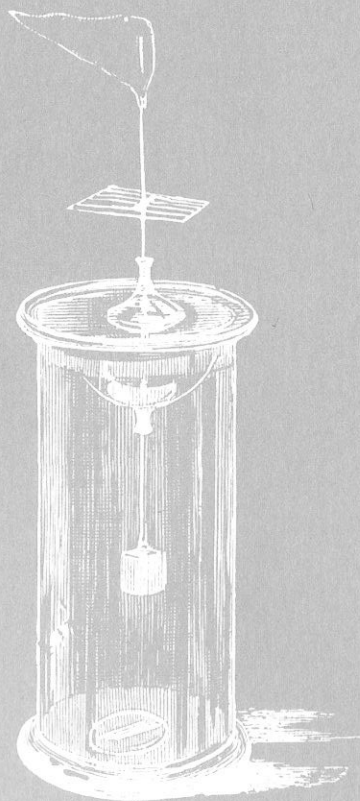


ALFRED JARRY



EXPLOITS & OPINIONS OF  
DR. FAUSTROLL.



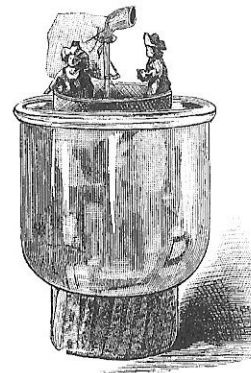


EXPLOITS & OPINIONS OF  
DOCTOR FAUSTROLL, PATAPHYSICIAN ©1911

EXPLOITS & OPINIONS  
OF DOCTOR FAUSTROLL,  
PATAPHYSICIAN

A NEO-SCIENTIFIC NOVEL  
BY ALFRED JARRY

TRANSLATED & ANNOTATED BY  
SIMON WATSON TAYLOR  
INTRODUCTION BY ROGER SHATTUCK



**E**  
EXACT CHANGE  
BOSTON  
1996

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## INTRODUCTION

BY ROGER SHATTUCK

THE AVANT-GARDE theater of the twentieth century keeps as one of its convenient reference points the explosive *générale* of *Ubu Roi* in 1896. That performance exploited ingredients that have become commonplace today, from barefaced slapstick to the subtleties of the absurd. Alfred Jarry (1873-1907), principal author and sole promoter of this schoolboy masterpiece, came close to eclipse during the thirty-year scuffle of literary movements that followed his premature death. The temporary eclipse occurred despite tribute to his genius from Apollinaire, Max Jacob, Breton, Artaud, Queneau, and even Gide. But the midget Jarry, eccentric to the point of mania and lucid to the point of hallucination, was not one to lie low for long. Today he is very much with us again.

The original legend centered about his attire (a cyclist's costume with pistols), his habits (drink practiced as discipline), his lodging (a dark cell literally on the second-and-a-half floor), and his daily fare (fish he caught at will anywhere in the Seine). In public the young upstart puffed himself up to the proportions of Ubu,

the human blunderbuss who smashed all history as he went. But the artist in Jarry continued to be precocious and hid rather than revealed itself in this hypertrophied biography. There is much more to him than the long remembered scandals of Ubu. Little wonder that since the second World War Jarry's reputation has enjoyed a spirited revival in France. His works have been collected and republished in eight volumes, new writings discovered, his career and talent reexamined, and a Collège de 'Pataphysique founded to perpetuate his inventions and destructions. In his posthumous ascent to lasting literary esteem Jarry still contrives to dismay readers in approximately the same proportion that he impresses them. He will not be held at arm's length.

\*

The great posthumous works in Western literature usually carry with them a fundamental enigma. Pascal's *Pensées* and Rimbaud's *Illuminations* raise problems of chronology and interpretation, as well as making their own particular challenges to the very idea of literature. Jarry would have guffawed and found a suitable *blague* to dismiss this grandiose approach to his book, *Exploits and Opinions of Doctor Faustroll, Pataphysician*. Yet after having failed to find a publisher for more than a few chapters, he entrusted at least two manuscripts of the text to reliable friends, and inscribed one of them for posterity. At twenty-five Jarry suggested he was

writing over everyone's head, including his own; he had to "experience" death in order to catch up with himself.

*Faustroll* reveals its enigmatic qualities most clearly in contrast to *Ubu Roi*, *Ubu Enchaîné*, and *Ubu Cocu*. In the nineties Ubu's freewheeling and adolescent nihilism was received with a raucous mixture of hoots and cheers in the auditorium as in the press. Yet it was received. *Faustroll*, even though a few fragments appeared in the *Mercur de France* in May, 1895, encountered only silence and uneasy rejection by the two editors most devoted to Jarry's work. This time he appeared to have attempted too much. In a grotesque symmetry, *Faustroll* moves in the opposite direction from the *Ubu* plays and forms their complement. Beneath the highly congested surface, and in spite of its desultory structure, one senses in *Faustroll* the search for a new reality, a stupendous effort to create out of the ruins Ubu had left behind a new system of values — the world of pataphysics. Beneath the double talk and ellipsis, its formal definition (see pp. 21-23) seems to mean that the virtual or imaginary nature of things as glimpsed by the heightened vision of poetry or science or love can be seized and lived as real. This is the ultimate form of "authentic enactment."

If mathematics is the dream of science, ubiquity (*sic*) the dream of mortality, and poetry the dream of speech, pataphysics fuses them into the "common sense" of Doctor Faustroll, who lives all dreams as one. Jarry recounts the miraculous tale in an utterly sober and scientific manner, and pursues his analyses with such

rigor and attention to detail that we lose sight of the conventional boundary between reality and hallucination. A character in another work of Jarry's asserts: "I can see all possible worlds when I look at only one of them. God — or myself — created all possible worlds, they coexist, but men can hardly glimpse even one" (*Caesar-Antichrist*). Unlike the destructive and unfeeling Ubu, Faustroll welcomes and explores all forms of existence.

In the *Mercure de France* Apollinaire hailed the first edition of *Exploits and Opinions of Doctor Faustroll, Pataphysician*: "It is the most important publication of 1911." In 1923 the surrealist, Philippe Soupault, prefaced the second edition by insisting on its undiminished importance and affirming the genius of both Jarry's life and his writings. After two more French editions, this translation completes the cycle. Jarry's work appears in English at a moment when the atomic and space revolutions (plus rumors of anti-matter and splitting time) have endowed Faustroll's fantastic voyages with something approaching plausibility.\*

The history of the work helps to illuminate its recesses. Like the *Ubu* cycle, its origins go back to the *lycée* in Rennes where Jarry and his schoolmates found a ready target for their overcharged imaginations in the figure of Professor Hébert. His scientific demonstrations were as renowned and as ineffectual as his classroom discipline. In a series of legendary farces he became "le père

\* A few sentences like these reflect the composition of the Introduction in 1965 to accompany the original publication of Simon Watson Taylor's translation. Their allusions to events of the sixties do not affect the purport of my comments. In any case, Jarry reveled in anachronisms.

Ebé," kept alive and rechristened by Jarry, and finally broken over the heads of the Paris public at the Théâtre de l'Œuvre after an unremitting campaign. Professor Hébert's calamitous "science of physics" yielded "pataphysics," treasured and developed by Jarry. A few years after leaving the *lycée*, he announced for publication a *Treatise on 'Pataphysics*. But before it appeared, the treatise combined with two further ideas which modified Jarry's original project. The first was to create a cast of characters to incarnate, practice, and expound the new science. Along with an array of lesser personages most of whom appear only in the one "exploit" or chapter devoted to them, we follow the central figure of Doctor Faustroll and his two attendants: the bailiff, Panmuphle, both pursuer and prisoner of Faustroll, and the monosyllabic dogfaced baboon, Bosse-de-Nage (literally, "bottom-face"). Many of Faustroll's actions can be attributed equally to a God-like knowledge of the workings of the universe\* and to an effervescent puckish enjoyment of life.

The second idea which modified the original treatise was to adopt the loose narrative form of an indefinitely renewed journey to marvelous lands — a form which served Homer and Rabelais, among others. Thus in the very structure of his treatise-novel Jarry assumed a total liberty to broach any subject: Faustroll simply moves on at will to another time and/or place. Jarry called this

\* Asked if he is a Christian, Faustroll replies: "I am God." (p. 37)

literary hybrid a “neo-scientific novel.” In a later article he suggested the term “hypothetical novel” to describe a class of works from *Arabian Nights* to the novels of Villiers de l’Isle-Adam and H. G. Wells — works which do not confine their actions to the “real” world. Any summary of Jarry’s novel must remain highly hypothetical.

Doctor Faustroll is dunned for back rent by the bailiff Panmuphle, who inventories and seizes his library of “twenty-seven equivalent books.” (BOOK ONE)

The elements of pataphysics are briefly set down and illustrated by an experiment in relativity and surface tension. (BOOK TWO)

Doctor Faustroll escapes the law in a skiff or sieve which travels on both land and water. He is accompanied by the baboon, Bosse-de-Nage, as navigator, and by Panmuphle, tamed by drink and chained to his seat, as oarsman and narrator until the next to last book. Their peregrinations carry them to fourteen lands or islands, whose topography and inhabitants are so described as to convey Jarry’s comments on fourteen friends (or enemies) in the world of the arts — among them, Aubrey Beardsley, Léon Bloy, Gauguin, Gustave Kahn, Mallarmé, Henri de Régnier, and Marcel Schwob. (BOOK THREE)

After further navigations, discussions, and a great banquet, Faustroll discourses on death and starts a holocaust in which Bosse-de-Nage perishes — provisionally.

His monosyllabic and all-sufficing language (“Ha ha”) is carefully analyzed. (BOOK FOUR)

After a coprological aside on the “legless cripple” who represents Pierre Loti, Faustroll puts Henri Rousseau in charge of a “painting machine” to “embellish” the academic canvases hanging in the Luxembourg Museum. (BOOK FIVE)

While Faustroll has an erotic adventure, the painting machine under the Lucretian name of Clinamen executes thirteen paintings, each described in a short prose poem. (BOOK SIX)

Faustroll dies by drowning after sinking the skiff to avoid collision, and his body, like a tight scroll unfurled by the water, reveals the future in its spirals. (BOOK SEVEN)

The final book, entitled “Eternity,” resumes the treatise on pataphysics begun in BOOK TWO. Two telepathic letters from Faustroll to Lord Kelvin regarding the latter’s experiments in measurement, matter, and light, are followed by a crowning pataphysical discourse on the “surface” and nature of God. In accurate geometrical theorems He is demonstrated to be “the tangential point between zero and infinity.” (BOOK EIGHT)

Jarry writes in a highly compressed, poetic, often mock-heroic prose that requires careful reading. Yet the sentences move at headlong speed and draw the reader unexpectedly into the action.

One vacillates between amusement, puzzlement, irritation, and astonishment at Jarry-Faustroll's cavalier treatment of the world and of words. In this translation by Simon Watson Taylor, provided with his copious notes, the work becomes almost more readable in English than in the French editions, many of which are noteless and full of annoying misprints.

There is a further aspect of the book, however, which is less immediately apparent than its stylistic characteristics and which establishes it as a singularly rich historical document. (Nothing is incompatible with pataphysics.) Writing two years before the close of the nineteenth century, Jarry seized several of its most characteristic yet most contradictory lines of development and discovered — by creating it himself — their point of convergence. With the greatest of glee he grasped the scientific tradition; not, significantly, as represented by Pasteur or Poincaré or Curie or even by his former teacher Bergson, but as he came upon it in the exceptional generation of contemporary English scientists: Sir William Thomson (Lord Kelvin), Clerk Maxwell, Sir William Crookes, Arthur Cayley, and C. V. Boys. Their works appeared in French editions in the nineties when Jarry was still considering a scientific career. These investigators, as much in the line of Dodgson-Carroll (mathematician turned writer) as of Newton (physicist turned theologian), all displayed a high degree of eccentric brilliance and freedom to roam among the physical sciences. Above all, they performed what seemed to be bizarre experiments

with soap bubbles, gyrostats, tiny boats driven about in a basin by camphor, and similar toys. They illustrated their theories by hypothesizing microscopic homunculi living on cabbage leaves (Crookes) or shoving molecules around like stevedores (Maxwell's "Sorting Demon"). For them as for Jarry, science was an adventure, domestic and transcendent.

Science formed the first strand. With more intensity than glee, Jarry also embraced the symbolist school in literature and its doctrines of suggestion and musicality. Symbolism, in both the apocalyptic version of Rimbaud and the lapidary version of Mallarmé, conjured up its universe out of words in new relationships to meanings, and Jarry exploited this liberty to the full. The third significant strand contributing to the substance of *Faustroll* leads back to a frequently disdained aspect of the mood of the time. In cabarets like the *Chat Noir* and lively reviews like *La Plume*, a savage and often grotesque sense of humor rubbed shoulders with the earnestness of symbolism. This was the era of the front-page cartoon and the wry *chronique*, one of Jarry's particular talents. In *Faustroll* as in *Ubu Cocu* he pushed his sense of the comic into the realm where laughter is mixed with apprehension for ourselves. The final strand, less significant than the others but worth mentioning, is the occultist visionary revival. That materialistic age of science and progress supported a flourishing sideshow of esoteric cults, from Rosicrucianism to heraldry. This fourth component, however, is not so far afield from the first as one might



think, for table turning attracted the energies of scientific research as well as of spiritualist fraud.

Science, symbolism, humor, and the occult — few writers have attempted to compound such disparate elements into a single work, as Jarry himself knew. His only master was Rabelais. This erudite freethinking monk produced out of his teeming imagination an amalgam of the riches of life in the sixteenth century and wrote a book for all time. But the canons of literary taste as they have hardened in the twentieth century leave little place for Rabelais. A twentieth-century Rabelais strikes one as even more preposterous, and Jarry would have found an audience more readily had he written simply a work of science fiction, a symbolist narrative, a bawdy tale, or a spiritual allegory. Instead, *Faustroll* is doing a number of things at the same time.

