charmed Pécuchet.

His blue eyes, always half-closed, smiled in his fresh-coloured face. His trousers, with big flaps, which creased at the end over beaver shoes, took the shape of his stomach, and made his shirt bulge out at the waist; and his fair hair, which of its own accord grew in tiny curls, gave him a somewhat childish look.

He kept whistling continually with the tips of his lips.

Bouvard was struck by the serious air of Pécuchet. One would have thought that he wore a wig, so flat and black were the locks which adorned his high skull. His face seemed entirely in profile, on account of his nose, which descended very low. His legs, confined in tight wrappings of lasting, were entirely out of proportion with the length of his bust. His voice was loud and hollow.

This exclamation escaped him:

"How pleasant it would be in the country!"

But, according to Bouvard, the suburbs were unendurable on account of the noise of the public-houses outside the city. Pécuchet was of the same opinion. Nevertheless, he was beginning to feel tired of the capital, and so was Bouvard.

And their eyes wandered over heaps of stones for building, over the hideous water in which a truss of straw was floating, over a factory chimney rising towards the horizon. Sewers sent forth their poisonous exhalations. They turned to the opposite side; and they had in front of them the walls of the Public Granary.

Decidedly (and Pécuchet was surprised at the fact), it was still warmer in the street than in his own house. Bouvard persuaded him to put down his overcoat. As for him, he laughed at what people might say about him.

Suddenly, a drunken man staggered along the footpath; and the pair began a political discussion on the subject of working-men. Their opinions were similar, though perhaps Bouvard was rather more liberal in his views.

A noise of wheels sounded on the pavement amid a whirlpool of dust. It turned out to be three hired carriages which were going towards Bercy, carrying a bride with her bouquet, citizens in white cravats, ladies with their petticoats huddled up so as almost to touch their armpits, two or three little girls, and a student.

The sight of this wedding-party led Bouvard and Pécuchet to talk about women, whom they declared to be frivolous, waspish, obstinate. In spite of this, they were often better than men; but at other times they were worse. In short, it was better to live without them. For his part, Pécuchet was a bachelor.

"As for me, I'm a widower," said Bouvard, "and I have no children."

"Perhaps you are lucky there. But, in the long run, solitude is very sad."

Then, on the edge of the wharf, appeared a girl of the town with a soldier, – sallow, with black hair, and marked with smallpox. She leaned on the soldier's arm, dragging her feet along, and swaying on her hips.

When she was a short distance from them, Bouvard indulged in a coarse remark. Pécuchet became very red in the face, and, no doubt to avoid answering, gave him a look to indicate the fact that a priest was coming in their direction.

The ecclesiastic slowly descended the avenue, along which lean elm trees were placed as landmarks, and Bouvard, when he no longer saw the priest's three-cornered head-piece, expressed his relief; for he hated Jesuits. Pécuchet, without absolving them from blame, exhibited some respect for religion.

Meanwhile, the twilight was falling, and the window-blinds in front of them were raised. The passers-by became more numerous. Seven o'clock struck.

Their words rushed on in an inexhaustible stream; remarks succeeding to anecdotes, philosophic views to individual considerations. They disparaged the management of the bridges and causeways, the tobacco administration, the theatres, our marine, and the entire human race, like people who had undergone great mortifications. In listening to each other both found again some ideas which had long since slipped out of their minds; and though they had passed the age of simple emotions, they experienced a new pleasure, a kind of expansion, the tender charm associated with their first appearance on life's stage.

Twenty times they had risen and sat down again, and had proceeded along the boulevard from the upper to the lower lock, each time intending to take their departure, but not having the strength to do so, held back by a kind of fascination.

However, they came to parting at last, and they had clasped each other's hands, when Bouvard said all of a sudden:

"Faith! what do you say to our dining together?"

"I had the very same idea in my own head," returned Pécuchet, "but I hadn't the courage to propose it to you."

And he allowed himself to be led towards a little restaurant facing the Hôtel de Ville, where they would be comfortable.

Bouvard called for the *menu*. Pécuchet was afraid of spices, as they might inflame his blood. This led to a medical discussion. Then they glorified the utility of science: how many things could be learned, how many researches one could make, if one had only time! Alas! earning one's bread took up all one's time; and they raised their arms in astonishment, and were near embracing each other over the table on discovering that they were both copyists, Bouvard in a commercial establishment, and Pécuchet in the Admiralty, which did not, however, prevent him from devoting a few spare moments each evening to study. He had noted faults in M. Thiers's work, and he spoke with the utmost respect of a certain professor named Dumouchel.

Bouvard had the advantage of him in other ways. His hair watch-chain, and his manner of whipping-up the mustard-sauce, revealed the greybeard, full of experience; and he ate with the corners of his napkin under his armpits, giving utterance to things which made Pécuchet laugh. It was a peculiar laugh, one very low note, always the same, emitted at long intervals. Bouvard's laugh was explosive, sonorous, uncovering his teeth, shaking his shoulders, and making the customers at the door turn round to stare at him.

When they had dined they went to take coffee in another establishment. Pécuchet, on contemplating the gas-burners, groaned over the spreading torrent of luxury; then, with an imperious movement, he flung aside the newspapers. Bouvard was more indulgent on this point. He liked all authors indiscriminately, having been disposed in his youth to go on the stage.

He had a fancy for trying balancing feats with a billiard-cue and two ivory balls, such as Barberou, one of his friends, had performed. They invariably fell, and, rolling along the floor between people's legs, got lost in some distant corner. The waiter, who had to rise every time to search for them on all-fours under the benches, ended by making complaints. Pécuchet picked a quarrel with him; the coffee-house keeper came on the scene, but Pécuchet would listen to no excuses, and even cavilled over the amount consumed.

He then proposed to finish the evening quietly at his own abode, which was quite near, in the Rue St. Martin. As soon as they had entered he put on a kind of cotton nightgown, and did the honours of his apartment.

A deal desk, placed exactly in the centre of the room caused inconvenience by its sharp corners; and all around, on the boards, on the three chairs, on the old armchair, and in the corners, were scattered pell-mell a number of volumes of the "Roret Encyclopædia," "The Magnetiser's Manual," a Fénelon, and other old books, with heaps of waste paper, two cocoa-nuts, various medals, a Turkish cap, and shells brought back from Havre by Dumouchel. A layer of dust velveted the walls, which otherwise had been painted yellow. The shoe-brush was lying at the side of the bed, the coverings of which hung down. On the ceiling could be seen a big black stain, produced by the smoke of the lamp.

Bouvard, on account of the smell no doubt, asked permission to open the window.

"The papers will fly away!" cried Pécuchet, who was more afraid of the currents of air.

However, he panted for breath in this little room, heated since morning by the slates of the roof.

Bouvard said to him: "If I were in your place, I would remove my flannel."

"What!" And Pécuchet cast down his head, frightened at the idea of no longer having his healthful flannel waistcoat.

"Let me take the business in hand," resumed Bouvard; "the air from outside will refresh you."

At last Pécuchet put on his boots again, muttering, "Upon my honour, you are bewitching me." And, notwithstanding the distance, he accompanied Bouvard as far as the latter's house at the corner of the Rue de Béthune, opposite the Pont de la Tournelle.

Bouvard's room, the floor of which was well waxed, and which had curtains of cotton cambric and mahogany furniture, had the advantage of a balcony overlooking the river. The two principal ornaments were a liqueur-frame in the middle of the chest of drawers, and, in a row beside the glass, daguerreotypes representing his friends. An oil painting occupied the alcove.

"My uncle!" said Bouvard. And the taper which he held in his hand shed its light on the portrait of a gentleman.

Red whiskers enlarged his visage, which was surmounted by a forelock curling at its ends. His huge cravat, with the triple collar of his shirt, and his velvet waistcoat and black coat, appeared to cramp him. You would have imagined there were diamonds on his shirt-frill. His eyes seemed fastened to his cheekbones, and he smiled with a cunning little air.

Pécuchet could not keep from saying, "One would rather take him for your father!"

"He is my godfather," replied Bouvard carelessly, adding that his baptismal name was François-Denys-Bartholemée.

Pécuchet's baptismal name was Juste-Romain-Cyrille, and their ages were identical – forty-seven years. This coincidence caused them satisfaction, but surprised them, each having thought the other much older. They next vented their admiration for Providence, whose combinations are sometimes marvellous.

"For, in fact, if we had not gone out a while ago to take a walk we might have died before knowing each other."

And having given each other their employers' addresses, they exchanged a cordial "good night."

"Don't go to see the women!" cried Bouvard on the stairs.

Pécuchet descended the steps without answering this coarse jest.

Next day, in the space in front of the establishment of MM. Descambos Brothers, manufacturers of Alsatian tissues, 92, Rue Hautefeuille, a voice called out:

"Bouvard! Monsieur Bouvard!"

The latter glanced through the window-panes and recognised Pécuchet, who articulated more loudly:

"I am not ill! I have remained away!"

"Why, though?"

"This!" said Pécuchet, pointing at his breast.

All the talk of the day before, together with the temperature of the apartment and the labours of digestion, had prevented him from sleeping, so much so that, unable to stand it any longer, he had flung off his flannel waistcoat. In the morning he recalled his action, which fortunately had no serious consequences, and he came to inform Bouvard about it, showing him in this way that he had placed him very high in his esteem.

He was a small shopkeeper's son, and had no recollection of his mother, who died while he was very young. At fifteen he had been taken away from a boarding-school to be sent into the employment of a process-server. The gendarmes invaded his employer's residence one day, and that worthy was sent off to the galleys – a stern history which still caused him a thrill of terror. Then he had attempted many callings – apothecary's apprentice, usher, book-keeper in a packet-boat on the Upper Seine. At length, a head of a department in the Admiralty, smitten by his handwriting, had employed him as a copying-clerk; but the consciousness of a defective education, with the intellectual needs engendered by it, irritated his temper, and so he lived altogether alone, without relatives, without a mistress. His only distraction was to go out on Sunday to inspect public works.

The earliest recollections of Bouvard carried him back across the banks of the Loire into a farmyard. A man who was his uncle had brought him to Paris to teach him commerce. At his majority, he got a few thousand francs. Then he took a wife, and opened a confectioner's shop. Six months later his wife disappeared, carrying off the cash-box. Friends, good cheer, and above all, idleness, had speedily accomplished his ruin. But he was inspired by the notion of utilising his beautiful chirography, and for the past twelve years he had clung to the same post in the establishment of MM. Descambos Brothers, manufacturers of tissues, 92, Rue Hautefeuille. As for his uncle, who formerly had sent him the celebrated portrait as a memento, Bouvard did not even know his residence, and expected nothing more from him. Fifteen hundred francs a year and his salary as copying-clerk enabled him every evening to take a nap at a coffee-house. Thus their meeting had the importance of an adventure. They were at once drawn together by secret fibres. Besides, how can we explain sympathies? Why does a certain peculiarity, a certain imperfection, indifferent or hateful in one person, prove a fascination in another? That which we call the thunderbolt is true as regards all the passions.

Before the month was over they "thou'd" and "thee'd" each other.

Frequently they came to see each other at their respective offices. As soon as one made his appearance, the other shut up his writing-desk, and they went off together into the streets. Bouvard walked with long strides, whilst Pécuchet, taking innumerable steps, with his frock-coat flapping at his heels, seemed to slip along on rollers. In the same way, their peculiar tastes were in harmony. Bouvard smoked his pipe, loved cheese, regularly took his half-glass of brandy. Pécuchet snuffed, at dessert ate only preserves, and soaked a piece of sugar in his coffee. One was self-confident, flighty, generous; the other prudent, thoughtful, and thrifty.

In order to please him, Bouvard desired to introduce Pécuchet to Barberou. He was an ex-commercial traveller, and now a purse-maker – a good fellow, a patriot, a ladies' man, and one who affected the language of the faubourgs. Pécuchet did not care for him, and he brought Bouvard to the residence of Dumouchel. This author (for he had published a little work on mnemonics) gave lessons in literature at a young ladies' boarding-school, and had orthodox opinions and a grave deportment. He bored Bouvard.

Neither of the two friends concealed his opinion from the other. Each recognised the correctness of the other's view. They altered their habits, they quitting their humdrum lodgings, and ended by dining together every day.

They made observations on the plays at the theatre, on the government, the dearness of living, and the frauds of commerce. From time to time, the history of Collier or the trial of Fualdès turned up in their conversations; and then they sought for the causes of the Revolution.

They lounged along by the old curiosity shops. They visited the School of Arts and Crafts, St. Denis, the Gobelins, the Invalides, and all the public collections.

When they were asked for their passports, they made pretence of having lost them, passing themselves off as two strangers, two Englishmen.

In the galleries of the Museum, they viewed the stuffed quadrupeds with amazement, the butterflies with delight, and the metals with indifference; the fossils made them dream; the conchological specimens bored them. They examined the hot-houses through the glass, and groaned at the thought that all these leaves distilled poisons. What they admired about the cedar was that it had been brought over in a hat.

At the Louvre they tried to get enthusiastic about Raphael. At the great library they desired to know the exact number of volumes.

On one occasion they attended at a lecture on Arabic at the College of France, and the professor was astonished to see these two unknown persons attempting to take notes. Thanks to Barberou, they penetrated into the green-room of a little theatre. Dumouchel got them tickets for a sitting at the Academy. They inquired about discoveries, read the prospectuses, and this curiosity developed their intelligence. At the end of a horizon, growing every day more remote, they perceived things at the same time confused and marvellous.

When they admired an old piece of furniture they regretted that they had not lived at the period when it was used, though they were absolutely ignorant of what period it was. In accordance with certain names, they imagined countries only the more beautiful in proportion to their utter lack of definite information about them. The works of which the titles were to them unintelligible, appeared to their minds to contain some mysterious knowledge.

And the more ideas they had, the more they suffered. When a mail-coach crossed them in the street, they felt the need of going off with it. The Quay of Flowers made them sigh for the country.

One Sunday they started for a walking tour early in the morning, and, passing through Meudon, Bellevue, Suresnes, and Auteuil, they wandered about all day amongst the vineyards, tore up wild poppies by the sides of fields, slept on the grass, drank milk, ate under the acacias in the gardens of country inns, and got home very late – dusty, worn-out, and enchanted.

They often renewed these walks. They felt so sad next day that they ended by depriving themselves of them.

The monotony of the desk became odious to them. Always the eraser and the sandarac, the same inkstand, the same pens, and the same companions. Looking on the latter as stupid fellows, they talked to them less and less. This cost them some annoyances. They came after the regular hour every day, and received reprimands.

Formerly they had been almost happy, but their occupation humiliated them since they had begun to set a higher value on themselves, and their disgust increased while they were mutually glorifying and spoiling each other. Pécuchet contracted Bouvard's bluntness, and Bouvard assumed a little of Pécuchet's moroseness.

"I have a mind to become a mountebank in the streets!" said one to the other.

"As well to be a rag-picker!" exclaimed his friend.

What an abominable situation! And no way out of it. Not even the hope of it!

One afternoon (it was the 20th of January, 1839) Bouvard, while at his desk, received a letter left by the postman.

He lifted up both hands; then his head slowly fell back, and he sank on the floor in a swoon.

The clerks rushed forward; they took off his cravat; they sent for a physician. He re-opened his eyes; then, in answer to the questions they put to him:

"Ah! the fact is – the fact is – A little air will relieve me. No; let me alone. Kindly give me leave to go out."

And, in spite of his corpulence, he rushed, all breathless, to the Admiralty office, and asked for Pécuchet.

Pécuchet appeared.

"My uncle is dead! I am his heir!"

"It isn't possible!"

Bouvard showed him the following lines:

> OFFICE OF MAÎTRE TARDIVEL, NOTARY.
>
> *Savigny-en-Septaine, 14th January, 1839.*
>
> Sir, – I beg of you to call at my office in order to take notice there of the will of your natural father, M. François-Denys-Bartholomée Bouvard, ex-merchant in the town of Nantes, who died in this parish on the 10th of the present month. This will contains a very important disposition in your favour.
>
> Tardivel, *Notary.*

Pécuchet was obliged to sit down on a boundary-stone in the courtyard outside the office.

Then he returned the paper, saying slowly:

"Provided that this is not – some practical joke."

"You think it is a farce!" replied Bouvard, in a stifled voice like the rattling in the throat of a dying man.

But the postmark, the name of the notary's office in printed characters, the notary's own signature, all proved the genuineness of the news; and they regarded each other with a trembling at the corners of their mouths and tears in their staring eyes.

They wanted space to breathe freely. They went to the Arc de Triomphe, came back by the water's edge, and passed beyond Nôtre Dame. Bouvard was very flushed. He gave Pécuchet blows with his fist in the back, and for five minutes talked utter nonsense.

They chuckled in spite of themselves. This inheritance, surely, ought to mount up – ?

"Ah! that would be too much of a good thing. Let's talk no more about it."

They did talk again about it. There was nothing to prevent them from immediately demanding explanations. Bouvard wrote to the notary with that view.

The notary sent a copy of the will, which ended thus:

> "Consequently, I give to François-Denys-Bartholemée Bouvard, my recognised natural son, the portion of my property disposable by law."

The old fellow had got this son in his youthful days, but he had carefully kept it dark, making him pass for a nephew; and the "nephew" had always called him "my uncle," though he had his own idea on the matter. When he was about forty, M. Bouvard married; then he was left a widower. His two legitimate sons having gone against his wishes, remorse took possession of him for the desertion of his other child during a long period of years. He would have even sent for the lad but for the influence of his female cook. She left him, thanks to the manœuvres of the family, and in his isolation, when death drew nigh, he wished to repair the wrongs he had done by bequeathing to the fruit of his early love all that he could of his fortune. It ran up to half a million francs, thus giving the copying-clerk two hundred and fifty thousand francs. The eldest of the brothers, M. Étienne, had announced that he would respect the will.

Bouvard fell into a kind of stupefied condition. He kept repeating in a low tone, smiling with the peaceful smile of drunkards: "An income of fifteen thousand livres!" – and Pécuchet, whose head, however, was stronger, was not able to get over it.

They were rudely shaken by a letter from Tardivel. The other son, M. Alexandre, declared his intention to have the entire matter decided by law, and even to question the legacy, if he could, requiring, first of all, to have everything sealed, and to have an inventory taken and a sequestrator appointed, etc. Bouvard got a bilious attack in consequence. Scarcely had he recovered when he started for Savigny, from which place he returned without having brought the matter nearer to a settlement, and he could only grumble about having gone to the expense of a journey for nothing. Then followed sleepless nights, alternations of rage and hope, of exaltation and despondency. Finally, after the lapse of six months, his lordship Alexandre was appeased, and Bouvard entered into possession of his inheritance.

His first exclamation was: "We will retire into the country!" And this phrase, which bound up his friend with his good fortune, Pécuchet had found quite natural. For the union of these two men was absolute and profound. But, as he did not wish to live at Bouvard's expense, he would not go before he got his retiring pension. Two years more; no matter! He remained inflexible, and the thing was decided.

In order to know where to settle down, they passed in review all the provinces. The north was fertile, but too cold; the south delightful, so far as the climate was concerned, but inconvenient because of the mosquitoes; and the middle portion of the country, in truth, had nothing about it to excite curiosity. Brittany would have suited them, were it not for the bigoted tendency of its inhabitants. As for the regions of the east, on account of the Germanic *patois* they could not dream of it. But there were other places. For instance, what about Forez, Bugey, and Rumois? The maps said nothing about them. Besides, whether their house happened to be in one place or in another, the important thing was to have one. Already they saw themselves in their shirt-sleeves, at the edge of a plat-band, pruning rose trees, and digging, dressing, settling the ground, growing tulips in pots. They would awaken at the singing of the lark to follow the plough; they would go with baskets to gather apples, would look on at butter-making, the thrashing of corn, sheep-shearing, bee-culture, and would feel delight in the lowing of cows and in the scent of new-mown hay. No more writing! No more heads of departments! No more even quarters' rent to pay! For they had a dwelling-house of their own! And they would eat the hens of their own poultry-yard, the vegetables of their own garden, and would dine without taking off their wooden shoes! "We'll do whatever we like! We'll let our beards grow!"

They would purchase horticultural implements, then a heap of things "that might perhaps be useful," such as a tool-chest (there was always need of one in a house), next, scales, a land-surveyor's chain, a bathing-tub in case they got ill, a thermometer, and even a barometer, "on the Gay-Lussac system," for physical experiences, if they took a fancy that way. It would not be a bad thing either (for a person cannot always be working out of doors), to have some good literary works; and they looked out for them, very embarrassed sometimes to know if such a book was really "a library book."

Bouvard settled the question. "Oh! we shall not want a library. Besides, I have my own."

They prepared their plans beforehand. Bouvard would bring his furniture, Pécuchet his big black table; they would turn the curtains to account; and, with a few kitchen utensils, this would be quite sufficient. They swore to keep silent about all this, but their faces spoke volumes. So their colleagues thought them funny. Bouvard, who wrote spread over his desk, with his elbows out, in order the better to round his letters, gave vent to a kind of whistle while half-closing his heavy eyelids with a waggish air. Pécuchet, squatted on a big straw foot-stool, was always carefully forming the pot-hooks of his large handwriting, but all the while swelling his nostrils and pressing his lips together, as if he were afraid of letting his secret slip.

After eighteen months of inquiries, they had discovered nothing. They made journeys in all the outskirts of Paris, both from Amiens to Evreux, and from Fontainebleau to Havre. They wanted a country place which would be a thorough country place, without exactly insisting on a picturesque site; but a limited horizon saddened them.