From the beginning, in the numerous dedications of sections and chapters, one encounters the documentary and allusive aspect of the work — its running commentary on the literary figures and intellectual currents of the time. Though veiled and indirect, many chapters achieve a rare form of criticism. Jarry's parodies mete out both homage and scurrility. On another level, *Faustroll* contains the spiritual autobiography of Jarry, who in the flesh assumed the monstrous role of Ubu but who sought in literature, in erudition, and in alcohol his means of spiritual elevation. In this light *Faustroll* is a novel of quest without the usual note of self-pity. On the third level, and far more difficult than the first two, one must measure

the literary value of the book. Despite Jarry's subtitle, "a neo-scientific novel," it falls into no genre, not even that of the picaresque novel or the marvel tale. He sacrifices all unities of plot, of discursive argument, of time and place, of character. Its unity of action in the Aristotelian sense concerns the man-god Faustroll, the wise buffoon, who survives his own death and continues his travels in the "unknown dimensions" of "eternity."

But this is already the fourth and final level: the sphere of pataphysics. What would have been the anagogical or spiritual significance for medieval commentators refers here to a systematic toying with the arrangement of things and their significance until we see the improbable hypothesis as real. From this level of meaning and creation we finally see that pataphysics contains within itself, despite undertones of spoofing and quackery, a commentary on the other levels of social and historical time, personal biography, and artistic value. The richest concepts in the book arise within the area of scientific imagination (Jarry affirmed bluntly that there is no other kind), have their application in biographical and literary spheres, and become the tenets of pataphysics. Three examples will show the range of Jarry's mind. The astronomical term *syzygy* (a conjunction or opposition of planets in a solar system) probably appealed to him because it suggests that something akin to crystalline form may emerge at intervals out of the random movements of the cosmos; yet for Jarry *syzygy* also represents the rule of prose style that a word must transfix a momentary

conjunction or opposition of meanings. Clinamen, an infinitesimal and fortuitous swerve in the motion of an atom, formed the basis of Lucretius' theory of matter and was invoked by Lord Kelvin when he proposed his "kinetic theory of matter." To Jarry in 1898 it signified the very principle of creation, of reality as an exception rather than the rule. (For pataphysics is, in one definition, the science of "laws governing exceptions.") Today scientists and philosophers have stumbled once again over the concept of Clinamen, newly attired as Heisenberg's indeterminacy principle. In the final chapters, Jarry coined the portmanteau term, "eternity," to point to a crossing of ideas concerning the propagation of light, the nature of time, and the dimensions of the universe. From every point of view, scientific, poetic, and metaphysical, the word is infinitely suggestive.

*Exploits and Opinions of Doctor Faustroll, Pataphysician* is an exasperating and haunting work, and terms in which to judge its success or failure scarcely exist outside its own pages. Jarry, of course, wrote the recalcitrant reader's response right into the text for Bosse-de-Nage.

"'Ha ha,' he said succinctly; and he did not lose himself in further considerations."

EXPLOITS & OPINIONS OF  
DOCTOR FAUSTROLL, PATAPHYSICIAN



“There are eight abodes, eight places of sight, eight deities, and eight Purushas. Whoever understands those Purushas in their division, and again in their union, has overcome the world. I ask thee about the Purusha in the Upanishads. And thou explain not him to me, thy head will fall off.” S’akalya knew him not, so his head fell off. Moreover robbers took away his bones, mistaking them for something else.

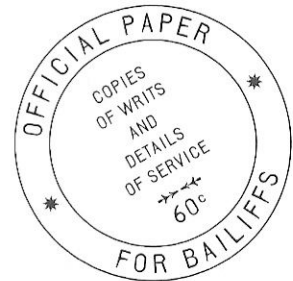
— THE BRIHAD A’RANYAKA UPANISHAD

BOOK ONE

PROCEEDINGS

I

SUMMONS PURSUANT  
TO ARTICLE 819



IN THIS YEAR *Eighteen Hundred and Ninety-eight*, the Eighth day of February, Pursuant to article 819 of the Code of Civil Procedure and at the request of M. and Mme. Bonhomme (Jacques), proprietors of a house situate at Paris, 100 bis, rue Richer, the aforementioned having address for service at my residence and further at the Town Hall of Q borough.

I, the undersigned, René-Isidore Panmuphle, Bailiff attached to the Civil Court of First Instance of the Department of Seine, in session at Paris, residing in said City, 37, rue Pavée, Do hereby summon in the name of the LAW and of JUSTICE, Monsieur Faustroll, doctor, tenant of various premises dependent upon the house aforementioned, residing at Paris, 100 bis, rue Richer, and having proceeded to the aforementioned house, bearing upon its exterior the number 100, and having rung, knocked, and called the aforementioned variously

and successively, no person having opened the door to us, and the next door neighbors declaring to us that this is indeed the residence of said M. Faustroll, but that they were unwilling to accept a copy of this writ and, inasmuch as I did find at said premises neither relations nor servants, nor any neighbor willing to accept service of this present copy by subscribing to the original thereto, I did proceed forthwith to the Town Hall of Q borough at which place I did personally deliver this present copy to his Worship the Mayor, who did certificate the original thereto; *within the maximum period of twenty-four hours, to pay to the claimant into my hands as tender in full and valid quittance the sum of Three Hundred and Seventy-two thousand francs 27 centimes, in respect of Eleven quarters rental of the aforementioned premises due on the First day of January last, without prejudice to those subsequently falling due and to any and all other rights, actions, interests, costs and distraint, declaring to the aforementioned that failing satisfaction of this present Summons within said period of time, he shall be constrained thereto by all lawful means, and notably by the seizure and impounding of such goods and chattels as may be present on the premises leased. Wherefore I did deposit this present copy of the foregoing at the premises aforesaid. Cost: eleven francs 30 centimes, including 1/2 sheet of special stamped paper at 0 fr. 60 centimes.*

PANMUPHLE

*To Monsieur Faustroll, Doctor,  
clo the Town Hall of Q borough,  
Paris.*

CONCERNING THE HABITS AND BEARING  
OF DOCTOR FAUSTROLL

Doctor Faustroll was sixty-three years old when he was born in Circassia in 1898 (the 20th century was [-2] years old).

At this age, which he retained all his life, Doctor Faustroll was a man of medium height, or, to be absolutely accurate, of  $(8 \times 10^{10} + 10^9 + 4 \times 10^8 + 5 \times 10^6)$  atomic diameters; with a golden-yellow skin, his face clean-shaven, apart from a few sea-green mustachios,<sup>1</sup> as worn by king Saleh; the hairs of his head alternately platinum blonde and jet black, an auburn ambiguity changing according to the sun's position; his eyes, two capsules of ordinary writing-ink flecked with golden spermatozoa like Danzig schnapps.

He was beardless, apart from his mustachios, through the judicious use of baldness microbes which permeated his skin from the groin to the eyelashes and ate away all the follicles, without any need for Faustroll to fear that his scalp-hair or eyebrows might fall out, since these microbes attack only fresh young hairs. From his groin down to his feet, in contrast, he was sheathed in a satyric black fur, for he was man to an improper degree.

That morning he took his daily sponge bath<sup>2</sup> of two-tone wallpaper painted by Maurice Denis, with a design of trains climbing

up spirals; a long time ago he had given up water in favor of wall-paper — seasonable, fashionable, or according to his whim.

So as not to embarrass the populace, he drew on over this design a shirt made of quartz fiber; baggy trousers of dull black velvet drawn tight at the ankles; tiny little gray boots, with even layers of dust carefully preserved on them, at great expense, for many months past, broken only by the dry geysers of ant-lions; a golden-yellow silk waistcoat, exactly the same color as his skin, with no more buttons than an undervest, and two rubies as buttons for the breast pockets, very high up; and a greatcoat lined with blue fox fur.

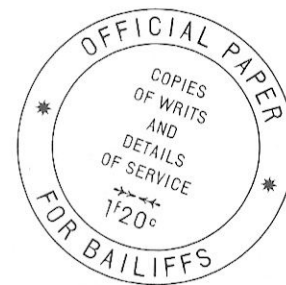
On his right index finger, he piled emerald and topaz rings right up to the fingernail — the only one of the ten which he did not bite — and the line of rings was kept in place by a specially designed linchpin made of molybdenum, screwed into the bone of the unguis phalanx, through the fingernail.

By way of a tie, he passed around his neck the ceremonial ribbon of the Great Strumpot,<sup>3</sup> an Order invented by himself and patented to avoid any vulgarization.

He hanged himself by this ribbon on a specially constructed gibbet, procrastinating for a few quarter-hours between the choice of the two asphyxiating make-ups called *white hanged man* and *blue hanged man*.

And, after cutting himself down, he put on a solar topee.

SERVICE OF WRIT



IN THIS YEAR Eighteen Hundred and Ninety-eight, this tenth day of February, at Eight o'clock in the morning, pursuant to article 819 of the Code of Civil Procedure and at the request of M. and Mme. Bonhomme (Jacques), the husband both in his own name and in support and authorization of the lady his spouse, proprietors of a house situate at Paris, no. 100 bis, rue Richer, the aforementioned having address for service at my residence and further at the Town Hall of Q borough,

I, THE UNDERSIGNED, RENÉ-ISIDORE PANMUPHLE, BALIFF ATTACHED TO THE CIVIL COURT OF FIRST INSTANCE OF THE DEPARTMENT OF SEINE, IN SESSION AT PARIS, RESIDING IN SAID CITY, 37 RUE PAVÉE, do hereby summon in reiteration in the name of the Law and of Justice M. Faustroll, doctor, tenant of various premises dependent upon the house aforementioned, residing therein at the aforementioned rue Richer, No. 100 bis, which bears at present the number 100, where having proceeded and having knocked variously and successively without obtaining a reply, we betook ourselves to Paris, to the office of M. Solarcable, commissioner of police, the latter granting us his assistance in our undertaking; to pay to myself as Bailiff and bearer of said summons, the sum of Three Hundred and

Seventy-two thousand francs 27 centimes in respect of Eleven quarters rental of the aforementioned premises without prejudice to other claims, the named party having refused payment of these claims.

Wherefore I have seized in distraint and placed under the authority of the Law and of Justice the following objects:

4

CONCERNING THE EQUIVALENT BOOKS  
OF DOCTOR FAUSTROLL

In the premises detailed above, entry having been effected by M. Lourdeau, locksmith at Paris, no. 205, rue Nicolas Flamel, with the exception of a bed of polished copper mesh, twelve meters long and without bedding, of an ivory chair and of an onyx and gold table; sequestration made of twenty-seven assorted volumes, some paper-backed and others bound, with the following titles:

1. BAUDELAIRE, a volume of E.A. POE translations.
2. BERGERAC, *Works*, volume II, containing the *History of the States and Empires of the Sun*, and the *History of Birds*.
3. *The Gospel According to SAINT LUKE*, in Greek.
4. BLOY, *The Ungrateful Beggar*.
5. COLERIDGE, *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*.

6. DARIEN, *The Thief*.
7. DESBORDES-VALMORE, *The Oath of the Little Men*.
8. ELSKAMP, *Illuminated Designs*.
9. An odd volume of the *Plays* of FLORIAN.
10. An odd volume of *The Thousand and One Nights*, in the GALLAND translation.
11. GRABBE, *Scherz, Satire, Ironie und tiefere Bedeutung*, comedy in three acts.
12. KAHN, *The Tale of Gold and of Silence*.
13. LAUTRÉAMONT, *The Lays of Maldoror*.
14. MAETERLINCK, *Aglavaine and Sélysette*.
15. MALLARMÉ, *Verse and Prose*.
16. MENDÈS, *Gog*.
17. *The Odyssey*, Teubner's edition.
18. PÉLADAN, *Babylon*.
19. RABELAIS.
20. JEAN DE CHILRA, *The Sexual Hour*.
21. HENRI DE RÉGNIER, *The Jasper Cane*.
22. RIMBAUD, *The Illuminations*.
23. SCHWOB, *The Childrens' Crusade*.
24. *Ubu Roi*.
25. VERLAINE, *Wisdom*.
26. VERHAEREN, *The Hallucinated Landscapes*.
27. VERNE, *Voyage to the Center of the Earth*.

In addition, three prints hanging on the walls, a poster by TOULOUSE-LAUTREC, *Jane Avril*; one by BONNARD, advertising the *Revue Blanche*; a portrait of Doctor Faustroll, by AUBREY BEARDSLEY; and an old picture, which appeared to us to be valueless, *Saint Cado*, issued by the Oberthür printing house of Rennes.

It was impossible to enter the cellar due to the flooding thereof. It appeared to be filled, to a height of two meters, with a mixture of wine and spirits, though no barrels or bottles were to be seen.

I have installed as guardian thereof, in absence of the subject of distraint, M. Delmor de Pionsec, one of my witnesses named hereunder. The sale will take place on whatever day shall ultimately be decided, at the hour of noon, in the Place de l'Opéra.

And from all the aforementioned facts, I have assembled the present official report, the compilation of which occupied me from eight in the morning until a quarter before three in the afternoon, and of which I have left a copy for the subject of distraint, in the hands of his excellency the aforementioned commissioner of police, and with the guardian, and without prejudice to any further actions, the above matter wholly in the presence of and assisted by Messrs. Delmor de Pionsec and Troccon,<sup>4</sup> attorneys-at-law, residing at Paris, 37 rue Pavée, the required witnesses who have with myself signed original and copy. Cost thirty-two francs 40 centimes. For the copies were used two sheets of official paper costing 1 fr. 20 centimes. Signed: Lourdeau, locksmith.<sup>5</sup> Signed: Solarcable, commissioner of police. Signed: Delmor de Pionsec.