They fled from the vicinity of habitations, and only redoubled their solitude.

Sometimes they made up their minds; then, fearing they would repent later, they changed their opinion, the place having appeared unhealthy, or exposed to the sea-breeze, or too close to a factory, or difficult of access.

Barberou came to their rescue. He knew what their dream was, and one fine day he called on them to let them know that he had been told about an estate at Chavignolles, between Caen and Falaise. This comprised a farm of thirty-eight hectares,[1] with a kind of château, and a garden in a very productive state.

They proceeded to Calvados, and were quite enraptured. For the farm, together with the house (one would not be sold without the other), only a hundred and forty-three thousand francs were asked. Bouvard did not want to give more than a hundred and twenty thousand.

Pécuchet combated his obstinacy, begged of him to give way, and finally declared that he would make up the surplus himself. This was his entire fortune, coming from his mother's patrimony and his own savings. Never had he breathed a word, reserving this capital for a great occasion.

The entire amount was paid up about the end of 1840, six months before his retirement.

Bouvard was no longer a copying-clerk. At first he had continued his functions through distrust of the future; but he had resigned once he was certain of his inheritance. However, he willingly went back to MM. Descambos; and the night before his departure he stood drinks to all the clerks.

Pécuchet, on the contrary, was morose towards his colleagues, and went off, on the last day, roughly clapping the door behind him.

He had to look after the packing, to do a heap of commissions, then to make purchases, and to take leave of Dumouchel.

The professor proposed to him an epistolary interchange between them, of which he would make use to keep Pécuchet well up in literature; and, after fresh felicitations, wished him good health.

Barberou exhibited more sensibility in taking leave of Bouvard. He expressly gave up a domino-party, promised to go to see him "over there," ordered two aniseed cordials, and embraced him.

Bouvard, when he got home, inhaled over the balcony a deep breath of air, saying to himself, "At last!" The lights along the quays quivered in the water, the rolling of omnibuses in the distance gradually ceased. He recalled happy days spent in this great city, supper-parties at restaurants, evenings at the theatre, gossips with his portress, all his habitual associations; and he experienced a sinking of the heart, a sadness which he dared not acknowledge even to himself.

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[1] Roughly speaking, about 93 acres. – Translator.

Pécuchet was walking in his room up to two o'clock in the morning. He would come back there no more: so much the better! And yet, in order to leave behind something of himself, he printed his name on the plaster over the chimney-piece.

The larger portion of the baggage was gone since the night before. The garden implements, the bedsteads, the mattresses, the tables, the chairs, a cooking apparatus, and three casks of Burgundy would go by the Seine, as far as Havre, and would be despatched thence to Caen, where Bouvard, who would wait for them, would have them brought on to Chavignolles.

But his father's portrait, the armchairs the liqueur-case, the old books, the time-piece, all the precious objects were put into a furniture waggon, which would proceed through Nonancourt, Verneuil, and Falaise. Pécuchet was to accompany it.

He installed himself beside the conductor, upon a seat, and, wrapped up in his oldest frock-coat, with a comforter, mittens, and his office foot-warmer, on Sunday, the 20th of March, at daybreak, he set forth from the capital.

The movement and the novelty of the journey occupied his attention during the first few hours. Then the horses slackened their pace, which led to disputes between the conductor and the driver. They selected execrable inns, and, though they were accountable for everything, Pécuchet, through excess of prudence, slept in the same lodgings.

Next day they started again, at dawn, and the road, always the same, stretched out, uphill, to the verge of the horizon. Yards of stones came after each other; the ditches were full of water; the country showed itself in wide tracts of green, monotonous and cold; clouds scudded through the sky. From time to time there was a fall of rain. On the third day squalls arose. The awning of the waggon, badly fastened on, went clapping with the wind, like the sails of a ship. Pécuchet lowered his face under his cap, and every time he opened his snuff-box it was necessary for him, in order to protect his eyes, to turn round completely.

During the joltings he heard all his baggage swinging behind him, and shouted out a lot of directions. Seeing that they were useless, he changed his tactics. He assumed an air of good-fellowship, and made a display of civilities; in the troublesome ascents he assisted the men in pushing on the wheels: he even went so far as to pay for the coffee and brandy after the meals. From that time they went on more slowly; so much so that, in the neighbourhood of Gauburge, the axletree broke, and the waggon remained tilted over. Pécuchet immediately went to inspect the inside of it: the sets of porcelain lay in bits. He raised his arms, while he gnashed his teeth, and cursed these two idiots; and the following day was lost owing to the waggon-driver getting tipsy: but he had not the energy to complain, the cup of bitterness being full.

Bouvard had quitted Paris only on the third day, as he had to dine once more with Barberou. He arrived in the coach-yard at the last moment; then he woke up before the cathedral of Rouen: he had mistaken the *diligence*.

In the evening, all the places for Caen were booked. Not knowing what to do, he went to the Theatre of Arts, and he smiled at his neighbours, telling them he had retired from business, and had lately purchased an estate in the neighbourhood. When he started on Friday for Caen, his packages were not there. He received them on Sunday, and despatched them in a cart, having given notice to the farmer who was working the land that he would follow in the course of a few hours.

At Falaise, on the ninth day of his journey, Pécuchet took a fresh horse, and even till sunset they kept steadily on. Beyond Bretteville, having left the high-road, he got off into a cross-road, fancying that every moment he could see the gable-ends of Chavignolles. However, the ruts hid them from view; they vanished, and then the party found themselves in the midst of ploughed fields. The night was falling. What was to become of them? At last Pécuchet left the waggon behind, and, splashing in the mire, advanced in front of it to reconnoitre. When he drew near farm-houses, the dogs barked. He called out as loudly as ever he could, asking what was the right road. There was no answer. He was afraid, and got back to the open ground. Suddenly two lanterns flashed. He perceived a cabriolet, and rushed forward to meet it. Bouvard was inside.

But where could the furniture waggon be? For an hour they called out to it through the darkness. At length it was found, and they arrived at Chavignolles.

A great fire of brushwood and pine-apples was blazing in the dining-room. Two covers were placed there. The furniture, which had come by the cart, was piled up near the vestibule. Nothing was wanting. They sat down to table.

Onion soup had been prepared for them, also a chicken, bacon, and hard-boiled eggs. The old woman who cooked came from time to time to inquire about their tastes. They replied, "Oh! very good, very good!" and the big loaf, hard to cut, the cream, the nuts, all delighted them. There were holes in the flooring, and the damp was oozing through the walls. However, they cast around them a glance of satisfaction, while eating on the little table on which a candle was burning. Their faces were reddened by the strong air. They stretched out their stomachs; they leaned on the backs of their chairs, which made a cracking sound in consequence, and they kept repeating: "Here we are in the place, then! What happiness! It seems to me that it is a dream!"

Although it was midnight, Pécuchet conceived the idea of taking a turn round the garden. Bouvard made no objection. They took up the candle, and, screening it with an old newspaper, walked along the paths. They found pleasure in mentioning aloud the names of the vegetables.

"Look here – carrots! Ah! – cabbages!"

Next, they inspected the espaliers. Pécuchet tried to discover the buds. Sometimes a spider would scamper suddenly over the wall, and the two shadows of their bodies appeared magnified, repeating their gestures. The ends of the grass let the dew trickle out. The night was perfectly black, and everything remained motionless in a profound silence, an infinite sweetness. In the distance a cock was crowing.

Their two rooms had between them a little door, which was hidden by the papering of the wall. By knocking a chest of drawers up against it, nails were shaken out; and they found the place gaping open. This was a surprise.

When they had undressed and got into bed, they kept babbling for some time. Then they went asleep – Bouvard on his back, with his mouth open, his head bare; Pécuchet on his right side, his knees in his stomach, his head muffled in a cotton night-cap; and the pair snored under the moonlight which made its way in through the windows.

CHAPTER II.
Experiments in Agriculture

How happy they felt when they awoke next morning! Bouvard smoked a pipe, and Pécuchet took a pinch of snuff, which they declared to be the best they had ever had in their whole lives. Then they went to the window to observe the landscape.

In front of them lay the fields, with a barn and the church-bell at the right and a screen of poplars at the left.

Two principal walks, forming a cross, divided the garden into four parts. The vegetables were contained in wide beds, where, at different spots, arose dwarf cypresses and trees cut in distaff fashion. On one side, an arbour just touched an artificial hillock; while, on the other, the espaliers were supported against a wall; and at the end, a railed opening gave a glimpse of the country outside. Beyond the wall there was an orchard, and, next to a hedge of elm trees, a thicket; and behind the railed opening there was a narrow road.

They were gazing on this spectacle together, when a man, with hair turning grey, and wearing a black overcoat, appeared walking along the pathway, striking with his cane all the bars of the railed fence. The old servant informed them that this was M. Vaucorbeil, a doctor of some reputation in the district. She mentioned that the other people of note were the Comte de Faverges, formerly a deputy, and an extensive owner of land and cattle; M. Foureau, who sold wood, plaster, all sorts of things; M. Marescot, the notary; the Abbé Jeufroy; and the widow Bordin, who lived on her private income. The old woman added that, as for herself, they called her Germaine, on account of the late Germain, her husband. She used to go out as a charwoman, but would be very glad to enter into the gentlemen's service. They accepted her offer, and then went out to take a look at their farm, which was situated over a thousand yards away.

When they entered the farmyard, Maître Gouy, the farmer, was shouting at a servant-boy, while his wife, on a stool, kept pressed between her legs a turkey-hen, which she was stuffing with balls of flour.

The man had a low forehead, a thin nose, a downward look, and broad shoulders. The woman was very fair-haired, with her cheek-bones speckled with bran, and that air of simplicity which may be seen in the faces of peasants on the windows of churches.

In the kitchen, bundles of hemp hung from the ceiling. Three old guns stood in a row over the upper part of the chimney-piece. A dresser loaded with flowered crockery occupied the space in the middle of the wall; and the window-panes with their green bottle-glass threw over the tin and copper utensils a sickly lustre.

The two Parisians wished to inspect the property, which they had seen only once – and that a mere passing glance. Maître Gouy and his wife escorted them, and then began a litany of complaints.

All the appointments, from the carthouse to the boilery, stood in need of repair. It would be necessary to erect an additional store for the cheese, to put fresh iron on the railings, to raise the boundaries, to deepen the ponds, and to plant anew a considerable number of apple trees in the three enclosures.

Then they went to look at the lands under cultivation. Maître Gouy ran them down, saying that they ate up too much manure; cartage was expensive; it was impossible to get rid of stones; and the bad grass poisoned the meadows. This depreciation of his land lessened the pleasure experienced by Bouvard in walking over it.

They came back by the hollow path under an avenue of beech trees. On this side the house revealed its front and its courtyard. It was painted white, with a coating of yellow. The carthouse and the storehouse, the bakehouse and the woodshed, made, by means of a return, two lower wings. The kitchen communicated with a little hall. Next came the vestibule, a second hall larger than the other, and the drawing-room. The four rooms on the first floor opened on the corridor facing the courtyard. Pécuchet selected one of them for his collections. The last was to be the library; and, on opening some of the presses, they found a few ancient volumes, but they had no fancy for reading the titles of them. The most urgent matter was the garden.

Bouvard, while passing close to the row of elm trees, discovered under their branches a plaster figure of a woman. With two fingers she held wide her petticoat, with her knees bent and her head over her shoulder, as if she were afraid of being surprised.

"I beg your pardon! Don't inconvenience yourself!" – and this pleasantry amused them so much that they kept repeating it twenty times a day for three months.

Meanwhile, the people of Chavignolles were desirous to make their acquaintance. Persons came to look at them through the railed fence. They stopped up the openings with boards. This thwarted the inhabitants. To protect himself from the sun Bouvard wore on his head a handkerchief, fastened so as to look like a turban. Pécuchet wore his cap, and he had a big apron with a pocket in front, in which a pair of pruning-shears, his silk handkerchief, and his snuff-box jostled against one another. Bare-armed, side by side, they dug, weeded, and pruned, imposing tasks on each other, and eating their meals as quickly as ever they could, taking care, however, to drink their coffee on the hillock, in order to enjoy the view.

If they happened to come across a snail, they pounced on it and crushed it, making grimaces with the corners of their mouths, as if they were cracking nuts. They never went out without their grafting implements, and they used to cut the worms in two with such force that the iron of the implement would sink three inches deep. To get rid of caterpillars, they struck the trees furiously with switches.

Bouvard planted a peony in the middle of the grass plot, and tomatoes so that they would hang down like chandeliers under the arch of the arbour.

Pécuchet had a large pit dug in front of the kitchen, and divided it into three parts, where he could manufacture composts which would grow a heap of things, whose detritus would again bring other crops, providing in this way other manures to a limitless extent; and he fell into reveries on the edge of the pit, seeing in the future mountains of fruits, floods of flowers, and avalanches of vegetables. But the horse-dung, so necessary for the beds, was not to be had, inasmuch as the farmers did not sell it, and the innkeepers refused to supply it. At last, after many searches, in spite of the entreaties of Bouvard, and flinging aside all shamefacedness, he made up his mind to go for the dung himself.

It was in the midst of this occupation that Madame Bordin accosted him one day on the high-road. When she had complimented him, she inquired about his friend. This woman's black eyes, very small and very brilliant, her high complexion, and her assurance (she even had a little moustache) intimidated Pécuchet. He replied curtly, and turned his back on her – an impoliteness of which Bouvard disapproved.

Then the bad weather came on, with frost and snow. They installed themselves in the kitchen, and went in for trellis-work, or else kept going from one room to another, chatted by the chimney corner, or watched the rain coming down.

Since the middle of Lent they had awaited the approach of spring, and each morning repeated: "Everything is starting out!" But the season was late, and they consoled their impatience by saying: "Everything is going to start out!"

At length they were able to gather the green peas. The asparagus gave a good crop; and the vine was promising.

Since they were able to work together at gardening, they must needs succeed at agriculture; and they were seized with an ambition to cultivate the farm. With common sense and study of the subject, they would get through it beyond a doubt.

But they should first see how others carried on operations, and so they drew up a letter in which they begged of M. de Faverges to do them the honour of allowing them to visit the lands which he cultivated.

The count made an appointment immediately to meet them.

After an hour's walking, they reached the side of a hill overlooking the valley of the Orne. The river wound its way to the bottom of the valley. Blocks of red sandstone stood here and there, and in the distance larger masses of stone formed, as it were, a cliff overhanging fields of ripe corn. On the opposite hill the verdure was so abundant that it hid the house from view. Trees divided it into unequal squares, outlining themselves amid the grass by more sombre lines.

Suddenly the entire estate came into view. The tiled roofs showed where the farm stood. To the right rose the château with its white façade, and beyond it was a wood. A lawn descended to the river, into which a row of plane trees cast their shadows.

The two friends entered a field of lucern, which people were spreading. Women wearing straw hats, with cotton handkerchiefs round their heads, and paper shades, were lifting with rakes the hay which lay on the ground, while at the end of the plain, near the stacks, bundles were being rapidly flung into a long cart, yoked to three horses.

The count advanced, followed by his manager. He was dressed in dimity; and his stiff figure and mutton-chop whiskers gave him at the same time the air of a magistrate and a dandy. Even when he was speaking, his features did not appear to move.

As soon as they had exchanged some opening courtesies, he explained his system with regard to fodder: the swathes should be turned without scattering them; the ricks should be conical, and the bundles made immediately on the spot, and then piled together by tens. As for the English rake, the meadow was too uneven for such an implement.

A little girl, with her stockingless feet in old shoes, and showing her skin through the rents in her dress, was supplying the women with cider, which she poured out of a jug supported against her hip. The count asked where this child came from, but nobody could tell. The women who were making the hay had picked her up to wait on them during the harvesting. He shrugged his shoulders, and just as he was moving away from the spot, he gave vent to some complaints as to the immorality of our country districts.

Bouvard eulogised his lucern field.

It was fairly good, in spite of the ravages of the *cuscute*.[2]

The future agriculturists opened their eyes wide at the word "cuscute."

On account of the number of his cattle, he resorted to artificial meadowing; besides, it went well before the other crops – a thing that did not always happen in the case of fodder.

"This at least appears to me incontestable."

"Oh! incontestable," replied Bouvard and Pécuchet in one breath. They were on the borders of a field which had been carefully thinned. A horse, which was being led by hand, was dragging along a large box, mounted on three wheels. Seven ploughshares below were opening in parallel lines small furrows, in which the grain fell through pipes descending to the ground.

"Here," said the count, "I sow turnips. The turnip is the basis of my quadrennial system of cultivation."

And he was proceeding to deliver a lecture on the drill-plough when a servant came to look for him, and told him that he was wanted at the château.

His manager took his place – a man with a forbidding countenance and obsequious manners.

He conducted "these gentlemen" to another field, where fourteen harvesters, with bare breasts and legs apart, were cutting down rye. The steels whistled in the chaff, which came pouring straight down. Each of them described in front of him a large semicircle, and, all in a line, they advanced at the same time. The two Parisians admired their arms, and felt smitten with an almost religious veneration for the opulence of the soil. Then they proceeded to inspect some of the ploughed lands. The twilight was falling, and the crows swooped down into the ridges.

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[2] *Cuscute*– dodder.

As they proceeded they met a flock of sheep pasturing here and there, and they could hear their continual browsing. The shepherd, seated on the stump of a tree, was knitting a woollen stocking, with his dog beside him.

The manager assisted Bouvard and Pécuchet to jump over a wooden fence, and they passed close to two orchards, where cows were ruminating under the apple trees.

All the farm-buildings were contiguous and occupied the three sides of the yard. Work was carried on there mechanically by means of a turbine moved by a stream which had been turned aside for the purpose. Leathern bands stretched from one roof to the other, and in the midst of dung an iron pump performed its operations.

The manager drew their attention to little openings in the sheepfolds nearly on a level with the floor, and ingenious doors in the pigsties which could shut of their own accord.

The barn was vaulted like a cathedral, with brick arches resting on stone walls.

In order to amuse the gentlemen, a servant-girl threw a handful of oats before the hens. The shaft of the press appeared to them enormously big. Next they went up to the pigeon-house. The dairy especially astonished them. By turning cocks in the corners, you could get enough water to flood the flagstones, and, as you entered, a sense of grateful coolness came upon you as a surprise. Brown jars, ranged close to the barred opening in the wall, were full to the brim of milk, while the cream was contained in earthen pans of less depth. Then came rolls of butter, like fragments of a column of copper, and froth overflowed from the tin pails which had just been placed on the ground.

But the gem of the farm was the ox-stall. It was divided into two sections by wooden bars standing upright their full length, one portion being reserved for the cattle, and the other for persons who attended on them. You could scarcely see there, as all the loopholes were closed up. The oxen were eating, with little chains attached to them, and their bodies exhaled a heat which was kept down by the low ceiling. But someone let in the light, and suddenly a thin stream of water flowed into the little channel which was beside the racks. Lowings were heard, and the horns of the cattle made a rattling noise like sticks. All the oxen thrust their muzzles between the bars, and proceeded to drink slowly.

The big teams made their way into the farmyard, and the foals began to neigh. On the ground floor two or three lanterns flashed and then disappeared. The workpeople were passing, dragging their wooden shoes over the pebbles, and the bell was ringing for supper.

The two visitors took their departure.

All they had seen delighted them, and their resolution was taken. After that evening, they took out of their library the four volumes of *La Maison Rustique*, went through Gasperin's course of lectures, and subscribed to an agricultural journal.

In order to be able to attend the fairs more conveniently, they purchased a car, which Bouvard used to drive.

Dressed in blue blouses, with large-brimmed hats, gaiters up to their knees, and horse-dealers' cudgels in their hands, they prowled around cattle, asked questions of labourers, and did not fail to attend at all the agricultural gatherings.

Soon they wearied Maître Gouy with their advice, and especially by their depreciation of his system of fallowing. But the farmer stuck to his routine. He asked to be allowed a quarter, putting forward as a reason the heavy falls of hail. As for the farm-dues, he never furnished any of them. His wife raised an outcry at even the most legitimate claims. At length Bouvard declared his intention not to renew the lease.

Thenceforth Maître Gouy economised the manures, allowed weeds to grow up, ruined the soil; and he took himself off with a fierce air, which showed that he was meditating some scheme of revenge.

Bouvard had calculated that 20,000 francs, that is to say, more than four times the rent of the farm, would be enough to start with. His notary sent the amount from Paris.

The property which they had undertaken to cultivate comprised fifteen hectares[3] of grounds and meadows, twenty-three of arable land, and five of waste land, situated on a hillock covered with stones, and known by the name of La Butte.[4]

They procured all the indispensable requirements for the purpose: four horses, a dozen cows, six hogs, one hundred and sixty sheep, and for the household two carters, two women, a shepherd, and in addition a big dog.

In order to get cash at once, they sold their fodder. The price was paid to them directly, and the gold napoleons counted over a chest of oats appeared to them more glittering than any others, more rare and valuable.

In the month of November they brewed cider. It was Bouvard that whipped the horse, while Pécuchet on the trough shovelled off the strained apples.

They panted while pressing the screw, drew the juice off into the vat, looked after the bung-holes, with heavy wooden shoes on their feet; and in all this they found a huge diversion.

Starting with the principle that you cannot have too much corn, they got rid of about half of their artificial meadows; and, as they had not rich pasturing, they made use of oil-cakes, which they put into the ground without pounding, with the result that the crop was a wretched one.

The following year they sowed the ground very thickly. Storms broke out, and the ears of corn were scattered.