Signed: Panmuphle, bailiff.<sup>6</sup> Registered at Paris, the 11th day of February 1898. Received five francs. Signed: Liconet.<sup>7</sup> True copy certified. (*Illegible.*)

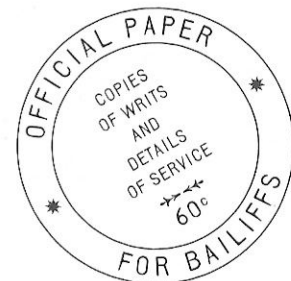
5

NOTICE OF WARRANT  
ENABLING IMMEDIATE SALE

IN THIS YEAR *Eighteen Hundred and Ninety-eight*, the Fourth day of June, *at the request of* M. and Mme. Bonhomme (Jacques), the husband *residing at* Paris, rue Pavée, 37, *electing domicile in my office and further at the* Town Hall of Q borough; *I, the undersigned, René-Isidore Panmuphle, BALIFF attached to the Civil Court of First Instance of the Department of the Seine, in session at Paris, residing in said City, 37, rue Pavée, have signified, declared, and under the above heading deposited copy with* M. Faustroll. . .

\*

Whereas this present half-sheet of special stamped paper at 60 centimes is insufficient to record the diverse marvels which I discovered at the home of the said Doctor Faustroll, having drunk my fill in the cellar into which he had hurled me; the present



deponent provisionally does solicit the favor of his honor the President of the Civil Tribunal of the Seine to authorize, in so far as the cost of stamped paper does threaten to exceed largely the amount deposited, the description of the ensuing events on unstamped paper, so that a record may be retained for the Law and for Justice of the said marvels, and that such record may not perish.

## 6

### CONCERNING THE DOCTOR'S BOAT, WHICH IS A SIEVE

TO C. V. BOYS

Doctor Faustroll, arising from under the sheets covering the polished copper bed which I was not authorized to seize, and addressing himself to me, speaking to me personally, said:

"It is probable that you have no conception, Panmuphle, writ-carrying bailiff, of capillarity, of surface tension, nor of weightless membranes, equilateral hyperbolae, surfaces without curvature, nor, more generally, of the elastic skin which is water's epidermis.<sup>8</sup>

"Since the days when saints and miracle-workers went sailing in stone troughs or on coats of coarse cloth, and when Christ walked barefoot on the sea, I know of no creature — apart from

myself — other than the filiform water-scorpion and the larvae of water-gnats, capable of making use of the surface of ponds, either from above or beneath, as a solid floor.

"It is true that it has been possible to construct sacks made from a material which allows air and steam to pass through but is impermeable to water, so that one can blow out a candle through the cloth and yet the same cloth will retain its liquid content indefinitely. My colleague F. de Romilly has succeeded in boiling liquids in a bell jar whose base was made of gauze with a fairly wide mesh. . .

"But this bed, twelve meters long, is not a bed but a boat, shaped like an elongated sieve. The meshes are wide enough to allow the passage of a large pin; and the whole sieve has been dipped in melted paraffin, then shaken so that this substance (which is never really *touched* by water), while covering the web, leaves the holes empty — the number of which amounts to about fifteen million four hundred thousand. When I place my sieve on the river, the water's skin tautens against the holes, and the liquid flowing beneath cannot penetrate unless the skin breaks. But the convexity of my round keel offers no projecting angle, and the pressure of the water during launching, while jumping rapids, etc., is reduced by an external non-paraffined shell with much larger meshes, sixteen thousand only; this serves additionally to protect the paraffin glaze from being scratched by reeds, just as an interior grill saves it from damage by feet.



“My sieve, then, floats like a boat, and can be laden without sinking to the bottom. Not only that, it possesses this advantage over ordinary boats — as my learned friend C. V. Boys has remarked to me — that one can allow a thin jet of water to fall on it without submerging it. If I should decide to expel my urates, or if a wave should break over the side, the liquid will simply pass through the mesh and rejoin the external waves.

“In this perpetually dry boat (called a skiff, doubtless because it is constructed to carry three people),<sup>9</sup> I shall henceforth take up my residence, since I am forced to leave this house. . .”

“Doubtless,” I said, “because the premises are no longer furnished.”

“I also possess an even finer skiff,” continued the doctor, “of quartz fiber drawn out by means of a crossbow; but at the present moment I have just deposited thereon, with the aid of a straw, 250,000 drops of castor oil, in imitation of the beads on spiders’ webs, alternately large and small beads, the vibrations per second of the latter being to the vibrations per second of the former in the proportion of 64,000/1,500,000 under the sole influence of the pressure of the liquid’s elastic skin. This skiff has every appearance of a huge genuine spider’s web, and catches flies just as easily. But it is only fitted out for one person.

“And since the present one carries three people, you shall accompany me, and someone else to whom you will shortly be introduced — not to mention some others, for I am bringing along

some beings who have managed to escape your Law and your Justice between the lines of my seized volumes.

“And while I enumerate them, and summon the other *person*, here is a book, hand-written by myself, which you can seize as the twenty-eighth volume and read, so that you may not only contain yourself in patience but may also very probably understand me better during the course of this voyage, though I am not asking your opinion about its necessity.”

“Yes, but this navigation in a sieve. . .”

“The skiff is not only propelled by oar blades but also by suction disks at the end of spring levers. And its keel travels on three steel rollers at the same level. I am all the more convinced of the excellence of my calculations and of its insubmersibility in that, as is my invariable habit, we shall not be navigating on water but on dry land.”

## 7

## CONCERNING THE CHOSEN FEW

Across the foliated space of the twenty-seven equivalents, Faustroll conjured up into the third dimension:

From Baudelaire, E. A. Poe’s *Silence*, taking care to retranslate Baudelaire’s translation into Greek.

From Bergerac, the precious tree into which the nightingale-king and his subjects were metamorphosed, in the land of the sun.

From Luke, the Calumniator who carried Christ on to a high place.

From Bloy, the black pigs of Death, retinue of the Betrothed.

From Coleridge, the ancient mariner's crossbow and the ship's floating skeleton, which, when placed in the skiff, was sieve upon sieve.

From Darien, the diamond crowns of the Saint-Gothard rock-drillers.

From Desbordes-Valmore, the duck placed by the woodcutter at the children's feet, and the fifty-three trees with scored barks.

From Elskamp, the hares, running over the sheets, which became cupped hands and carried the spherical universe like a fruit.

From Florian, Scapin's lottery ticket.

From *The Thousand and One Nights*, the eye of the third Kalender, who was the son of a king: the eye poked out by the tail of the flying horse.

From Grabbe, the thirteen journeymen tailors massacred at dawn by Baron Mordax on the order of the knight of the papal order of Civil Merit, and the table napkin which he tied round his neck beforehand.

From Kahn, one of the golden peals from the celestial goldsmiths' shops.

From Lautréamont, the scarab, beautiful as the trembling of hands in alcoholism, which vanished over the horizon.

From Maeterlinck, the lights heard by the first blind sister.

From Mallarmé, the virgin, the bright, and the beautiful today.

From Mendès, the north wind which blew upon the green sea and blended with its salt the sweat of the galley slave who rowed until he was a hundred and twenty years old.

From *The Odyssey*, the joyful walk of the irreproachable son of Peleus in the meadow of asphodels.

From Péladan, the reflection, in the mirror of the shield silvered with ancestral ashes, of the sacrilegious massacre of the seven planets.

From Rabelais, the little bells to which the devils danced during the tempest.

From Rachilde, Cleopatra.

From Régnier, the sorrel plain where the modern centaur snorted.

From Rimbaud, the icicles hurled by the wind of God into the waters.

From Schwob, the scaly animals imitated by the whiteness of the leper's hands.

From *Ubu Roi*, the fifth letter of the first word of the first act.

From Verhaeren, the cross made by the spade in the horizon's four brows.

From Verlaine, voices asymptotic toward death.

From Verne, the two and a half leagues of the earth's crust.

Meanwhile, René-Isidore Panmuphle, bailiff, began to read Faustroll's manuscript in deep darkness, substantiating the invisible ink of sulphate of quinine by means of the invisible infrared rays of a spectrum whose other colors were locked in an opaque box; until he was interrupted by the introduction of the third traveler.

BOOK TWO

ELEMENTS OF PATAPHYSICS

TO THADÉE NATANSON

8

DEFINITION

An epiphenomenon is that which is superinduced upon a phenomenon.

Pataphysics, whose etymological spelling should be ἐπι (μετὰ τὰ φυσικά) and actual orthography *'pataphysics*, preceded by an apostrophe so as to avoid a simple pun,<sup>10</sup> is the science of that which is superinduced upon metaphysics, whether within or beyond the latter's limitations, extending as far beyond metaphysics as the latter extends beyond physics. Ex: an epiphenomenon being often accidental, pataphysics will be, above all, the science of the particular, despite the common opinion that the only science is that of the general. Pataphysics will examine the laws governing exceptions, and will explain the universe supplementary to this one; or,

less ambitiously, will describe a universe which can be — and perhaps should be — envisaged in the place of the traditional one, since the laws that are supposed to have been discovered in the traditional universe are also correlations of exceptions, albeit more frequent ones, but in any case accidental data which, reduced to the status of unexceptional exceptions, possess no longer even the virtue of originality.

DEFINITION. *Pataphysics is the science of imaginary solutions, which symbolically attributes the properties of objects, described by their virtuality, to their lineaments.*

Contemporary science is founded upon the principle of induction: most people have seen a certain phenomenon precede or follow some other phenomenon most often, and conclude therefrom that it will ever be thus. Apart from other considerations, this is true only in the majority of cases, depends upon the point of view, and is codified only for convenience — if that! Instead of formulating the law of the fall of a body toward a center, how far more apposite would be the law of the ascension of a vacuum toward a periphery, a vacuum being considered a unit of non-density, a hypothesis far less arbitrary than the choice of a concrete unit of positive density such as *water*?

For even this body is a postulate and an average man's point of view, and in order that its qualities, if not its nature, should

remain fairly constant, it would be necessary to postulate that the height of human beings should remain more or less constant and mutually equivalent. Universal assent is already a quite miraculous and incomprehensible prejudice. Why should anyone claim that the shape of a watch is round — a manifestly false proposition — since it appears in profile as a narrow rectangular construction, elliptic on three sides; and why the devil should one only have noticed its shape at the moment of looking at the time? — Perhaps under the pretext of utility. But a child who draws a watch as a circle will also draw a house as a square, as a façade, without any justification, of course; because, except perhaps in the country, he will rarely see an isolated building, and even in a street the façades have the appearance of very oblique trapezoids.

We must, in fact, inevitably admit that the common herd (including small children and women) is too dimwitted to comprehend elliptic equations, and that its members are at one in a so-called universal assent because they are capable of perceiving only those curves having a single focal point, since it is easier to coincide with one point rather than with two. These people communicate and achieve equilibrium by the outer edge of their bellies, tangentially. But even the common herd has learned that the *real* universe is composed of ellipses, and tradesmen keep their wine in barrels rather than cylinders.

So that we may not abandon, through digression, our usual

example of water, let us reflect, in this connection, upon the irreverence of the common herd whose instinct sums up the adepts of the science of pataphysics in the following phrase:

9

FAUSTROLL SMALLER THAN FAUSTROLL

TO WILLIAM CROOKES

*Other madmen cried ceaselessly that the figure one was at the same time bigger and smaller than itself, and proclaimed a number of similar absurdities as if they were useful discoveries.*

— THE TALISMAN OF ORAMANE

Doctor Faustroll (if one may be permitted to speak from personal experience) desired one day to be smaller than himself and resolved to explore one of the elements, in order to examine any disturbances which this change in size might involve in their mutual relationship.

For this purpose he chose that substance which is normally liquid, colorless, incompressible and horizontal in small quantities; having a curved surface, blue in depth and with edges that tend to ebb and flow when it is stretched; which Aristotle terms heavy, like earth; the enemy of fire and renascent from it when decomposed

explosively; which vaporizes at a hundred degrees, a temperature determined by this fact, and in a solid state floats upon itself — water, of course! And having shrunk to the classic size of a mite, as a paradigm of smallness, he traveled along the length of a cabbage leaf, paying no attention to his fellow mites or to the magnified aspect of his surroundings, until he encountered the Water.

This was a globe, twice his size, through whose transparency the outlines of the universe appeared to him gigantically enlarged, whilst his own image, reflected dimly by the leaves' foil, was magnified to his original size. He gave the orb a light tap, as if knocking on a door: the deracinated eye of malleable glass "adapted itself" like a living eye, became presbyopic, lengthened itself along its horizontal diameter into an ovoid myopia, repulsed Faustroll by means of this elastic inertia and became spherical once more.

The doctor, taking small steps, rolled the crystal globe, with some considerable difficulty, toward a neighboring globe, slipping on the rails of the cabbage-leaf's veins; coming together, the two spheres sucked each other in, tapering in the process, until suddenly a new globe of twice the size rocked placidly in front of Faustroll.

With the tip of his boot the doctor kicked out at this unexpected development of the elements: an explosion, formidable in its fragmentation and noise, rang out following the projection all around of new and minute spheres, dry and hard as diamonds, that

rolled to and fro all along the green arena, each one drawing along beneath it the image of the tangential point of the universe, distorting it according to the sphere's projection and magnifying its fabulous center.

Beneath everything, the chlorophyll, like a shoal of green fishes, followed its charted currents in the cabbage's subterranean canals. . .

I O

CONCERNING THE DOGFACED BABOON  
BOSSE-DE-NAGE, WHO KNEW NO HUMAN  
WORDS BUT "HA HA"

TO CHRISTIAN BECK

*Hey, you, said Giromon gravely; as for you, I'll take your robe for a storm-sail; your legs for masts, your arms for yardarms; your body for the hull, and I'll f. . . well pitch you into the water with six inches of steel in your stomach for ballast. . . And since, when you are a ship, it's your fat head which will serve as a figurehead, then I shall baptize you: the dirty b. . .*

— EUGENE SUE, *THE SALAMANDER*  
(LE PICHON JOUEIC DEIS DIABLES)<sup>11</sup>

Bosse-de-Nage was a dogfaced baboon less cyno- than hydrocephalous, and, as a result of this blemish, less intelligent than his fellows. The red and blue callosity which they sport on their buttocks was, in his case, displaced by Faustroll, by means of some strange medication, and grafted on to his cheeks, azurine on one, scarlet on the other, so that his flat face was a tricolor.

Not content with this, the good doctor wanted to teach him to speak; and if Bosse-de-Nage (so named because of the double protuberance of the cheeks described above) was not completely familiar with the French language, he could pronounce fairly correctly a few words of Belgian, calling the life belt hanging at the stern of Faustroll's skiff "swimming-bladder with inscription thereon," but more often he enunciated a tautological monosyllable:

"Ha ha," he said in French; and he added nothing more.

This character will prove very useful during the course of this book, to punctuate some of its overlong speeches: in the manner of Victor Hugo (*The Burgraves*, part I, sc. 2):

*And is that all?*

— *Nay, listen yet:*

And Plato, in various passages:<sup>12</sup>

- Ἀληθῆ λέγεις, ἔφη.
- Ἀληθῆ.
- Ἀληθέστατα.
- Δῆλα γάρ, ἔφη, καὶ τυφλῶ.
- Δῆλα δῆ.
- Δῆλον δῆ.
- Δίκαιον γοῦν.
- Εἰκός.
- Ἔμοιγε.
- Ἔοικε γάρ.
- Ἔστιν, ἔφη.
- Καὶ γὰρ ἔφω.
- Καὶ μάλ', ἔφη.
- Κάλλιστα λέγεις.
- Καλῶς.
- Κομιδῆ μὲν οὖν.
- Μέμνημαι.
- Ναί.
- Ἐυμβαίνει γάρ οὕτως.
- Οἶμαι μὲν, καὶ πολύ.
- Ὁμολογῶ.
- Ὁρθότατα.
- Ὁρθῶς γ', ἔφη.
- Ὁρθῶς ἔφη.
- Ὁρθῶς μοι δοκεῖς λέγειν.

- Οὐκοῦν χρή.
- Παντάπασι.
- Παντάπασι μὲν οὖν.
- Πάντων μάλιστα.
- Πάνυ μὲν οὖν.
- Πεισόμεθα μὲν οὖν.
- Πολλὴ ἀνάγκη.
- Πολύ γε.
- Πολὺ μὲν οὖν μάλιστα.
- Πρέπει γάρ.
- Πῶς γὰρ ἄν.
- Πῶς γὰρ οὔ.
- Πῶς δ' οὔ.
- Τί δαί.
- Τὶ μὴν.
- Τοῦτο μὲν ἄληθές λέγεις.
- Ὡς δοκεῖ.

Here follows the narrative of René-Isidore Panmuphle.



BOOK THREE

FROM PARIS TO  
PARIS BY SEA

OR THE BELGIAN  
FAMILY ROBINSON

TO ALFRED VALLETTE

*Inquiring what men of learning there were then in the city, and  
what wine they drank there.*

— GARGANTUA, CHAPTER XVI

II II

CONCERNING THE EMBARKATION IN THE ARK

Bosse-de-Nage descended with tiny steps, making sure of the flat adhesion of his feet as one unrolls a glued poster, carrying the skiff on his shoulder by the ears, in imitation of the ancient Egyptians teaching their disciples. The red metal surface, like that of the boat-fly, began to shine in the sun as the long boat ventured its xiphoid twelve-meter long prow from out of the passageway. The curved blades of the oars made a clangorous sound as they scraped along the sides of the old stone walls.

“Ha ha!” said Bosse-de-Nage as he deposited the skiff upon the pavement; but on this occasion he added nothing to his statement.

Faustroll rubbed the rubicund cheeks of the cabin boy against the grooves of the sliding seat to lubricate the mechanism; the scorched face glowed more luminously still, swelling up in the bows as a lantern to light our way. The doctor sat aft on his ivory chair: between his legs was the onyx table covered with his compasses, maps, sextants and various other scientific instruments; he threw at his feet, in place of ballast, the curious beings retained from his twenty-seven equivalent books and the manuscript seized by myself; then he passed around his elbows the tiller’s two guide ropes, and motioning me to sit down, facing him, on the felt sliding seat (which I could not help obeying, drunk as I was and ready to believe anything), he shackled my feet to two leather fetters at the bottom of the skiff, and thrust into my hands the handles of the ash-wood oars, whose blades moved apart with the surging symmetry of two peacock’s feathers preening.

I pulled at the oars, moving in my backward position I knew not whither, squinting between two lanes of moist lines in a gray horizontality, overtaking forms looming up from behind me which the sharp-edged oars chopped off at the legs; other distant forms followed the direction we were taking. We ploughed through the masses of people as through a dense fog, and the acoustical sign of our progress was the screech of tearing silk.

Between the distant figures which followed us and those near us which crossed our path, one could distinguish other figures, vertical and more or less stationary. Faustroll consented to explain to me that the function of navigators was to make land and to drink, while the role of Bosse-de-Nage was to draw the skiff up on to the bank at each halt on our errant way, as also to interrupt our conversation, where a pause might be convenient, with his interjections; thus, I gazed at the beings hovering into view from behind me, in the same way as did the watchers in the Platonic den, and I consulted on successive occasions the teaching of the vessel's master, Faustroll the doctor.

## I 2

### CONCERNING THE SQUITTY SEA, THE OLFATORY LIGHTHOUSE, AND THE ISLE OF CACK, WHERE WE DRANK NOT

TO LOUIS L. . .

"This dead body," said the doctor, "from whose carcass you can see old fogies trembling in senility and young men with red hair, equally cretinous in their speech and their silence, giving beaks full of flesh to speckled, handwriting-colored birds, like ichneumon

flies boring into flesh to lay their eggs — this dead body is not only an island but a man: he is pleased to call himself Baron Hildebrand of the Squitty Sea.<sup>13</sup>

"And since the island is sterile and desolate, he can grow no kind of beard. He suffered from impetigo in childhood, and his nurse, who was so old that her lore was sufficient to encourage unusually copious stool, predicted to him that this was a sign that he would be unable to dissimulate from anyone

*the infamous nudity of his calf's muzzle.*

"Only his brain — and the anterior motor centers of the medulla — are dead. And because of this inertia he is, on our navigatory route, not a man but an island, and this is why (if you both behave, I will show you the map). . ."

"Ha ha!" said Bosse-de-Nage, waking up suddenly; then he relapsed into an obstinate silence.

". . . This is why," continued Faustroll, "I find him mentioned on my fluvial map as isle of Cack."<sup>14</sup>

"Yes," I said, "but how is it that this crowd of people and birds which has come to scatter obituaries on the corpse can raven upon him with such confidence, in the middle of this vast plain, while all these graybeards and young men, if I am not isobic to them, are blind and without sticks?"

"See here," said Faustroll, opening his seized manuscript, the

ELEMENTS OF PATAPHYSICS, book N, ch. ζ: *Concerning Obelischolychnies<sup>15</sup> for dogs, while they are still baying at the moon.*

“A lighthouse raises its pr. . . in a storm, says Corbière; a lighthouse lifts its finger to point out from afar the place of safety, of truth and beauty. But for moles and for you too, Panmuphle, a lighthouse is as invisible as the ten thousand and first sonic interval is imperceptible, or the infrared rays by whose light I have written this book. The lighthouse of the isle of Cack is dark, subterranean, and cloacal, as if it had looked at the sun too long. No waves break against it, and thus no sound guides one to it. And your cerumen, Panmuphle, would close your ears even to its subterranean rumblings.

“This lighthouse nourishes itself upon the pure matter which is the substance of the isle of Cack; that is to say, the Baron’s soul, exhaled from his mouth by a leaden blowpipe. From all the places where I refuse to drink, flights of pages, guided by his scent, come like magpies to suck life (their own, *exclusive*) from the syrupy and smoking jet emanating from the saturnine blowpipe. And so that it shall not be stolen from them, the graybeards, organized into a monastery, have built upon the Baron’s carcass a little chapel that they have christened CATHOLIC MAXIMUM. The speckled birds have their dovecotes there. The people call them young wild duck.<sup>16</sup> We pataphysicians call them simply and honestly shit-diggers.”

CONCERNING THE LAND OF LACE

TO AUBREY BEARDSLEY

After leaving this displeasing island behind, our map was refolded and I rowed for another six hours, my toes held by fetters, my tongue hanging out from thirst — we would have been mortally ill had we taken a drink in that island — and Faustroll kept me drawn so upright with the parallel jerks of the two cords of his tiller that, in my backward motion, I could just see straight astern the island’s smoke still rising until it was hidden by the doctor’s shoulders. Bosse-de-Nage, so exhausted from thirst that he was quite livid, gave out only a dim light.

Suddenly a purer light than this emerged from the shadows, but in no way similar to the brutal genesis of the world.

The king of Lace drew out the light as a rope-maker plaits his retrograde line, and the threads trembled slightly in the dim light, like cobwebs. They wove themselves into forests, like the leaves which hoarfrost engraves on windowpanes; then they fashioned themselves into a Madonna and her Child in the Christmas snow; and then into jewels, peacocks, and gowns, intermingling like the swimming dance of the Rhine maidens. The Beaux and the Belles strutted and preened in imitation of fans, until their patient

gathering broke up with a cry. Just as the white junonians, roosting in a park, complain raucously when the lying intrusion of a lamp apes prematurely the dawn's reflection of their ocelli, so an artless shape burgeoned in the forest of raked-over pine pitch; and as Pierrot serenades the confusion of the moon's entwined ball, the paradox of day burrowing underground arose from Ali Baba screaming in the pitiless oil and the jar's darkness.

Bosse-de-Nage, as far as I could judge, understood these prodigies very little.

"Ha ha," he said succinctly; and he did not lose himself in further considerations.

## II 4

### CONCERNING THE FOREST OF LOVE

TO EMILE BERNARD

Like a tree frog out of water, the skiff edged forward, drawn by its suction disks along a smooth descending road.

In this district of Paris no omnibus had ever passed, nor railway, nor tramway, nor bicycle, nor probably any openwork boat with a copper skin, moving upon three rollers set at the same level, manned by a doctor pataphysician, who has at his feet the twenty-

seven most excellent quintessences of works brought back by inquisitive men from their travels, manned also by a bailiff named Panmuphle (I, René-Isidore, the undersigned) and by a hydrocephalous baboon knowing no words of human language except *ha ha*. Here, instead of street lamps we could see ancient monuments of carved stone, green statues crouching down in robes folded in the shape of hearts; heterosexual ring-dancers blowing into unmentionable flageolets; finally, a seaweed-green calvary in which the eyes of the women were like nuts cloven horizontally by the suture line of their shells.

The incline opened out suddenly into the triangle of an open space. The sky opened out too, and a sun burst open in it like the yolk of a prairie oyster bursting in the throat, and the azure became reddish blue; the sea was so warm that it steamed; the redyed costumes of the passers-by were splashes of color more brilliant than opaque precious stones.

"Are you Christians?" asked a bronzed man, dressed in a gaudy smock, standing in the center of the little triangular town.

"Like M. Arouet, M. Renan, and M. Charbonnel," I answered after some reflection.<sup>17</sup>

"I am God," said Faustroll.

"Ha ha!" said Bosse-de-Nage, without further commentary.

Thus I remained in charge of the skiff with the baboon cabin boy, who passed the time by jumping on my shoulders and pissing down my back; but I beat him off with blows from a bundle of

writs, and observed with curiosity from far off the demeanor of the gaily dressed man who had approved of Faustroll's answer.

They were seated beneath a great archway, behind which was a second, and behind these there blazed the greenness and fatness of an historiated field of cabbages. Between the arches were tables and pitchers and benches set out in a barn and on a threshing floor, crowded with people dressed in sapphire-blue velvet, with diamond-shaped faces and down-colored hair, the furry surface of the earth and of the people's necks being both like cows' hair. Men were wrestling in a blue and yellow meadow, disturbing sand-gray toads whose frightened croaks reached me in the boat; couples danced gavottes; and the bagpipes, from on top of the freshly drained barrels, droned out the flight of ribbons of white tinsel and violet silk.

Each of the two thousand dancers in the barn offered to Faustroll a girdlecake, hard cube-shaped milk, and different liqueurs in glasses as thick as a bishop's amethyst is wide and holding less than a thimbleful. The doctor drank from them all. Each person present threw a pebble into the sea, stinging the blisters on my hands, novice oarsman that I was, as I held them up to protect myself, and stinging the multicolored cheeks of Bosse-de-Nage.

"Ha ha!" he growled, to express his fury, but he remembered his solemn oath.

The doctor returned to the sound of bells, with two big maps of the country, which his guide had given him absolutely free; one

represented realistically, worked in tapestry, the forest surrounding the triangular space: the rose-red foliage rising above the blue mass of the grass, and the groups of women, the wave of each group with its crest of white bonnets breaking gently against the ground, in an eccentric circle of dawn shadow.

And on it was written: *The forest of Love*. On the second map were enumerated all the products of this happy land, men at the market with their plump yellow pigs, themselves plump and blue, stuffed into their clothes like sausages. They were all as blown up as the cheeks of a bagpiper, as full of wind as a bagpipe or a stomach.

The Christian host took leave of Faustroll courteously and sailed away in his own boat toward a more distant land. And we could see the red line of the sea's horizon cut the beam of his rose-colored sail.

We rubbed the adipose cheeks of the hydrocephalous baboon against the slide rails of the felt seat; and when I had taken up the oars once more, and Faustroll had taken the tiller's silken guide ropes, I crouched and stretched out once again in the alternating movements of the oarsman, over the conjoined waves of the dry land.

CONCERNING THE GREAT STAIRCASE OF  
BLACK MARBLE

TO LÉON BLOY

At the valley's mouth, we skirted one final calvary, whose frightening height might have led one to take it, at first sight, for a gigantic, black, mass altar.<sup>18</sup> At the blunt point of this improbable marble pyramid, between two acolytes strongly resembling cyncephali of Tanit, the huge king's head carbonized itself in the moon's furnace. He was grasping a tiger by the scruff of its neck, and was forcing the people of the Squitty Sea to climb up on hands and knees. After their bones had first been slashed by the blades of the successive steps, he let the monstrous hunter gorge itself with their flesh from butchers' hooks gripped in his fist.

He welcomed Faustroll with honor, and, raising his arm from the summit of the calvary, he deposited in our skiff a viaticum of twenty-four Squitty sea-ears skewered on a unicorn's horn.