Nevertheless, they set their hearts on the cheese, and undertook to clear away the stones from La Butte. A hamper carried away the stones. The whole year, from morn to eve, in sunshine or in rain, the everlasting hamper was seen, with the same man and the same horse, toiling up the hill, coming down, and going up again. Sometimes Bouvard walked in the rear, making a halt half-way up the hill to dry the sweat off his forehead.

As they had confidence in nobody, they treated the animals themselves, giving them purgatives and clysters.

Serious irregularities occurred in the household. The girl in the poultry-yard became *enceinte*. Then they took married servants; but the place soon swarmed with children, cousins, male and female, uncles, and sisters-in-law. A horde of people lived at their expense; and they resolved to sleep in the farm-house successively.

But when evening came they felt depressed, for the filthiness of the room was offensive to them; and besides, Germaine, who brought in the meals, grumbled at every journey. They were preyed upon in all sorts of ways. The threshers in the barn stuffed corn into the pitchers out of which they drank. Pécuchet caught one of them in the act, and exclaimed, while pushing him out by the shoulders:

"Wretch! You are a disgrace to the village that gave you birth!"

His presence inspired no respect. Moreover, he was plagued with the garden. All his time would not have sufficed to keep it in order. Bouvard was occupied with the farm. They took counsel and decided on this arrangement.

The first point was to have good hotbeds. Pécuchet got one made of brick. He painted the frames himself; and, being afraid of too much sunlight, he smeared over all the bell-glasses with chalk. He took care to cut off the tops of the leaves for slips. Next he devoted attention to the layers. He attempted many sorts of grafting – flute-graft, crown-graft, shield-graft, herbaceous grafting, and whip-grafting. With what care he adjusted the two libers! how he tightened the ligatures! and what a heap of ointment it took to cover them again!

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[3] One hectare contains 2 acres 1 rood 38 perches. – Translator.

[4] The [Text missing in original. —*Transcriber.*]

Twice a day he took his watering-pot and swung it over the plants as if he would have shed incense over them. In proportion as they became green under the water, which fell in a thin shower, it seemed to him as if he were quenching his own thirst and reviving along with them. Then, yielding to a feeling of intoxication, he snatched off the rose of the watering-pot, and poured out the liquid copiously from the open neck.

At the end of the elm hedge, near the female figure in plaster, stood a kind of log hut. Pécuchet locked up his implements there, and spent delightful hours there picking the berries, writing labels, and putting his little pots in order. He sat down to rest himself on a box at the door of the hut, and then planned fresh improvements.

He had put two clumps of geraniums at the end of the front steps. Between the cypresses and the distaff-shaped trees he had planted sunflowers; and as the plots were covered with buttercups, and all the walks with fresh sand, the garden was quite dazzling in its abundance of yellow hues.

But the bed swarmed with larvæ. In spite of the dead leaves placed there to heat the plants, under the painted frames and the whitened bell-glasses, only a stunted crop made its appearance. He failed with the broccoli, the mad-apples, the turnips, and the watercress, which he had tried to raise in a tub. After the thaw all the artichokes were ruined. The cabbages gave him some consolation. One of them especially excited his hopes. It expanded and shut up quickly, but ended by becoming prodigious and absolutely uneatable. No matter – Pécuchet was content with being the possessor of a monstrosity!

Then he tried his hand at what he regarded as the *summum* of art – the growing of melons.

He sowed many varieties of seed in plates filled with vegetable mould, which he deposited in the soil of the bed. Then he raised another bed, and when it had put forth its virgin buddings he transplanted the best of them, putting bell-glasses over them. He made all the cuttings in accordance with the precepts of *The Good Gardener*. He treated the flowers tenderly; he let the fruits grow in a tangle, and then selected one on either arm, removed the others, and, as soon as they were as large as nuts, he slipped a little board around their rind to prevent them from rotting by contact with dung. He heated them, gave them air, swept off the mist from the bell-glasses with his pocket-handkerchief, and, if he saw lowering clouds, he quickly brought out straw mattings to protect them.

He did not sleep at night on account of them. Many times he even got up out of bed, and, putting on his boots without stockings, shivering in his shirt, he traversed the entire garden to throw his own counterpane over his hotbed frames.

The melons ripened. Bouvard grinned when he saw the first of them. The second was no better; neither was the third. For each of them Pécuchet found a fresh excuse, down to the very last, which he threw out of the window, declaring that he could not understand it at all.

The fact was, he had planted some things beside others of a different species; and so the sweet melons got mixed up with the kitchen-garden melons, the big Portugal with the Grand Mogul variety; and this anarchy was completed by the proximity of the tomatoes – the result being abominable hybrids that had the taste of pumpkins.

Then Pécuchet devoted his attention to the flowers. He wrote to Dumouchel to get shrubs with seeds for him, purchased a stock of heath soil, and set to work resolutely.

But he planted passion-flowers in the shade and pansies in the sun, covered the hyacinths with dung, watered the lilies near their blossoms, tried to stimulate the fuchsias with glue, and actually roasted a pomegranate by exposing it to the heat of the kitchen fire.

When the weather got cold, he screened the eglantines under domes of strong paper which had been lubricated with a candle. They looked like sugarloaves held up by sticks.

The dahlias had enormous props; and between these straight lines could be seen the winding branches of a Sophora Japonica, which remained motionless, without either perishing or growing.

However, since even the rarest trees flourish in the gardens of the capital, they must needs grow successfully at Chavignolles; and Pécuchet provided himself with the Indian lilac, the Chinese rose, and the eucalyptus, then in the beginning of its fame. But all his experiments failed; and at each successive failure he was vastly astonished.

Bouvard, like him, met with obstacles. They held many consultations, opened a book, then passed on to another, and did not know what to resolve upon when there was so much divergence of opinion.

Thus, Puvis recommends marl, while the Roret Manual is opposed to it. As for plaster, in spite of the example of Franklin, Riefel and M. Rigaud did not appear to be in raptures about it.

According to Bouvard, fallow lands were a Gothic prejudice. However, Leclerc has noted cases in which they are almost indispensable. Gasparin mentions a native of Lyons who cultivated cereals in the same field for half a century: this upsets the theory as to the variation of crops. Tull extols tillage to the prejudice of rich pasture; and there is Major Beetson, who by means of tillage would abolish pasture altogether.

In order to understand the indications of the weather, they studied the clouds according to the classification of Luke Howard. They contemplated those which spread out like manes, those which resemble islands, and those which might be taken for mountains of snow – trying to distinguish the nimbus from the cirrus and the stratus from the cumulus. The shapes had altered even before they had discovered the names.

The barometer deceived them; the thermometer taught them nothing; and they had recourse to the device invented in the time of Louis XIV. by a priest from Touraine. A leech in a glass bottle was to rise up in the event of rain, to stick to the bottom in settled weather, and to move about if a storm were threatening. But nearly always the atmosphere contradicted the leech. Three others were put in along with it. The entire four behaved differently.

After many reflections, Bouvard realised that he had made a mistake. His property required cultivation on a large scale, the concentrated system, and he risked all the disposable capital that he had left – thirty thousand francs.

Stimulated by Pécuchet, he began to rave about pasture. In the pit for composts were heaped up branches of trees, blood, guts, feathers – everything that he could find. He used Belgian cordial, Swiss wash, lye, red herrings, wrack, rags; sent for guano, tried to manufacture it himself; and, pushing his principles to the farthest point, he would not suffer even urine or other refuse to be lost. Into his farmyard were carried carcasses of animals, with which he manured his lands. Their cut-up carrion strewed the fields. Bouvard smiled in the midst of this stench. A pump fixed to a dung-cart spattered the liquid manure over the crops. To those who assumed an air of disgust, he used to say, "But 'tis gold! 'tis gold!" And he was sorry that he had not still more manures. Happy the land where natural grottoes are found full of the excrements of birds!

The colza was thin; the oats only middling; and the corn sold very badly on account of its smell. A curious circumstance was that La Butte, with the stones cleared away from it at last, yielded less than before.

He deemed it advisable to renew his material. He bought a Guillaume scarifier, a Valcourt weeder, an English drill-machine, and the great swing-plough of Mathieu de Dombasle, but the ploughboy disparaged it.

"Do you learn to use it!"

"Well, do you show me!"

He made an attempt to show, but blundered, and the peasants sneered. He could never make them obey the command of the bell. He was incessantly bawling after them, rushing from one place to another, taking down observations in a note-book, making appointments and forgetting all about them – and his head was boiling over with industrial speculations.

He got the notion into his head of cultivating the poppy for the purpose of getting opium from it, and above all the milk-vetch, which he intended to sell under the name of "family coffee."

Finally, in order to fatten his oxen the more quickly, he blooded them for an entire fortnight.

He killed none of his pigs, and gorged them with salted oats. The pigsty soon became too narrow. The animals obstructed the farmyard, broke down the fences, and went gnawing at everything.

In the hot weather twenty-five sheep began to get spoiled, and shortly afterwards died. The same week three bulls perished owing to Bouvard's blood-lettings.

In order to destroy the maggots, he thought of shutting up the fowls in a hencoop on rollers, which two men had to push along behind the plough – a thing which had only the effect of breaking the claws of the fowls.

He manufactured beer with germander-leaves, and gave it to the harvesters as cider. The children cried, the women moaned, and the men raged. They all threatened to go, and Bouvard gave way to them.

However, to convince them of the harmlessness of his beverage, he swallowed several bottles of it in their presence; then he got cramps, but concealed his pains under a playful exterior. He even got the mixture sent to his own residence. He drank some of it with Pécuchet in the evening, and both of them tried to persuade themselves that it was good. Besides, it was necessary not to let it go to waste. Bouvard's colic having got worse, Germaine went for the doctor.

He was a grave-looking man, with a round forehead, and he began by frightening his patient. He thought the gentleman's attack of cholerine must be connected with the beer which people were talking about in the country. He desired to know what it was composed of, and found fault with it in scientific terms with shruggings of the shoulders. Pécuchet, who had supplied the recipe for it, was mortified.

In spite of pernicious limings, stinted redressings, and unseasonable weedings, Bouvard had in front of him, in the following year, a splendid crop of wheat. He thought of drying it by fermentation, in the Dutch fashion, on the Clap-Meyer system: that is to say, he got it thrown down all of a heap and piled up in stacks, which would be overturned as soon as the damp escaped from them, and then exposed to the open air – after which Bouvard went off without the least uneasiness.

Next day, while they were at dinner, they heard under the beech trees the beating of a drum. Germaine ran out to know what was the matter, but the man was by this time some distance away. Almost at the same moment the church-bell rang violently.

Bouvard and Pécuchet felt alarmed, and, impatient to learn what had happened, they rushed bareheaded along the Chavignolles road.

An old woman passed them. She knew nothing about it. They stopped a little boy, who replied:

"I believe it's a fire!"