CONCERNING THE AMORPHOUS ISLE

TO FRANC-NOHAIN

This island is like soft coral, amoeboid and protoplasmic: its trees closely resemble the gesture of snails making horns at us. Its government is oligarchic. One of its kings, as the height of his pschent indicated to us, lived upon the devotion of his seraglio; to escape the judgment of his Parliaments, which was motivated by envy, he has crawled through the drains right down to below the monolith in the main square and has gnawed it away so as to leave a crust only two inches thick. And thus he is two fingers' breadth away from the gallows. Like Simon Stylites, he hides away in this hollow column, since it is fashionable today to place nothing on the platforms of the capitals but statues, which are the best caryatids in bad weather. He works, sleeps, loves and drinks on the verticality of a long ladder, and has no other lamp in his waking hours than the pallor of his nuptials. One of his minor achievements is the invention of the tandem, which extends to quadrupeds the benefits of the pedal.

Another king, versed in halieutics, decorates with his fishing-lines the tracks of circular railways resembling the beds of rivers.



But the trains, with the cruelty of youth, chase fish before them or crush embryonic bites in their bellies.

A third king has rediscovered the language of paradise, intelligible even to animals, and has brought some of these animals to perfection. He has manufactured electric dragonflies and has counted the innumerable ants by use of the figure 3.

Another, remarkable for his hairless face, instructed us in useful wiles, so that we became competent to make full use of our free evenings, consolidate our dead drunk credits and gain, without wasting our talent, the rewards of the French Academy.

Another mimes the thoughts of mankind, using personages of whom he has kept only the top half of their bodies, so that there may be nothing inside but what is pure.

Yet another is elaborating a huge tome, with the aim of computing the qualities of the French, who, he claims, will be as brave as they are gay, as gay as they are witty; in order to devote himself entirely to this labor, he has contrived to lose his young progeny in the forest during a country walk, profiting from a moment of inattention on their part. And while we were banqueting in his company and that of the other kings, on different rungs of the great ladder, Bosse-de-Nage having the job of keeping its foot steady, the shouts of the newshawks in the magical square informed us that his nephews were that day, as on previous days, searching desperately under the quincuncial trees for the venerable absent one.

## CONCERNING THE FRAGRANT ISLE

TO PAUL GAUGUIN

The Fragrant isle is completely sensitive, and fortified by mad-repores which retracted themselves, as we landed, into their coral-red casemates. The skiff's mooring line was fastened around a great tree that swayed in the wind like a parrot rocking itself in the sunshine.

The king of the islands was naked in a boat, his loins girded with his white and blue diadem. He was clad, too, in sky and greenery like a Caesar's chariot race, and as red-headed as if he were on a pedestal.

We drank to his health in liquors distilled in vegetable hemispheres.

His function is to preserve for his people the image of their gods. He was fixing one of these images to the mast of his boat with three nails, and it was like a triangular sail, or the equilateral gold of a dried fish brought back from the septentrion. And over the doorway of his wives' dwelling place he has captured the ecstasies and contortions of love in a divine cement. Standing apart from the interlacing of young breasts and rumps, sibyls record



the formula of happiness, which is double: *Be amorous*, and *Be mysterious*.

He possesses also a zither with seven strings of seven colors, the eternal colors; and, in his palace, a lamp nourished from the fragrant wellsprings of the earth. When the king sings, moving along the shore as he plays his zither, or when he prunes with an axe, from images of living wood, the young shoots which would disfigure the likeness of the gods, his wives burrow into the hollow of their beds, the weight of fear heavy upon their loins from the vigilant gaze of the Spirit of the Dead, and from the perfumed porcelain of the great lamp's eye.

As the skiff cast off from the reefs, we saw the king's wives chasing from the island a little legless cripple sprouting green seaweed like a wizened crab; on his dwarfish trunk a fairground wrestler's tunic aped the king's nakedness. He pushed himself forward jerkily with his cestus-covered fists, and with a rumbling from the casters under his base attempted to pursue and clamber aboard the platform of the *Omnibus de Corinthe*, which was just crossing our route; but such a leap is not within everyone's power. And he fell miserably short, cracking his posterior lavatory pan with a fissure less obscene than ludicrous.

CONCERNING THE CASTLE-ERRANT  
WHICH IS A JUNK

TO GUSTAVE KAHN

Faustroll, his eye on the compass needle, decided that we could not be very far northeast of Paris. After having first heard the sea's vertical windowpane, it was not long before we could see it, held in its place by a fortification of those plants, all root, which are the sand's skeleton; and we glided onto the smooth reddish beach, between the viscosity of groynes like parallel leviathans.

The silvered sky offered inverted reflections of the monuments to be found on the other side of the green sleep of hulls; ships passed across this sky, upside down and symmetrical toward invisible futures; then could be seen the image of the still distant rooftops of the castle of Rhythms.

Indefatigable coxswain that I was, I pulled on the oars for several hours, while Faustroll sought in vain for a landing place near the castle, which was receding constantly like a mirage; after passing through narrow streets of empty houses that spied our approach through faceted eyes of complicated mirrors, we finally touched with the sonorous fragility of our prow the flight of steps in fretworked wood leading to the nomadic edifice.

We hauled the skiff on to the shore, and Bosse-de-Nage stowed the tackle and treasures in a deep grotto.

"Ha! ha!" he said, but we did not listen to the rest of his speech.

The palace was a strange junk upon a calm sea quilted with sand; Faustroll assured me that some of the Atlantides lay beneath. Seagulls vibrated like the striking hammers of the sky's blue bell, or the embellishments of a gong's libration.

The lord of the island came forward on foot, leaping across the garden planted with sand dunes. He had a black beard, and wore armor of ancient coral; on several fingers he wore silver rings in which turquoises languished. We drank hollands gin and bitter beer, between courses of all kinds of smoked meat. The hours were struck by bells fashioned from all the metals. As soon as the mooring line had been untied by our laconic deck boy, the castle crumbled and died and reappeared mirrored in the sky, from very far away, as a great junk chafing the sand's fire.

## CONCERNING THE ISLE OF PTYX

TO STÉPHANE MALLARMÉ

The isle of Ptyx is fashioned from a single block of the stone of this name, a priceless stone found only in this island, which is entirely composed of it. It has the serene translucency of white sapphire and is the only precious stone not ice-cold to the touch, for its fire enters and spreads itself like wine after drinking. Other stones are as cold as the cry of trumpets; this has the precipitated heat of the surface of kettledrums. It was easy for us to land there, since it was cut in table-form, and we had the sensation of setting foot on a sun purged of the opaque or too dazzling aspects of its flame; as with the torches of olden times. One no longer noticed the accidents of things but only the substance of the universe, and this is why we did not care whether the flawless surface was a liquid equilibrated according to eternal laws, or a diamond, impervious except under a light falling directly from above.

The lord of the islands came toward us in a ship: the funnel puffed out blue halos behind his head, magnifying the smoke from his pipe and imprinting it on the sky. And as the ship pitched and tossed, his rocking chair jerked out his welcoming gestures.

From beneath his traveling-rug he drew four eggs with painted

shells, which he handed over to Doctor Faustroll after first taking a drink. In the flame of the punch we were drinking, the hatching of the oval embryos broke out over the island's shore: two distant columns, the isolation of two prismatic trinities of Pan pipes, splayed out in the spurt of their cornices the quadridigitate handshake of the sonnet's quatrains; and our skiff rocked its hammock in the newborn reflection of the triumphal arch. Dispersing the hairy curiosity of the fauns and the rosy bloom of the nymphs aroused from their reverie by this mellifluous creation, the pale motor vessel withdrew its blue breath toward the island's horizon, with its jerking chair waving goodbye.\*

2 ①

CONCERNING THE ISLE OF HER,  
THE CYCLOPS, AND THE GREAT SWAN  
WHICH IS OF CRYSTAL

TO HENRI DE RÉGNIER

The isle of Her, like the isle of Ptyx, is one single jewel, with out-jutting octagonal fortifications, resembling the basin of a fountain

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\* Since the writing of this book, the river around the island has turned into a funeral wreath.  
[Author's note.]

of jasper. The map gave it the name of the isle of Herm, because it is pagan and consecrated to Mercury; and the inhabitants called it the isle of Hort, because of its magnificent gardens. Faustroll instructed me that one should interpret a name only from its ancient and authentic root, and that the syllable *her*, like the root of a genealogical tree, means, more or less, *Seignioral*.

The island's surface is of still water, mirror-like (it was natural that the islands should appear to us as lakes, during our navigation over dry land); and one cannot imagine a ship sailing through it, unless in the manner of a ricochet skimming the surface, for this mirror reflects no ripples, not even its own. Nevertheless, there sails there a great swan, as pure and simple as a powder puff, and sometimes it beats its wings without breaking the ambient silence. When the fluttering of the fan is rapid enough, one can glimpse the whole island through its transparency, and the fall opens out like a pavonine<sup>19</sup> jet of water.

It has never been known for the gardeners of the isle of Her to allow the jet of a fountain to fall again into the basin, for this would dull the surface; the bouquets of spray hover at a little height in horizontal sheets like clouds; and the two parallel mirrors of the earth and the sky preserve their reciprocal emptiness like two magnets eternally face to face.

All conduct in this land is *formal*, as in olden times when this word signified *customary*.

The lord of the island is a Cyclops,<sup>20</sup> but we are not obliged to imitate the stratagems of Ulysses. Before his frontal eye was hung a forehead-chain enclaspng two silvered mirrors, back to back in a Janus frame. Faustroll calculated that the double mirror was exactly  $1.5 \times 10^{-5}$  centimeters thick. It reflected the light toward us like the eight-rayed stone of the heraldic serpent. The lord of the island could, the doctor informed me, discern clearly through these mirrors those ultraviolet elements hidden from us.

He approached with small steps between a double row of reeds, cut by his orders according to the erstwhile hierarchy of the syrinx;<sup>21</sup> his major-domos served us with sugar and with quarters of citron.<sup>22</sup>

His female retainers, whose dresses spread out like the ocelli of peacocks' tails, gave us a display of dancing on the glassy lawns of the island; but when they lifted their trains to walk upon this sward less glaucous than water, they evoked the image of Balkis, summoned from Sheba by Solomon, whose donkey's feet were betrayed by the hall's crystal floor, for at the sight of their capripede clogs and their fleece skirts we were seized with fright and flung ourselves into the skiff lying at the foot of the jasper landing-steps. I pulled on the oars, as Bosse-de-Nage expressed succinctly the general stupefaction:

"Ha ha!" he said; but his state of fright, no doubt, made him break off at that point.

And I retreated far from the island, perpendicularly enough

for Faustroll's head to conceal from me in a short while the gaze of the lord of Her, and the artificial eye in its orbit of mother-of-pearl resembling the reflecting glass of a semaphore lamp.

## 2 II

### CONCERNING THE ISLE OF CYRIL

TO MARCEL SCHWOB

The isle of Cyril first appeared to us as the red fire of a volcano, or as the punch bowl full of blood spattered out by the fall of shooting stars. Then we saw that it was mobile, armored, and quadrangular, with a helix at the four corners, shaped like the four demi-diagonals of separate arms able to advance in any direction. We realized that we had approached within gun range when a bullet tore off Bosse-de-Nage's right ear and four of his teeth.

"Ha ha!" stammered the *papio*; but the impact of a steel cylin-drocone against his left zygomatic apophysis made short work of his third word. And without awaiting a more detailed reply, the kinetic island hoisted the skull and kid,<sup>23</sup> and Faustroll the flag of the Great Strumpot.

After these salutations, the doctor joyfully drank some gin with Captain Kidd, and managed to dissuade him from setting the

skiff on fire (it was, despite its paraffin varnish, incombustible) and from hanging Bosse-de-Nage and myself — after robbing us — from the main yard (the skiff had no main yard).

We all fished for monkeys in a river, to the jaw-gaping horror of Bosse-de-Nage, and we visited the interior of the island.

Because the red glow of the volcano is blinding, one can soon see no more than if one were surrounded by a shadowless darkness; but so that one may follow the opaque undulations of the dazzling lava, there are children who run about the island with lamps. They are born and die without ever growing old, in the hulks of worm-eaten barges, on the bank of a bottle-green backwater. Lamp shades wander there like glaucous and pink crabs; and farther inland, whither we escaped as quickly as possible because of the marine animals which ravage the seashore at ebb tide, their particolored umbels sleep. The lamps and the volcano exhale a livid light, like the port-side light of the Boat of the Dead.

After drinking, the captain, resplendent with his curling mustachios, used his ship-boarding scimitar as a calamus and with an ink made of gunpowder and gin tattooed upon the forehead of our close-mouthed cabin boy these words in blue: BOSSE-DE-NAGE, *PAPIO CYNOCEPHALUS*, relit his pipe in the lava, and gave orders to the light-children to escort the skiff down to the sea; and until we reached the open sea we were accompanied by Kidd's words of farewell and by the dim lights like lackluster jellyfish.

CONCERNING THE GREAT CHURCH  
OF SNOUTFIGS

TO LAURENT TAILHADE

We could already hear bells — as loud as all the Brabantine chimes of ebony, maple, oak, cedar, sorb wood and poplar from Ringing isle — when I suddenly found myself between two black walls, beneath an archway, then dazzled by the glare of a long stained-glass window. The doctor, without deigning to warn me, had shot the skiff like an arrow, using the tiller's silken cords, into the center of the great portal of Snoutfigs cathedral. Like the prefatory cough of chair legs being shifted, my oars grated on the flagstones of the nave, along which our keel lay symmetrically.

Friar John climbed into the pulpit.

The awesome figure, warlike and sacerdotal, glared at the assembly. His chasuble was of chain mail, studded with balas rubies and black diamonds. Instead of rosaries, an olive-wood cithern dangled on his right hip, while at his left was slung his great two-handed sword, its hilt fashioned from a golden crescent, in its scabbard of horned-viper's skin.

His sermon was rhetorical and very Latin, Attic, and Asiatic at the same time; but I failed to understand why he was clanging

and clinking from his sollerets to his gauntlets, nor could I comprehend his phrases, arranged like the rounds of a fencing bout.