And the drum continued beating and the bell ringing more loudly than before. At length they reached the nearest houses in the village. The grocer, some yards away, exclaimed:

"The fire is at your place!"

Pécuchet stepped out in double-quick time; and he said to Bouvard, who trotted by his side with equal speed:

"One, two! one, two!" – counting his steps regularly, like the chasseurs of Vincennes.

The road which they took was a continuously uphill one; the sloping ground hid the horizon from their view. They reached a height close to La Butte, and at a single glance the disaster was revealed to them.

All the stacks, here and there, were flaming like volcanoes in the midst of the plain, stripped bare in the evening stillness. Around the biggest of them there were about three hundred persons, perhaps; and under the command of M. Foureau, the mayor, in a tricoloured scarf, youngsters, with poles and crooks, were dragging down the straw from the top in order to save the rest of it.

Bouvard, in his eagerness, was near knocking down Madame Bordin, who happened to be there. Then, seeing one of his servant-boys, he loaded him with insults for not having given him warning. The servant-boy, on the contrary, through excess of zeal, had at first rushed to the house, then to the church, next to where Monsieur himself was staying, and had returned by the other road.

Bouvard lost his head. His entire household gathered round him, all talking together, and he forbade them to knock down the stacks, begged of them to give him some help, called for water, and asked where were the firemen.

"We've got to get them first!" exclaimed the mayor.

"That's your fault!" replied Bouvard.

He flew into a passion, and made use of improper language, and everyone wondered at the patience of M. Foureau, who, all the same, was a surly individual, as might be seen from his big lips and bulldog jaw.

The heat of the stacks became so great that nobody could come close to them any longer. Under the devouring flames the straw writhed with a crackling sound, and the grains of corn lashed one's face as if they were buckshot. Then the stack fell in a huge burning pile to the ground, and a shower of sparks flew out of it, while fiery waves floated above the red mass, which presented in its alternations of colour parts rosy as vermilion and others like clotted blood. The night had come, the wind was swelling; from time to time, a flake of fire passed across the black sky.

Bouvard viewed the conflagration with tears in his eyes, which were veiled by his moist lids, and his whole face was swollen with grief. Madame Bordin, while playing with the fringes of her green shawl, called him "Poor Monsieur!" and tried to console him. Since nothing could be done, he ought to do himself justice.

Pécuchet did not weep. Very pale, or rather livid, with open mouth, and hair stuck together with cold sweat, he stood apart, brooding. But the curé who had suddenly arrived on the scene, murmured, in a wheedling tone:

"Ah! really, what a misfortune! It is very annoying. Be sure that I enter into your feelings."

The others did not affect any regret. They chatted and smiled, with hands spread out before the flame. An old man picked out burning straws to light his pipe with; and one blackguard cried out that it was very funny.

"Yes, 'tis nice fun!" retorted Bouvard, who had just overheard him.

The fire abated, the burning piles subsided, and an hour later only ashes remained, making round, black marks on the plain. Then all withdrew.

Madame Bordin and the Abbé Jeufroy led MM. Bouvard and Pécuchet back to their abode.

On the way the widow addressed very polite reproaches to her neighbour on his unsociableness, and the ecclesiastic expressed his great surprise at not having up to the present known such a distinguished parishioner of his.

When they were alone together, they inquired into the cause of the conflagration, and, in place of recognising, like the rest of the world, that the moist straw had taken fire of its own accord, they suspected that it was a case of revenge. It proceeded, no doubt, from Maître Gouy, or perhaps from the mole-catcher. Six months before Bouvard had refused to accept his services, and even maintained, before a circle of listeners, that his trade was a baneful one, and that the government ought to prohibit it. Since that time the man prowled about the locality. He wore his beard full-grown, and appeared to them frightful-looking, especially in the evening, when he presented himself outside the farmyard, shaking his long pole garnished with hanging moles.

The damage done was considerable, and in order to know their exact position, Pécuchet for eight days worked at Bouvard's books, which he pronounced to be "a veritable labyrinth." After he had compared the day-book, the correspondence, and the ledger covered with pencil-notes and discharges, he realised the truth: no goods to sell, no funds to get in, and in the cash-box zero. The capital showed a deficit of thirty-three thousand francs.

Bouvard would not believe it, and more than twenty times they went over the accounts. They always arrived at the same conclusion. Two years more of such farming, and their fortune would be spent on it! The only remedy was to sell out.

To do that, it was necessary to consult a notary. The step was a disagreeable one: Pécuchet took it on himself.

In M. Marescot's opinion, it was better not to put up any posters. He would speak about the farm to respectable clients, and would let them make proposals.

"Very well," said Bouvard, "we have time before us." He intended to get a tenant; then they would see. "We shall not be more unlucky than before; only now we are forced to practise economy!"

Pécuchet was disgusted with gardening, and a few days later he remarked:

"We ought to give ourselves up exclusively to tree culture – not for pleasure, but as a speculation. A pear which is the product of three soils is sometimes sold in the capital for five or six francs. Gardeners make out of apricots twenty-five thousand livres in the year! At St. Petersburg, during the winter, grapes are sold at a napoleon per grape. It is a beautiful industry, you must admit! And what does it cost? Attention, manuring, and a fresh touch of the pruning-knife."

It excited Bouvard's imagination so much that they sought immediately in their books for a nomenclature for purchasable plants, and, having selected names which appeared to them wonderful, they applied to a nurseryman from Falaise, who busied himself in supplying them with three hundred stalks for which he had not found a sale. They got a lock-smith for the props, an iron-worker for the fasteners, and a carpenter for the rests. The forms of the trees were designed beforehand. Pieces of lath on the wall represented candelabra. Two posts at the ends of the plat-bands supported steel threads in a horizontal position; and in the orchard, hoops indicated the structure of vases, cone-shaped switches that of pyramids, so well that, in arriving in the midst of them, you imagined you saw pieces of some unknown machinery or the framework of a pyrotechnic apparatus.

The holes having been dug, they cut the ends of all the roots, good or bad, and buried them in a compost. Six months later the plants were dead. Fresh orders to the nurseryman, and fresh plantings in still deeper holes. But the rain softening the soil, the grafts buried themselves in the ground of their own accord, and the trees sprouted out.

When spring had come, Pécuchet set about the pruning of pear trees. He did not cut down the shoots, spared the superfluous side branches, and, persisting in trying to lay the "duchesses" out in a square when they ought to go in a string on one side, he broke them or tore them down invariably. As for the peach trees, he got mixed up with over-mother branches, under-mother branches, and second-under-mother branches. The empty and the full always presented themselves when they were not wanted, and it was impossible to obtain on an espalier a perfect rectangle, with six branches to the right and six to the left, not including the two principal ones, the whole forming a fine bit of herringbone work.

Bouvard tried to manage the apricot trees, but they rebelled. He lowered their stems nearly to a level with the ground; none of them shot up again. The cherry trees, in which he had made notches, produced gum.

At first, they cut very long, which destroyed the principal buds, and then very short, which led to excessive branching; and they often hesitated, not knowing how to distinguish between buds of trees and buds of flowers. They were delighted to have flowers, but when they recognised their mistake, they tore off three fourths of them to strengthen the remainder.

Incessantly they kept talking about "sap" and "cambium," "paling up," "breaking down," and "blinding of an eye." In the middle of their dining-room they had in a frame the list of their young growths, as if they were pupils, with a number which was repeated in the garden on a little piece of wood, at the foot of the tree. Out of bed at dawn, they kept working till nightfall with their twigs carried in their belts. In the cold mornings of spring, Bouvard wore his knitted vest under his blouse, and Pécuchet his old frock-coat under his packcloth wrapper; and the people passing by the open fence heard them coughing in the damp atmosphere.

Sometimes Pécuchet drew forth his manual from his pocket, and he studied a paragraph of it standing up with his grafting-tool near him in the attitude of the gardener who decorated the frontispiece of the book. This resemblance flattered him exceedingly, and made him entertain more esteem for the author.

Bouvard was continually perched on a high ladder before the pyramids. One day he was seized with dizziness, and, not daring to come down farther, he called on Pécuchet to come to his aid.

At length pears made their appearance, and there were plums in the orchard. Then they made use of all the devices which had been recommended to them against the birds. But the bits of glass made dazzling reflections, the clapper of the wind-mill woke them during the night, and the sparrows perched on the lay figure. They made a second, and even a third, varying the dress, but without any useful result.

However, they could hope for some fruit. Pécuchet had just given an intimation of the fact to Bouvard, when suddenly the thunder resounded and the rain fell – a heavy and violent downpour. The wind at intervals shook the entire surface of the espalier. The props gave way one after the other, and the unfortunate distaff-shaped trees, while swaying under the storm, dashed their pears against one another.

Pécuchet, surprised by the shower, had taken refuge in the hut. Bouvard stuck to the kitchen. They saw splinters of wood, branches, and slates whirling in front of them; and the sailors' wives who, on the sea-shore ten leagues away, were gazing out at the sea, had not eyes more wistful or hearts more anxious. Then, suddenly, the supports and wooden bars of espaliers facing one another, together with the rail-work, toppled down into the garden beds.

What a picture when they went to inspect the scene! The cherries and plums covered the grass, amid the dissolving hailstones. The Passe Colmars were destroyed, as well as the Besi des Vétérans and the Triomphes de Jordoigne. There was barely left amongst the apples even a few Bon Papas; and a dozen Tetons de Venus, the entire crop of peaches, rolled into the pools of water by the side of the box trees, which had been torn up by the roots.

After dinner, at which they ate very little, Pécuchet said softly:

"We should do well to see after the farm, lest anything has happened to it."

"Bah! only to find fresh causes of sadness."

"Perhaps so; for we are not exactly lucky."

And they made complaints against Providence and against nature.

Bouvard, with his elbows on the table, spoke in little whispers; and as all their troubles began to subside, their former agricultural projects came back to their recollection, especially the starch manufacture and the invention of a new sort of cheese.

Pécuchet drew a loud breath; and while he crammed several pinches of snuff into his nostrils, he reflected that, if fate had so willed it, he might now be a member of an agricultural society, might be delivering brilliant lectures, and might be referred to as an authority in the newspapers.

Bouvard cast a gloomy look around him.

"Faith! I'm anxious to get rid of all this, in order that we may settle down somewhere else!"

"Just as you like," said Pécuchet; and the next moment: "The authors recommend us to suppress every direct passage. In this way the sap is counteracted, and the tree necessarily suffers thereby. In order to be in good health, it would be necessary for it to have no fruit! However, those which we prune and which we never manure produce them not so big, it is true, but more luscious. I require them to give me a reason for this! And not only each kind demands its particular attentions, but still more each individual tree, according to climate, temperature, and a heap of things! Where, then, is the rule? and what hope have we of any success or profit?"

Bouvard replied to him, "You will see in Gasparin that the profit cannot exceed the tenth of the capital. Therefore, we should be doing better by investing this capital in a banking-house. At the end of fifteen years, by the accumulation of interest, we'd have it doubled, without having our constitutions ground down."

Pécuchet hung down his head.

"Arboriculture may be a humbug!"

"Like agriculture!" replied Bouvard.

Then they blamed themselves for having been too ambitious, and they resolved to husband thenceforth their labour and their money. An occasional pruning would suffice for the orchard. The counter-espaliers were forbidden, and dead or fallen trees should not be replaced; but he was going to do a nasty job – nothing less than to destroy all the others which remained standing. How was he to set about the work?

Pécuchet made several diagrams, while using his mathematical case. Bouvard gave him advice. They arrived at no satisfactory result. Fortunately, they discovered amongst their collection of books Boitard's work entitled *L'Architecte des Jardins*.

The author divides them into a great number of styles. First there is the melancholy and romantic style, which is distinguished by immortelles, ruins, tombs, and "a votive offering to the Virgin, indicating the place where a lord has fallen under the blade of an assassin." The terrible style is composed of overhanging rocks, shattered trees, burning huts; the exotic style, by planting Peruvian torch-thistles, "in order to arouse memories in a colonist or a traveller." The grave style should, like Ermenonville, offer a temple to philosophy. The majestic style is characterised by obelisks and triumphal arches; the mysterious style by moss and by grottoes; while a lake is appropriate to the dreamy style. There is even the fantastic style, of which the most beautiful specimen might have been lately seen in a garden at Würtemberg – for there might have been met successively a wild boar, a hermit, several sepulchres, and a barque detaching itself from the shore of its own accord, in order to lead you into a boudoir where water-spouts lave you when you are settling yourself down upon a sofa.

Before this horizon of marvels, Bouvard and Pécuchet experienced a kind of bedazzlement. The fantastic style appeared to them reserved for princes. The temple to philosophy would be cumbersome. The votive offering of the Madonna would have no signification, having regard to the lack of assassins, and – so much the worse for the colonists and the travellers – the American plants would cost too much. But the rocks were possible, as well as the shattered trees, the immortelles, and the moss; and in their enthusiasm for new ideas, after many experiments, with the assistance of a single man-servant, and for a trifling sum, they made for themselves a residence which had no analogy to it in the entire department.

The elm hedge, open here and there, allowed the light of day to fall on the thicket, which was full of winding paths in the fashion of a labyrinth. They had conceived the idea of making in the espalier wall an archway, through which the prospect could be seen. As the arch could not remain suspended, the result was an enormous breach and a fall of wreckage to the ground.

They had sacrificed the asparagus in order to build on the spot an Etruscan tomb, that is to say, a quadrilateral figure in dark plaster, six feet in height, and looking like a dog-hole. Four little pine trees at the corners flanked the monument, which was to be surmounted by an urn and enriched by an inscription.

In the other part of the kitchen garden, a kind of Rialto projected over a basin, presenting on its margin encrusted shells of mussels. The soil drank up the water – no matter! they would contrive a glass bottom which would keep it back.

The hut had been transformed into a rustic summer-house with the aid of coloured glass.

At the top of the hillock, six trees, cut square, supported a tin head-piece with the edges turned up, and the whole was meant to signify a Chinese pagoda.

They had gone to the banks of the Orne to select granite, and had broken it, marked the pieces with numbers, and carried them back themselves in a cart, then had joined the fragments together with cement, placing them one above the other in a mass; and in the middle of the grass arose a rock resembling a gigantic potato.

Something further was needed to complete the harmony. They pulled down the largest linden tree they had (however, it was three quarters dead), and laid it down the entire length of the garden, in such a way that one would imagine it had been carried thither by a torrent or levelled to the ground by a thunderstorm.

The task finished, Bouvard, who was on the steps, cried from a distance:

"Here! you can see best!" – "See best!" was repeated in the air.

Pécuchet answered:

"I am going there!" – "Going there!"

"Hold on! 'Tis an echo!" – "Echo!"

The linden tree had hitherto prevented it from being produced, and it was assisted by the pagoda, as it faced the barn, whose gables rose above the row of trees.

In order to try the effect of the echo, they amused themselves by giving vent to comical phrases: Bouvard yelled out language of a blackguard description.

He had been several times at Falaise, under the pretence of going there to receive money, and he always came back with little parcels, which he locked up in the chest of drawers. Pécuchet started one morning to repair to Bretteville, and returned very late with a basket, which he hid under his bed. Next day, when he awoke, Bouvard was surprised. The first two yew trees of the principal walk, which the day before were still spherical, had the appearance of peacocks, and a horn with two porcelain knobs represented the beak and the eyes. Pécuchet had risen at dawn, and trembling lest he should be discovered, he had cut the two trees according to the measurement given in the written instructions sent him by Dumouchel.

For six months the others behind the two above mentioned assumed the forms of pyramids, cubes, cylinders, stags, or armchairs; but there was nothing equal to the peacocks. Bouvard acknowledged it with many eulogies.

Under pretext of having forgotten his spade, he drew his comrade into the labyrinth, for he had profited by Pécuchet's absence to do, himself too, something sublime.

The gate leading into the fields was covered over with a coating of plaster, under which were ranged in beautiful order five or six bowls of pipes, representing Abd-el-Kader, negroes, naked women, horses' feet, and death's-heads.

"Do you understand my impatience?"

"I rather think so!"

And in their emotion they embraced each other.

Like all artists, they felt the need of being applauded, and Bouvard thought of giving a great dinner.

"Take care!" said Pécuchet, "you are going to plunge into entertainments. It is a whirlpool!"

The matter, however, was decided. Since they had come to live in the country, they had kept themselves isolated. Everybody, through eagerness to make their acquaintance, accepted their invitation, except the Count de Faverges, who had been summoned to the capital by business. They fell back on M. Hurel, his factotum.

Beljambe, the innkeeper, formerly a *chef* at Lisieux, was to cook certain dishes; Germaine had engaged the services of the poultry-wench; and Marianne, Madame Bordin's servant-girl, would also come. Since four o'clock the range was wide open; and the two proprietors, full of impatience, awaited their guests.

Hurel stopped under the beech row to adjust his frock-coat. Then the curé stepped forward, arrayed in a new cassock, and, a second later, M. Foureau, in a velvet waistcoat. The doctor gave his arm to his wife, who walked with some difficulty, assisting herself with her parasol. A stream of red ribbons fluttered behind them – it was the cap of Madame Bordin, who was dressed in a lovely robe of shot silk. The gold chain of her watch dangled over her breast, and rings glittered on both her hands, which were partly covered with black mittens. Finally appeared the notary, with a Panama hat on his head, and an eyeglass – for the professional practitioner had not stifled in him the man of the world. The drawing-room floor was waxed so that one could not stand upright there. The eight Utrecht armchairs had their backs to the wall; a round table in the centre supported the liqueur case; and above the mantelpiece could be seen the portrait of Père Bouvard. The shades, reappearing in the imperfect light, made the mouth grin and the eyes squint, and a slight mouldiness on the cheek-bones seemed to produce the illusion of real whiskers. The guests traced a resemblance between him and his son, and Madame Bordin added, glancing at Bouvard, that he must have been a very fine man.

After an hour's waiting, Pécuchet announced that they might pass into the dining-room.

The white calico curtains with red borders were, like those of the drawing-room, completely drawn before the windows, and the sun's rays passing across them, flung a brilliant light on the wainscotings, the only ornament of which was a barometer.

Bouvard placed the two ladies beside him, while Pécuchet had the mayor on his left and the curé on his right.

They began with the oysters. They had the taste of mud. Bouvard was annoyed, and was prodigal of excuses, and Pécuchet got up in order to go into the kitchen and make a scene with Beljambe.

During the whole of the first course, which consisted of a brill with a vol-au-vent and stewed pigeons, the conversation turned on the mode of manufacturing cider; after which they discussed what meats were digestible or indigestible. Naturally, the doctor was consulted. He looked at matters sceptically, like a man who had dived into the depths of science, and yet did not brook the slightest contradiction.

At the same time, with the sirloin of beef, Burgundy was supplied. It was muddy. Bouvard, attributing this accident to the rinsing of the bottles, got them to try three others without more success; then he poured out some St. Julien, manifestly not long enough in bottle, and all the guests were mute. Hurel smiled without discontinuing; the heavy steps of the waiters resounded over the flooring.

Madame Vaucorbeil, who was dumpy and waddling in her gait (she was near her confinement), had maintained absolute silence. Bouvard, not knowing what to talk to her about, spoke of the theatre at Caen.

"My wife never goes to the play," interposed the doctor.

M. Marescot observed that, when he lived in Paris, he used to go only to the Italian operas.

"For my part," said Bouvard, "I used to pay for a seat in the pit sometimes at the Vaudeville to hear farces."

Foureau asked Madame Bordin whether she liked farces.

"That depends on what kind they are," she said.

The mayor rallied her. She made sharp rejoinders to his pleasantries. Then she mentioned a recipe for preparing gherkins. However, her talents for housekeeping were well known, and she had a little farm, which was admirably looked after.

Foureau asked Bouvard, "Is it your intention to sell yours?"

"Upon my word, up to this I don't know what to do exactly."

"What! not even the Escalles piece?" interposed the notary. "That would suit you, Madame Bordin."

The widow replied in an affected manner:

"The demands of M. Bouvard would be too high."

"Perhaps someone could soften him."

"I will not try."

"Bah! if you embraced him?"

"Let us try, all the same," said Bouvard.

And he kissed her on both cheeks, amid the plaudits of the guests.

Almost immediately after this incident, they uncorked the champagne, whose detonations caused an additional sense of enjoyment. Pécuchet made a sign; the curtains opened, and the garden showed itself.

In the twilight it looked dreadful. The rockery, like a mountain, covered the entire grass plot; the tomb formed a cube in the midst of spinaches, the Venetian bridge a circumflex accent over the kidney-beans, and the summer-house beyond a big black spot, for they had burned its straw roof to make it more poetic. The yew trees, shaped like stags or armchairs, succeeded to the tree that seemed thunder-stricken, extending transversely from the elm row to the arbour, where tomatoes hung like stalactites. Here and there a sunflower showed its yellow disk. The Chinese pagoda, painted red, seemed a lighthouse on the hillock. The peacocks' beaks, struck by the sun, reflected back the rays, and behind the railed gate, now freed from its boards, a perfectly flat landscape bounded the horizon.

In the face of their guests' astonishment Bouvard and Pécuchet experienced a veritable delight.

Madame Bordin admired the peacocks above all; but the tomb was not appreciated, nor the cot in flames, nor the wall in ruins. Then each in turn passed over the bridge. In order to fill the basin, Bouvard and Pécuchet had been carrying water in carts all the morning. It had escaped between the foundation stones, which were imperfectly joined together, and covered them over again with lime.

While they were walking about, the guests indulged in criticism.