Suddenly a bronze bullet was fired from a falconet bound to a counter-faced slab by four iron chains, the shot ploughing open the orator's right temple and splitting his armet as far as his tonsure, laying bare the optic nerve and the right lobe of the brain, but without affecting that stronghold of understanding.

Just as the smoke rose from the falconet, a pungent steam was exhaled from the throats of the congregation and congealed into the shape of a squat monster at the foot of the pulpit.

That day, I saw the Snout. It is respectable and well-proportioned, in every way comparable to the hermit crab or pagurian, as God is infinitely similar to man. It has horns which serve it as a nose and as tongue-papillae, shaped like long fingers issuing from its eyes; two claws of uneven length and ten legs in all; and being, like the pagurian, vulnerable only in its fundament, it hides this and its rudimentary sex in a concealed shell.

Friar John drew his great sword, making as if to attack the Snout, to the clear anxiety of those present. Faustroll remained impassive and Bosse-de-Nage, inordinately interested, forgot himself so far as to think visibly:

"Ha ha!"

But he said not a word, for fear of outrunning his thoughts.

The Snout retreated, the point of its shell first, while everyone drew back; and its claws grated together like stammering

mouths. The sword blade, flashing as it was drawn from its horned-viper's skin sheath, blunted itself against the creature's hairy codpiece.

At this point, Faustroll set the skiff in motion. By pulling his guide ropes harder, he was able to bend the skiff appreciably; this was possible because his tiller did not simply control a flat rudder aft but bent the long keel, from the fore-end, to right, to left, upward or downward, according to his directional requirements. And the sail of taut copper glowed like a crescent moon. With myself manipulating my suction disks to adhere to the granite's dangerously polished surface, the doctor led me toward the monster. And in its roundabout route our navigation twisted back on itself like the wedding ring of an amphisbaena's Narcissus kiss.

By this artifice, Friar John was easily able to meet the Snout at its own level, the monster having advanced slightly while its adversary descended the twelve steps. He winkled it from its shell with the forked tip of his sword, and chopped its fundament into as many pieces as there were people present in the nave; but neither he nor we ourselves, except Bosse-de-Nage, wanted to taste this offering.

And the combat would have been the very image, in all its vicissitudes, of a bullfight if the bull Shell-Bottom had made a direct onslaught instead of attempting a thrust at the end of its circular flight.

However, the bejeweled preacher remounted the pulpit for his



sermon. And his flock, no longer possessed by the Snout's spirit, were purged of their crass humor and applauded him.

As for us, we departed once more toward the nearby bells of Ringing isle, and Faustroll did not consult the stars further, for our way was lit by the beams of the great windows, iridescent as words, beams like starry paths leading from the church.

## 23

### CONCERNING THE RINGING ISLE

TO CLAUDE TERRASSE

"Happy the sage," says the *Chi-Hing*, "in the valley where he lives, a recluse, who delights to hear the sound of cymbals; alone, in his bed, awakening, he exclaims: Never, I swear, shall I forget the happiness that I feel!"

The lord of the island, after welcoming us in these terms, led us to his plantations which were fortified by aeolian marker poles of bamboo. The commonest plants there were the side-drums, the ravanastron, sambuca, archlute and bandore, the kin and the tché, the beggar's-guitar and vina, the magrepha and hydraulus. In a conservatory there arose the many necks and geyser breath of the steam-organ given to Pippin in 757 by Constantine Copronymus,

and imported into Ringing isle by Saint Cornelius of Compiègne. Here one could breathe in the perfume of the piccolo, *oboe d'amore*, contrabassoon and sarrusophone, the Brittany bagpipe, zampogna and English bagpipe; the Bengali *chéré*, bombardon, serpent, coelophone, saxhorn and anvil.

The temperature of the island is regulated by consulting thermometers called sirens. At the winter solstice the atmospheric sonority drops from a cat's cursing to the buzzing of wasps and bumblebees and the vibration of a fly's wing. At the summer solstice, all the above-named flowers blossom, reaching a pitch of overshrill ardor like that of insects hovering over the plants of our native fields. At night, here, Saturn clashes together his sistrum and his ring. And, at dawn and twilight, the sun and moon explode like divorced cymbals.

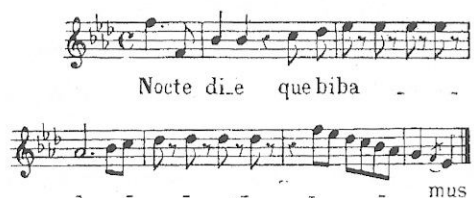
"Ha, ha," began Bosse-de-Nage, wanting to try out his voice before joining in the universal musical refrain; but the two heavenly bodies clashed together in a kiss of reconciliation and the planter celebrated this clangorous event thus:

"Happy the sage," he cried, "who, on a mountain slope, delights to hear the sound of cymbals; alone in his bed on awakening, he sings: Never, I swear, shall my desires go beyond what I already possess!"

And Faustroll, before taking leave, drank with him wormwood distilled on the mountain tops, and the skiff exhaled its chromatic course at the beat of my oars. Toward the two heavenly bodies



striking the hours of union and division of the black key and the diurnal key, a little naked child and a white-haired ancient sang on two lofty columns; toward this double disk of silver and of gold they sang:



The old man bellowed the selection of foul syllables, and the seraphic soprano took up the refrain accompanied by the choir of angels, Thrones, Powers and Dominions: “. . . *pet, a-mor mor, oc-cu-pet, cu, pet, a-mor oc-cu, semper nos amor occupet.*”

The white-bearded energumen concluded the coprolalic phrase with a throaty cry and an obscene contortion; at this moment, from our skiff, which was moored at the foot of this chubby and child-like body's stele, we could see the crumbling of his armor made of enameled cardboard or puppeteer's pasteboard and the blooming of the forty-five-year-old sistine dwarf's squalid beard.

From his throne perfumed with harps, the lord of the island gloried that his creation was good, and as we drew away we could hear this melody:

“Happy the sage who, on the hill where he dwells, delights to hear the sound of cymbals; alone in his bed, in awakening, he lies

in tranquillity and swears that he will never reveal to the vulgar the reason for his joy!”

24

CONCERNING THE HERMETIC SHADES AND  
THE KING WHO AWAITED DEATH

TO RACHILDE

After passing the river Ocean, which, as regards the stability of its surface, much resembles a great street or boulevard, we reached the land of the Cimmerii and the hermetic Shades, which differ from this river as two non-liquid planes may differ — that is to say, in size and in division. The place where the sun sets has the appearance, between the folds comprising the Town's mesentery, of the vermiform appendix of a caecum. It abounds in blind alleys and culs-de-sac, some of which expand into caverns. In one of these the day-star was wont to puff itself up. For the first time I understood that it was possible to reach the undersurface of the tangible horizon and see the sun from so close up.

There is a monstrous toad whose mouth is flush with the Ocean's surface and whose function is to devour the sunken disk, the way the moon eats the clouds. It genuflects daily in its circular

communion; at this moment steam rises from its nostrils, and the great flame arises which is the souls of certain people. This is what Plato called the apportionment by lots of souls outside the pole. And its genuflection, because of the structure of its limbs, is also a squatting. The duration of its deglutitory jubilation is therefore without dimension; and since it digests to the rhythm of a vigorous punctuality, its intestines remain unconscious of the transitory star which, in any case, is indigestible. It burrows a passage in the subterranean diversity of the earth and emerges from the opposite pole, where it purges itself of the excrements with which it has soiled itself. It is from this detritus that the devil Plural is born.

In the land where the sun is eternally dormant, there is a king who is its officer of the guard and due to share its fate, awaiting death each day; he believes that a night will some time remain perennial, and inquires after the evacuations of the toad on the horizon. But he has no time to consider the star hastening, its belly wobbling, into the adjoining cavern: he carries a mirror on his navel which gives him a reflection of it. His sole pastime is built from a house of cards, to which he adds a story each morning; here, once a month, the lords of the transpontine islands come to debauch themselves. When the castle is capped with one story too many the star will flash through it in its course, and that will be a considerable cataclysm. But the king has been sufficiently judicious not to build it on the ecliptic plane. And the castle keeps its balance in exact proportion to its height.

Since evening was descending as Bosse-de-Nage drew our skiff up on to the bank, the king was awaiting death as usual, and the toad was gaping functionally. The palace was swathed in blackness; couches had been prepared for the bodies, and philters to deaden the consciousness of agony. Bosse-de-Nage, though not professing it by a thoughtlessly variegated loquacity, prided himself on being deontological, and thought himself in honor bound to dress up in a black costume and to crown his skull — which resembled an ill-favored cucurbit — with a Belgian hat capable of storing up luminous vibrations in wave lengths equal to those of his costume, the crown of which resembled half a defunct globe.

And the night computed its hours so exactly that lamps had to be lit.

Suddenly the toad's descending colon thundered, and the non-alimentary bolus of pure fire took its usual path once more toward the pole of the devil Plural.

In a striking metamorphosis the mourning color of the hangings turned into pale rose. The philters were drunk joyfully through the reeds of Panpipes, and when little women were laid out on the red-hot couches, Bosse-de-Nage thought the time had come to bring matters to a point:

"Ha ha!" he declared in a summary fashion, but he saw that we had guessed his thoughts, and watched with great surprise the simplicity of his Belgian hat roll upon the carpet with the recalcitrant din of an sweep's iron brush.

CEPHALORGY

25

CONCERNING THE LAND-TIDE AND THE  
MARINE BISHOP MENDACIOUS

TO PAUL VALÉRY

Faustroll took his leave while the night was still hanging, like a pope, from four of the cardinal points. And as I asked him why he did not stay drinking until the sun's next sudden plunge, he arose in the skiff and, with his foot on the neck of Bosse-de-Nage, made soundings along our route.

He confided to me that he was afraid of being caught unawares by the ebb tide, since the period of syzygy was nearing its end. And I was seized with fear, because we were still rowing where there was no water, between the aridity of the houses, and soon we were

coasting along the pavements of a dusty square. As far as I could understand, the doctor was talking about the earth's tides, and I thought that one of us must be drunk, and that the ground was sinking toward its nadir, like a fathomless depth revealed in a nightmare. I know now that apart from the flux of its humors and the diastole and systole which pump its circulatory blood, the earth is bulging with intercostal muscles and breathes according to the moon's rhythm. But the regularity of this breathing is very gentle, and few people are aware of it.

Faustroll took some astral measurements, the visibility through the albugineous sky over this narrow street being excellent, and told me to note down the fact that the terrestrial radius had already shrunk  $1.4 \times 10^{-6}$  centimeters, through the subsidence in the reflux. He then gave orders to Bosse-de-Nage to cast anchor, assuring us that the sole pretext, worthy of his Doctrine, for an end to our drifting journey was that the thickness of the earth beneath our feet as far as its center was no longer deep enough to satisfy our honor.

Now it was midday, the alley's narrow length as deserted as an empty belly; and we put into port, as it was easy to tell by the numbers on the wall, in front of the four thousand and fourth house of the rue de Venise.

Between the ground levels with their floors of beaten earth, overlooked by doors wider than the street but less agape than women waiting on the uniformity of their beds, Faustroll raised the

question of berthing the skiff in some deep shelter. Suddenly he pointed, and I was not very surprised to see arise from the threshold of one of the barest and most sordid hovels a marine personage abstracted from book XIII of Aldrovandi's *Monsters*; having the appearance of a bishop, and, more particularly the type of bishop which was at one time, according to the book, fished up off the coast of Poland.

His miter was of fish scales and his cross like the corymb of a reflexed tentacle; his chasuble, which I touched, was all encrusted with stones from the depths and could easily be lifted up in the front and at the back, but, because of the chaste adherence of the cutis, hardly at all above the knees.

The marine bishop Mendacious made an obeisance before Faustroll, presented to Bosse-de-Nage an ear fig<sup>24</sup> gratis, and when the skiff was intruded into the vaulted berth and the door's valve closed once more, he presented me to Visited, his daughter, and to his two sons, Distinguished and Extravagant. Then he inquired of us whether it would be agreeable to us, quite succinctly, to:

## DRINK

TO PIERRE QUILLARD

However, Faustroll lifted with his fork toward his teeth five hams, whole, roasted, and boned, from Strasbourg, Bayonne, the Ardennes, York and Westphalia, all dripping with Johannisberger; the bishop's daughter, on her knees under the table, filled once again each unit of the ascending line of hectoliter cups in the moving belt which crossed the table in front of the doctor and passed, empty of its contents, near the raised throne of Bosse-de-Nage. I gave myself a thirst by swallowing a sheep that had been roasted alive while racing along a petrol-soaked track until done to a turn. Distinguished and Extravagant drank as thirstily as anhydrous sulphuric acid, as their names had made me suspect, and three of their jowls would have encompassed a cubic meter of firewood. However, Bishop Mendacious refreshed himself exclusively with fresh water and rat's piss.

At one time he had been in the habit of mixing this last substance with bread and Melun cheese, but had succeeded in suppressing the supererogatory vanity of these solid condiments. He sucked in water from a decanter of gold beaten as thin as the wave length of green light, served on a tray made of the fur (rather

than peltry, since the bishop wanted to be fashionable), of the freshly flayed fox of a drunkard,<sup>25</sup> in season, and quite equal to a twentieth of the latter's weight. Such luxury is not vouchsafed to all: the bishop kept rats at enormous expense, and also, in rooms paved with funnels, a whole seraglio of drunkards, whose conversation he imitated:

"Do you think," he said to Faustroll, "that a woman can ever be naked? In what do you recognize the nakedness of a wall?"

"When it is devoid of windows, doors, and other openings," opined the doctor.

"Your reasoning is good," continued Mendacious. "Naked women are never naked, especially old women."

He drank a great draught straight out of his carafe, whose point of sustentation was erect on its viscous carpet, like a root torn from its burial place. The catenulate conveyor belt of cups full of liquid or wind chanted like the incision made in a river's belly by the rosary of an illuminated towboat.