"In your place that's what I'd have done." – "The green peas are late." – "Candidly, this corner is not all right." – "With such pruning you'll never get fruit."

Bouvard was obliged to answer that he did not care a jot for fruit.

As they walked past the hedge of trees, he said with a sly air:

"Ah! here's a lady that puts us out of countenance: a thousand excuses!"

It was a well-seasoned joke; everyone knew "the lady in plaster."

Finally, after many turns in the labyrinth, they arrived in front of the gate with the pipes. Looks of amazement were exchanged. Bouvard observed the faces of his guests, and, impatient to learn what was their opinion, asked:

"What do you say to it?"

Madame Bordin burst out laughing. All the others followed her example, after their respective ways – the curé giving a sort of cluck like a hen, Hurel coughing, the doctor mourning over it, while his wife had a nervous spasm, and Foureau, an unceremonious type of man, breaking an Abd-el-Kader and putting it into his pocket as a souvenir.

When they had left the tree-hedge, Bouvard, to astonish the company with the echo, exclaimed with all his strength:

"Servant, ladies!"

Nothing! No echo. This was owing to the repairs made in the barn, the gable and the roof having been demolished.

The coffee was served on the hillock; and the gentlemen were about to begin a game of ball, when they saw in front of them, behind the railed fence, a man staring at them.

He was lean and sunburnt, with a pair of red trousers in rags, a blue waistcoat, no shirt, his black beard cut like a brush. He articulated, in a hoarse voice:

"Give me a glass of wine!"

The mayor and the Abbé Jeufroy had at once recognised him. He had formerly been a joiner at Chavignolles.

"Come, Gorju! take yourself off," said M. Foureau. "You ought not to be asking for alms."

"I! Alms!" cried the exasperated man. "I served seven years in the wars in Africa. I've only just got up out of a hospital. Good God! must I turn cutthroat?"

His anger subsided of its own accord, and, with his two fists on his hips, he surveyed the assembled guests with a melancholy and defiant air. The fatigue of bivouacs, absinthe, and fever, an entire existence of wretchedness and debauchery, stood revealed in his dull eyes. His white lips quivered, exposing the gums. The vast sky, empurpled, enveloped him in a blood-red light; and his obstinacy in remaining there caused a species of terror.

Bouvard, to have done with him, went to look for the remnants of a bottle. The vagabond swallowed the wine greedily, then disappeared amongst the oats, gesticulating as he went.

After this, blame was attached by those present to Bouvard. Such kindnesses encouraged disorder. But Bouvard, irritated at the ill-success of his garden, took up the defence of the people. They all began talking at the same time.

Foureau extolled the government. Hurel saw nothing in the world but landed property. The Abbé Jeufroy complained of the fact that it did not protect religion. Pécuchet attacked the taxes. Madame Bordin exclaimed at intervals, "As for me, I detest the Republic." And the doctor declared himself in favour of progress: "For, indeed, gentlemen, we have need of reforms."

"Possibly," said Foureau; "but all these ideas are injurious to business."

"I laugh at business!" cried Pécuchet.

Vaucorbeil went on: "At least let us make allowance for abilities."

Bouvard would not go so far.

"That is your opinion," replied the doctor; "there's an end of you, then! Good evening. And I wish you a deluge in order to sail in your basin!"

"And I, too, am going," said M. Foureau the next moment; and, pointing to the pocket where the Abd-el-Kader was, "If I feel the want of another, I'll come back."

The curé, before departing, timidly confided to Pécuchet that he did not think this imitation of a tomb in the midst of vegetables quite decorous. Hurel, as he withdrew, made a low bow to the company. M. Marescot had disappeared after dessert. Madame Bordin again went over her recipe for gherkins, promised a second for plums with brandy, and made three turns in the large walk; but, passing close to the linden tree, the end of her dress got caught, and they heard her murmuring:

"My God! what a piece of idiocy this tree is!"

At midnight the two hosts, beneath the arbour, gave vent to their resentment.

No doubt one might find fault with two or three little details here and there in the dinner; and yet the guests had gorged themselves like ogres, showing that it was not so bad. But, as for the garden, so much depreciation sprang from the blackest jealousy. And both of them, lashing themselves into a rage, went on:

"Ha! water is needed in the basin, is it? Patience! they may see even a swan and fishes in it!"

"They scarcely noticed the pagoda."

"To pretend that the ruins are not proper is an imbecile's view."

"And the tomb objectionable! Why objectionable? Hasn't a man the right to erect one in his own demesne? I even intend to be buried in it!"

"Don't talk like that!" said Pécuchet.

Then they passed the guests in review.

"The doctor seems to me a nice snob!"

"Did you notice the sneer of M. Marescot before the portrait?"

"What a low fellow the mayor is! When you dine in a house, hang it! you should show some respect towards the curios."

"Madame Bordin!" said Bouvard.

"Ah! that one's a schemer. Don't annoy me by talking about her."

Disgusted with society, they resolved to see nobody any more, but live exclusively by themselves and for themselves.

And they spent days in the wine-cellar, picking the tartar off the bottles, re-varnished all the furniture, enamelled the rooms; and each evening, as they watched the wood burning, they discussed the best system of fuel.

Through economy they tried to smoke hams, and attempted to do the washing themselves. Germaine, whom they inconvenienced, used to shrug her shoulders. When the time came for making preserves she got angry, and they took up their station in the bakehouse. It was a disused wash-house, where there was, under the faggots, a big, old-fashioned tub, excellently fitted for their projects, the ambition having seized them to manufacture preserves.

Fourteen glass bottles were filled with tomatoes and green peas. They coated the stoppers with quicklime and cheese, attached to the rims silk cords, and then plunged them into boiling water. It evaporated; they poured in cold water; the difference of temperature caused the bowls to burst. Only three of them were saved. Then they procured old sardine boxes, put veal cutlets into them, and plunged them into a vessel of boiling water. They came out as round as balloons. The cold flattened them out afterwards. To continue their experiments, they shut up in other boxes eggs, chiccory, lobsters, a hotchpotch of fish, and a soup! – and they applauded themselves like M. Appert, "on having fixed the seasons." Such discoveries, according to Pécuchet, carried him beyond the exploits of conquerors.

They improved upon Madame Bordin's pickles by spicing the vinegar with pepper; and their brandy plums were very much superior. By the process of steeping ratafia, they obtained raspberry and absinthe. With honey and angelica in a cask of Bagnolles, they tried to make Malaga wine; and they likewise undertook the manufacture of champagne! The bottles of Châblis diluted with water must burst of themselves. Then he no longer was doubtful of success.

Their studies widening, they came to suspect frauds in all articles of food. They cavilled with the baker on the colour of his bread; they made the grocer their enemy by maintaining that he adulterated his chocolate. They went to Falaise for a jujube, and, even under the apothecary's own eyes, they submitted his paste to the test of water. It assumed the appearance of a piece of bacon, which indicated gelatine.

After this triumph, their pride rose to a high pitch. They bought up the stock of a bankrupt distiller, and soon there arrived in the house sieves, barrels, funnels, skimmers, filters, and scales, without counting a bowl of wood with a ball attached and a Moreshead still, which required a reflecting-furnace with a basket funnel. They learned how sugar is clarified, and the different kinds of boilings, the large and the small system of boiling twice over, the blowing system, the methods of making up in balls, the reduction of sugar to a viscous state, and the making of burnt sugar. But they longed to use the still; and they broached the fine liqueurs, beginning with the aniseed cordial. The liquid nearly always drew away the materials with it, or rather they stuck together at the bottom; at other times they were mistaken as to the amount of the ingredients. Around them shone great copper pans; egg-shaped vessels projected their narrow openings; saucepans hung from the walls. Frequently one of them culled herbs on the table, while the other made the ball swing in the suspended bowl. They stirred the ladles; they tasted the mashes.

Bouvard, always in a perspiration, had no garment on save his shirt and his trousers, drawn up to the pit of his stomach by his short braces; but, giddy as a bird, he would forget the opening in the centre of the cucurbit, or would make the fire too strong.

Pécuchet kept muttering calculations, motionless in his long blouse, a kind of child's smock-frock with sleeves; and they looked upon themselves as very serious people engaged in very useful occupations.

At length they dreamed of a cream which would surpass all others. They would put into it coriander as in Kummel, kirsch as in Maraschino, hyssop as in Chartreuse, amber-seed as in Vespetro cordial, and sweet calamus as in Krambambuly; and it would be coloured red with sandalwood. But under what name should they introduce it for commercial purposes? – for they would want a name easy to retain and yet fanciful. Having turned the matter over a long time, they determined that it should be called "Bouvarine."

About the end of autumn stains appeared in the three glass bowls containing the preserves. The tomatoes and green peas were rotten. That must have been due to the way they had stopped up the vessels. Then the problem of stoppage tormented them. In order to try the new methods, they required money; and the farm had eaten up their resources.

Many times tenants had offered themselves; but Bouvard would not have them. His principal farm-servant carried on the cultivation according to his directions, with a risky economy, to such an extent that the crops diminished and everything was imperilled; and they were talking about their embarrassments when Maître Gouy entered the laboratory, escorted by his wife, who remained timidly in the background.

Thanks to all the dressings they had got, the lands were improved, and he had come to take up the farm again. He ran it down. In spite of all their toils, the profits were uncertain; in short, if he wanted it, that was because of his love for the country, and his regret for such good masters.

They dismissed him coldly. He came back the same evening.

Pécuchet had preached at Bouvard; they were on the point of giving way. Gouy asked for a reduction of rent; and when the others protested, he began to bellow rather than speak, invoking the name of God, enumerating his labours, and extolling his merits. When they called on him to state his terms, he hung down his head instead of answering. Then his wife, seated near the door, with a big basket on her knees, made similar protestations, screeching in a sharp voice, like a hen that has been hurt.

At last the lease was agreed on, the rent being fixed at three thousand francs a year – a third less than it had been formerly.

Before they had separated, Maître Gouy offered to buy up the stock, and the bargaining was renewed.

The valuation of the chattels occupied fifteen days. Bouvard was dying of fatigue. He let everything go for a sum so contemptible that Gouy at first opened his eyes wide, and exclaiming, "Agreed!" slapped his palm.

After which the proprietors, following the old custom, proposed that they should take a "nip" at the house, and Pécuchet opened a bottle of his Malaga, less through generosity than in the hope of eliciting eulogies on the wine.

But the husbandman said, with a sour look, "It's like liquorice syrup." And his wife, "in order to get rid of the taste," asked for a glass of brandy.

A graver matter engaged their attention. All the ingredients of the "Bouvarine" were now collected. They heaped them together in the cucurbit, with the alcohol, lighted the fire, and waited. However, Pécuchet, annoyed by the misadventure about the Malaga, took the tin boxes out of the cupboard and pulled the lid off the first, then off the second, and then off the third. He angrily flung them down, and called out to Bouvard. The latter had fastened the cock of the worm in order to try the effect on the preserves.

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