"Now," continued the bishop, "drink and eat. Visited, serve us with some lobster!"

"Was it not once fashionable in Paris," I hazarded, "to offer these animals in courtesy, like a snuff-taker proffering his snuff-box? But, from what I have heard, people were in the habit of refusing them, claiming that they were hairy pluripedes and repulsively dirty."

"Ho-hum, ho-hum," condescended the bishop. "If lobsters are

dirty and non-depilated, it is perhaps a proof that they are free. A nobler fate than that of the can of corned beef which you carry on a ribbon round your neck, doctor navigator, like the case of a pair of salted binoculars through which you like to scrutinize people and objects.

"But, listen:

THE LOBSTER AND THE CAN OF CORNED BEEF  
WHICH DOCTOR FAUSTROLL  
WORE ROUND HIS NECK

*Fable*

TO A.-F. HÉROLD

A can of corned beef, chained like a lorgnette,  
Saw a lobster pass by which resembled her fraternally.  
He was armored with a hard shell  
On which was written that inside, like herself, he was free  
of bones,  
(*Boneless and economical*);<sup>26</sup>  
And beneath his curved tail  
He was probably hiding a key with which to open her.  
Lovestricken, the sedentary corned beef  
Declared to the little automobile can of living potted meat

That if he would deign to become acclimatized,  
By her side, in the world's shopwindows,  
He should be decorated with several gold medals."

"Ha ha," meditated Bosse-de-Nage, but he did not develop his ideas more comprehensively.

And Faustroll interrupted the frivolity of the conversation with an important speech.

## 27

### CAPITALLY

Doctor Faustroll commenced:

"I do not believe that an unconscious murder is therefore necessarily motiveless: it is not governed by any command emanating from us and has no link with the precedent phenomena of our ego, but it certainly follows an external order, it is within the order of external phenomena, and it has a cause that is perceptible by the senses and is therefore significant.

"I have never had the desire to kill except after seeing a *horse's head*, which has become for me a sign, or an order, or more precisely a signal, like the down-turned thumb in the arena, that the time has come to strike the blow; and lest you should smile, I shall

explain to you that there are doubtless several reasons for this.

"The sight of a very ugly object certainly provokes one to do what is ugly. Now, what is ugly is evil. The sight of a revolting condition incites one to revolting pleasures. The appearance of a ferocious muzzle with the bones showing impels one to a ferocious act and the stripping of the bones. Now, there is no object in the whole world as ugly as the head of a horse, except perhaps that of the grasshopper, which is almost exactly similar without having the gigantic size of the former. And you know that the murder of Christ was foreshadowed by the following fact: that Moses, so that the Scriptures might be accomplished, had permitted the eating of the bruchus, the attacus, the ophiomachus and locust,<sup>27</sup> which are the four species of grasshopper."

"Ha ha!" interposed Bosse-de-Nage by way of digression, but he could find no valid objection.

"And furthermore," continued Faustroll imperturbably, "the grasshopper is not altogether a monstrous animal, having normally developed members, whereas the horse, born for indefinite deformation, has already, since the origin of its species, although endowed originally by nature with four feet furnished with fingers, succeeded in repudiating a certain number of its fingers and in jumping about on four solitary hooves, exaggerated and horny, like a piece of furniture sliding on four rollers. The horse is a planchette.

"But the head alone, although I cannot define my reasons —



perhaps because of the simple enormity of its teeth and the abominable rictus natural to it — is for me the sign of all ferocity or rather the sign of death. And the Apocalypse said precisely in signifying the fourth scourge that: ‘Death was mounted upon a pale horse.’ Which I interpret thus: ‘those whom Death comes to visit see first the head of the horse.’ And the war’s homicides derive from equitation.

“Now, if you are curious to know why I am rarely incited to murder in the street, where the horrible head multiplies in front of all the vehicles, I would reply that a signal, to be heard, must be isolated, and that a multitude does not possess the ability to give an order. And just as a thousand drums do not make as much noise as a single drum, and a thousand intelligences form a mob moved by instinct, so an individual is not an individual for me when he appears in the company of several of his equals, and I maintain that a head is only a head when separated from its body.

“And Baron Munchausen was never braver at war and better at killing than on the day when, the portcullis surmounted, he noticed that he had left half of his mount on the other side of the sharp girder.”

“Ha ha!” exclaimed Bosse-de-Nage appropriately; but Bishop Mendacious interrupted him to conclude:

“Well, doctor, so long as we never talk with you in the presence of a decapitated horse — and up to the present time the solipedes are cut up rather than guillotined — we may be

permitted to consider your murderous temptations as an agreeable paradox.”

Then he sent us to sleep with a macaronic Greek harangue, in which, tossing my head, I could only make out the last perfect proposition:

“. . . ΣΕΣΟΥΛΑΘΑΙ.”<sup>28</sup>

## 28

CONCERNING THE DEATH OF A NUMBER OF  
PEOPLE, AND MORE ESPECIALLY  
OF BOSSE-DE-NAGE

TO MONSIEUR DEIBLER, SYMPATHETICALLY

The little squat mower arrived and started to work. He gave such strokes with his scythe that he filled a quarter of a wagonful of hay, or more, so vigorous was he; and what is more, he took no pleasure in sharpening his scythe; but when its blade was dulled he drew it along his teeth, with a sound like f r o o o o c. Thus he saved time.

— BEROALDE DE VERVILLE,  
*HOW TO SUCCEED*, XXIV.<sup>29</sup>

After drinking, we took a walk through foggy streets, with Mendacious in the lead. Since the episcopal nature of his vestments



gave people the impression that he was probably an honest man, no one except the doctor and myself noticed that he was unhooking the shop signs with his crosier, as if inadvertently, and giving them graciously to Bosse-de-Nage to carry, the latter thanking him with the single word: "ha ha," for, as one knows, he was opposed to all idle verbiage.

And I was not yet aware of the bishop's charity in allowing the shop signs to fall down.

Suddenly the crosier's curling head began to uncurl, faced with the toughness of a gilt molding<sup>30</sup> above a horse-butcher's shop. The gliding flight hovered as an animal mask and as a twofold gaze from above and below.

Faustroll, very calm, lit a small perfumed candle which burned for seven days.

The first day, the flame was red, and revealed the categorical poison in the air, and the death of all scavengers and soldiers.

The second day, of women.

The third, of small children.

The fourth day, there was a remarkable epizootic disease among those quadrupeds considered edible on condition that they were ruminative and possessed a cloven hoof.

The saffron combustion of the fifth day decimated all cuckolds and bailiff's clerks, but I was of a superior grade.

The blue crackling of the sixth day hastened the impending end of all bicyclists, of all those at least, without exception, who

fasten their trouser cuffs with lobster claws.

The light changed into smoke on the seventh day, and Faustroll had a breathing space.

Mendacious unhooked the shop signs with his hands, after asking for a leg-up from Bosse-de-Nage.

And the fog dissipated weightlessly in centrifugal directions, before the arch of a riding school's great door; and Faustroll was overtaken again by insanity.

The bishop took to his heels, but not quickly enough to prevent Faustroll from tearing off his miter while it was still alive; whereas I was not molested by the doctor, for I was armored with my name Panmuphle.

But Faustroll crouched over the baboon, spreading his four limbs out on the ground and strangling him from behind. Bosse-de-Nage made a sign that he wished to speak, and, when the doctor had relaxed the grip of his fingers, said in two words:

"Ha ha!" and these were the last two words he uttered.

CONCERNING SOME FURTHER AND MORE  
EVIDENT MEANINGS OF THE WORDS "HA HA"

... And I'll declare  
He's mooning up some landscap'd alley where  
A *ha ha* lurks ahead. All unaware  
He won't, until he's tumbled, know it's there.

— PIRON<sup>31</sup>

We may properly treat here of the customary and succinct speech of Bosse-de-Nage, so that it may be made clear that it is with reasonable intention and not from mockery that we have always reported it in its full extent, together with the most probable cause of its premature interruption.

"HA HA," he said concisely; but we are in no way concerned with the accidental fact that he usually added nothing more.

In the first instance, it is more judicious to use the orthography AA, for the aspiration *h* was never written in the ancient languages of the world. It proclaimed in Bosse-de-Nage effort, servile and obligatory labor, and the consciousness of his inferiority.

A juxtaposed to A, with the former obviously equal to the latter, is the formula of the principle of identity: a thing is itself. It is at the same time the most excellent refutation of this very proposi-

tion, since the two A's differ in space, when we write them, if not indeed in time, just as two twins are never born together — even when issuing from the obscene hiatus of the mouth of Bosse-de-Nage.

The first A was perhaps congruent to the second, and we will therefore willingly write thus: A = A.

Pronounced quickly enough, until the letters become confounded, it is the idea of unity.

Pronounced slowly, it is the idea of duality, of echo, of distance, of symmetry, of greatness and duration, of the two principles of good and evil.

But this duality proves also that the perception of Bosse-de-Nage was notoriously discontinuous, not to say discontinuous and analytical, unsuited to all syntheses and to all adequations.

One may confidently assume that he could only perceive space in two dimensions, and was refractory to the idea of progress, implying, as it does, a spiral figure.

It would be a complicated problem to study, in addition, whether the first A was the efficient cause of the second. Let us content ourselves with noting that since Bosse-de-Nage usually uttered only AA and nothing more (AAA would be the medical formula *Amalgamate*), he had evidently no notion of the Holy Trinity, nor of all things triple, nor of the undefined, which commences at three, nor of the indeterminate, nor of the Universe, which may be defined as the Several.

Nor of anyone else. And, in fact, the day he was married, he indeed felt that his wife was chaste with him, but he could not tell whether she was a virgin.

And in his public life he never understood the use, on the boulevards, of those iron kiosks whose popular name derives from the fact that they are divided into three triangular prisms and that one can use only one-third at a time;<sup>32</sup> and he remained, until his death, branded thus by Captain Kidd:

BOSSE-DE-NAGE  
*Papio cynocephalus,*

befouling and ravaging everything indiscriminately.

We have purposely omitted to say, these meanings being very well-known, that *ha ha* is a ditched gap in a wall at the end of a garden path, an armed pit or military well into which chrome steel bridges may collapse, and that AA may still be read on the medals struck at Metz. If Faustroll's skiff had had a bowsprit, *ha ha* would have designated a special sail placed beneath the jibs.<sup>33</sup>

BOOK FIVE

OFFICIALLY

30

CONCERNING A THOUSAND VARIED MATTERS

TO PIERRE LOTI

But the bishop, decapitated of his miter, was in a bad way of business, being unaccustomed to attend to matters *nisi in pontificalibus*. For which reason, he entered his closet, victualled with a thousand varied matters suitable to encourage a crap.

On the little table where ordinarily rolls of paper unfold themselves, a fat little bust of a jolly little man with a scrubby little beard paraded in beetle-green.

The jolly little man waddles from right to left on the hemisphericity of his base, and the bishop would have recognized, had he been a member of the expedition at that time, the sprinting legless

cripple expelled from Fragrant isle. I found out later that he had met him, at less expense and looking even more like himself, on the vulgar clock in the sitting room of an old lady. The palmate legless cripple raised himself up on the artificial heels of his bowl and offered the bishop courteously a pad of squared paper as an abstersive:

"I had reserved it *for my mother*," he said, "but" (pointing to the bishop's amethyst), "as is the case with her, *the Christian faith permits you to read with serenity the most somber subjects*. You have not yet made use of my services in this way, but you will see that it is *even more me*."<sup>34</sup>

"This paper is then going. . .?" said the bishop.

"Read perseveringly with all your eyes, nay even with your most secret eye. This paper is sovereign. *It would b. . . you so, if only you knew!*"<sup>35</sup>

"You have decided me," said Mendacious.

"Take your place, then, among these piles of less efficacious suppositories. It is time: *I alone can still distinguish behind nearly all these accumulated words* THE BOTTOMLESS ABYSS."<sup>36</sup>

He jumped nimbly into the designated pit, and like an iron gauntlet sliding down the banisters of a staircase, the reverberation of his zinc bowl died away along the double turn of the depository pipe: but the verses of Messrs. Déroulède and Yan-Nibor,<sup>37</sup> rolled inside this concave *mirliton*, supported him with their feet.

*Reading by the Bishop  
while going about his business.*

#### DEATH OF LATENT OBSCURE

"Brr. . . brr. . . brr. . . brrr. . . chen. . . hatsch. . . *Latent Obscure is leaving us*. . . Brrr. . . brrr. . . *The moment of agony has been consummated*. . . brr. . . brr. . . *The momentary oblivion induced by sleep*. A verse. *Must she then die Latent Obscure*. . . Heuh. . . eheuh. . . *It is freezing hard*. . . *general sinister impression*. . . brr. . . brr. . . *she is already halfway into the abyss*. . . heuh heuh. . . *Bitter tears*. . . *the doctor says that she will not last the night*. . . Off with you, frog! down into the shades below. — *Her life is drawing to a close*" (Veiled drum). "*The cold bores into one's bones*" (bis). "Tra ratatat!" (The bishop hums joyously.) "In the train of a regiment, *our faithful Melanie, who comes from a stock of devoted old servants, who have practically become members of the family*. . ."

"Courage, you are doing fine," cried out the little man from below. "Carry on, do not be afraid of inconveniencing me: *I shall sleep right next door in the Arab room*."

"*The bitter struggle of the end*," agreed the bishop, still reading; "brrr. . . brrr. . . *agonizing nightmare*. *Horrible moment*. Let us read with the other side's eye: *the last ritual cleansing, the poor corpse, the horrible little bed, the great bed, the pale forehead, the dear face, this terrible little bed*."

"We rise and descend like ghosts," panted the leaves in their successive service.

"These GREEN PALMS," continued the bishop remorselessly, "placed crosswise on the breast. . ."

"Thank you for your good wishes," telephoned the inhabitant of the pipe. "I am delighted to see that you are not leaving us yet, seated at the top of my chimney. *The pale pale winter's day. . . serene countenance. . . supreme image, so pretty!*"

"Vague impressions," continued Mendacious modestly.

"The pale features, the gentle smile! Latent Obscure smiles so softly. . ."

"Heuh! eheuh. . . Obsessive impression, infinitely sad. . . Brrr . . . brr. . . ratatat!

"The dear voices and the dear sounds. . . good smiling eyes, so sad. . ."

"LATENT OBSCURE HAS LEFT US!!! thanks be to God," exclaimed the bishop, getting up.

"Thanks," echoed the little man. "*A warm sun. Open windows. Big cupboard, tiny box. I am smoking an oriental cigarette!*"

"Perhaps this is the last time," said the bishop sitting down again, suddenly forced to resume his reading, and reading with extreme concentration, "*that regret for Latent Obscure welled up in me with that intensity and in that peculiar form which brings tears, for all is suddenly calm, all becomes normal, forgotten, and there is a veil, a mist, an ash, something indescribable thrown as if in haste, brrrrr . . . and suddenly,*

of the memory of those beings who have returned to the ETERNAL NOTHINGNESS, rat, tat, ratatat. . . Bounty! bounty! In splashes, in fire and in blood! After the fashion of the rhinoceros. Without stopping. The rosary for the dead. Brrr. . . brr. . . I'm hypnotizing<sup>38</sup> myself. Ho-hu, ho-hu! Long as a lance."

"Is your name Kaka-San?" asked the little man after a certain while.

"No, Mendacious, marine bishop, at your service. Why?"

"Because Kaka-San did some very dirty things in her box during the quite pardonable unconstraint of her last hours."<sup>39</sup>

### 3 I

#### CONCERNING THE MUSICAL JET

"How do they call thee?"

"Chav-turd," quoth Panurge.

— PANTAGRUEL, III, 25

Now, it is necessary to know that the valve installed at the neck of the pit's mouth was of thin rubber; and to be familiar with the discoveries of Mr. Chichester Bell, cousin of Mr. Graham Bell, the illustrious inventor of the telephone, one should be aware that a stream of water falling upon an india-rubber sheet stretched over the upper end of a tube constitutes a microphone, that a liquid jet

handwriting colored is  
not the only impossible  
adjective. When she's  
hair is elbow bruised

breaks up at certain rates more easily than at others and, according to its nature, will respond to certain sounds in preference to others; finally, one should not be scandalized if we mention that the bishop's loins secreted this quite unconsciously musical jet whose amplified vibrations he perceived at the moment of taking leave of his reading.

*Voices of little women\** arose, glorifying the little man.

THE LITTLE WOMEN (*piano, common time, three sharps*), some of them GENTLY (*E-G-C-E . . . B-E-B pedal*):

"May your grief be soothed by our songs! (*F-A sharp*). Others: May your dire sorrow (*G-B sharp*). Fly away to the low murmur of the waves (*five flats, pedal, CRYSTALLINE*). . .

"Stranger (*G natural-B*), if you would charm our solitude, one must change your name (GENTLY) whose syllables are too rude, And give you another (*A flat*) like the mountain flowers (*G sharp, B natural*)."

Some women propose the name: "Atari." Others: "Fei." The L.W.: "No! (*Pedal. Two quaver-rests*) Lo-ti (*B-F, pedal, organ note*)."

The L.W.: "Henceforth (*ped. ped.*) let him be named Lo-ti." All surrounding him: "It is the moment of baptism! (RATHER SOLEMNLY). In the land of songs, In the land of loving (*crotchet-rest*), Lo-ti (*E flat, C, crotchet-rest, cresc.*), Lo-: (*C*) ti (*E flat*) shall be your supreme name (SIC)."

\* *Sic. The Isle of Dreams*, lyric by Reynaldo Hahn, words by P. Loti, A. Alexandre and G. Hartmann. [Author's note.]

THE LITTLE WOMEN (CONT.): "In the land of songs, In the land of loving, Loti, Loti shall be your supreme name (*two crotchet-rests*). Lo-ti (*E flat, E flat*) we name you, Lo-ti we name you, and (*p. p.*) we ble- (*in the key of b flat*) -ess you! (*Great uproar*)."

The valve opened, the music ceased; the aspersion being completed, the bishop resecured his ring, and laid on hands, confirming by this approved gesture the benediction of the L.W. Then he simply cut off the jet.

## 32

### HOW ONE OBTAINED CANVAS

TO PIERRE BONNARD

Faustroll carried out a subfumigation, and the specter of Bosse-de-Nage — who, having only existed imaginarily, could not really die — manifested itself, said "ha ha" respectfully, then was silent, awaiting orders.

I discovered that day a new meaning of this invaluable word, namely that the  $\alpha$ , beginning of all things, is interrogative, for it awaits an exposition in present space, and the appendix, greater than itself, of a sequence in duration.

"Here are a few billions in cash," said the doctor, rummaging in his ruby-buttoned waistcoat pockets. "You will ask a policeman the way to the National Department Store, called *Au Luxe Bourgeois*,<sup>40</sup> and there you will buy several ells of canvas.

"You will convey my compliments to the department managers Bouguereau, Bonnat, Detaille, Henner, J.-P. Laurens and Tartempion, to their horde of assistants and to the other subsidiary salesmen. And so as not to waste time in the grip of their haggling, you will, without a word. . ."

"Apart from *ha ha*," I insinuated maliciously.

". . . Pour over each of them a pile of gold, until their mouths are silenced beneath its rising tide. A sufficient payment will be seventy-six million guineas for M. Bouguereau; seventeen thousand seraphs for M. Henner; eighty thousand maravedi for M. Bonnat, since his canvas is stamped, in place of a trademark, with the figure of a poor man; thirty-eight dozen florins for M. J.-P. Laurens; forty-three centimes for M. Tartempion; and five billion francs, as well as a tip in kopeks, for M. Detaille. You will throw the remaining coppers into the faces of the other clowns."

"Ha ha," said Bosse-de-Nage to show that he had understood, and prepared to depart.

"This is all very well," I said to Faustroll, "but would it not be more honorable to allocate this gold toward the costs of my proceedings, and if necessary abstract the quantities of canvas by sheer cunning?"

"I will explain to you what my gold really is," said the doctor, winking. And to Bosse-de-Nage:

"One last word: so as to wash the shoptalk out of your prognathous jaws, enter a small room arranged for this purpose. There the ikons of the Saints shine forth. Bare your head before the *Poor Fisherman*, bow before the Monets, genuflect before the Degas and the Whistlers, grovel in the presence of Cézanne, prostrate yourself at the feet of Renoir and lick the sawdust of the spittoons at the foot of the frame of *Olympia!*"<sup>41</sup>

"Ha ha," agreed Bosse-de-Nage wholeheartedly, and his hurried exit carried with it the most ardent protestations of his zeal.

Turning toward me, the doctor continued:

"When Vincent van Gogh had unluted his crucible, and cooled the integrated matter of the true philosopher's stone, and when, on this first day of the world, all things were transmuted into the sovereign metal at the contact of the marvelous become real, the artisan of the Great Work contented himself with running his strong fingers through the pointed sumptuousness of his luminous beard, and said: 'How beautiful is yellow!'"<sup>42</sup>

"I could easily transmute all things, for I also possess this stone" (he showed it to me, set in one of his rings), "but I have found by experiment that the benefit extends only to those whose brain is that selfsame stone" (through a watchglass embedded in the fontanel of his skull he showed me this stone a second time). . .



Bosse-de-Nage returned with eleven scenery vans filled with vertical stacks of unredeemed canvases.<sup>43</sup>

"Do you think, my friend," ended Faustroll, "that one could possibly give gold to these people which would remain gold and worthy of being gold in their wallets?"

"That same in which they are now submerged will also spread the well-adjusted streams of its flux over their canvas. It is young and virgin, in every way comparable to the matter with which babies beshit themselves."

And after aiming the beneficent lance of the painting machine at the center of these quadrilaterals dishonored by irregular colors, he appointed to the control of this mechanical monster M. Henri Rousseau,<sup>44</sup> artist painter decorator, called the Customs-officer, mentioned with honor and medal-holder, who for sixty-three days embellished most painstakingly the impotent diversity of the grimaces from the National Department Store with the uniform stillness of chaos.

## A VISIT TO LUCULLUS

### 33

#### CONCERNING THE TERMES<sup>45</sup>

Now, Faustroll was sleeping next to Visited.

The great bed, carved out by knife, squatted upon the nakedness of the earth, that ancient part of the world's nebula, and poured upon the ground the worm-eaten hours of its sand.

Amid this rhythmical silence, Visited desired to discover whether, underneath the spiral-painted tapestry, Faustroll, who had loved her like the infinite series of numbers, possessed a heart capable of pumping out with its open and closed fist the projection of circling blood.

The watch's tick-tock, like the scratching on a table of a fingernail, a pen nib or a nail, beat near her ear. She counted nine strokes; the pulsation stopped, then continued up to eleven. . .

The bishop's daughter heard her own sleep before any further beats, and these did not disturb her, for she did not survive the frequency of Priapus.

On the oak of the decrepit bed, the termes, comparable to the invisibility of a red louse with yellow eyes, lent the isochronism of the throbbing of its head to the simulation of Faustroll's heart.

### 34

CLINAMEN<sup>46</sup>

TO PAUL FORT

. . . Meanwhile, after there was no one left in the world, the Painting Machine, animated inside by a system of weightless springs, revolved in azimuth in the iron hall of the Palace of Machines, the only monument standing in a deserted and razed Paris; like a spinning top, it dashed itself against the pillars, swayed and veered in infinitely varied directions, and followed its own whim in blowing onto the walls' canvas the succession of primary colors ranged according to the tubes of its stomach, like a *pousse-l'amour* in a bar, the lighter colors nearest to the surface. In the sealed palace which alone ruffled this dead smoothness, this mod-

ern deluge of the universal Seine, the unforeseen beast *Clinamen* ejaculated onto the walls of its universe:

#### NEBUCHADNEZZAR CHANGED INTO BEAST

What a beautiful sunset! or rather it is the moon, like a porthole in a hoghead of wine greater than a ship, or like the oily stopper of an Italian flask. The sky is a sulphurous gold so red that there is really nothing missing but a bird five hundred meters high capable of wafting us a breeze from the clouds. The architecture, the very type of all these flames, is most lively and even rather moving, but too romantic! There are towers with eyes and beaks and turrets capped like little policemen. Two watching women sway at the wind-swept windows like drying straitjackets. Thus the bird:

The great Angel, who is not angel but Principality, swoops down, after a flight exactly as black as a martin's, the color of the metal of a roofer's anvil. With one point on the roof, the compasses close and open up again, describing a circle around Nebuchadnezzar. One arm chants the metamorphosis. The king's hair does not stand on end, but droops like a walrus's wet whiskers; the pointed ends of his hair make no effort to squeeze shut the sensitive pimples which people this limp seaweed with zoophytes reflecting all the stars: tiny wings flutter to the rhythm of a toad's webbed feet. Pitiful pleas swim up against the stream of tears. The eyes' sorrowful pupils, in their ascent, crawl toward the knees of

the wine-lees colored sky. but the angel has enchained the newborn monster in the blood of the vitreous palace and thrown him into the bottom of a bottle.

#### THE RIVER AND THE MEADOW

The river has a fat, soft face for the smack of oars, a neck with many wrinkles, a blue skin with green downy hair. Between its arms, pressed to its heart, it holds the little Island shaped like a chrysalis. The Meadow in its green gown is asleep, its head in the hollow of its shoulder and neck.

#### TOWARD THE CROSS

At one end of the Infinite, in the form of a rectangle, is the white cross where the demons have been executed together with the unrepentant Thief. There is a barrier around the rectangle, white, with five-pointed stars studding the bars. Down the rectangle's diagonal comes the angel, praying calm and white like the wave's foam. And the horned fish, a monkey trick of the divine Ichthys, surge back toward the cross driven through the Dragon, who is green except for the pink of his bifid tongue. A blood-covered creature with hair standing on end and lenticular eyes is coiled around the tree. A green Pierrot rushes up, weaving from side to side and turning cartwheels. And all the devils, in the shape of mandrills or clowns, spread their caudal fins out wide like acrobats' legs, and, imploring the inexorable angel (*Woan't yew p'-lay*

*with me, mistub Loyal?*),<sup>47</sup> plod toward the Passion, shaking their clowns' straw wigs encrusted with sea-salt.

#### GOD FORBIDS ADAM AND EVE TO TOUCH THE TREE OF GOOD AND EVIL. THE ANGEL LUCIFER RUNS AWAY

God is young and gentle, with a rosy halo. His robe is blue and his gestures sweeping. The tree's base is twisted and its leaves aslant. The other trees are doing nothing apart from being green. Adam adores and looks to see if Eve also adores. They are on their knees. The angel Lucifer, old and looking like time and like the old man of the sea lapidated by Sinbad, plunges with his gilded horns toward the lateral ether.

#### LOVE

The soul is wheedled by Love who looks exactly like an iridescent veil and assumes the masked face of a chrysalis. It walks upon inverted skulls. Behind the wall where it hides, claws brandish weapons. It is baptized with poison. Ancient monsters, the wall's substance, laugh into their green beards. The heart remains red and blue, violet in the artificial absence of the iridescent veil that it is weaving.

#### THE CLOWN

His round hump hides the world's roundness, as his red cheek rends the lions on the tapestry. Clubs and diamonds are embroi-

dered on the crimson silk of his garments, and toward the sun and the grass he makes a benedictory aspersion with his tinkling aspergillum.

“FARTHER! FARTHER!” CRIES GOD TO THE MEEK

The mountain is red, the sun and the sky are red. A finger points toward its peak. The rocks surge upward, the absolute summit lost to view. The bodies of those who have not reached it come tumbling down again head first. One falls backward on to his hands, dropping his guitar. Another waits with his back to the mountain, near his bottles. One lies down on the road, his eyes still climbing. The finger still points, and the sun waits for obedience before it will set.

FEAR CREATES SILENCE

Nothing is terrifying, if it be not a widowed gallows, a bridge with dry piers, and a shadow which is content to be black. Fear, turning away its head, keeps its eyelids lowered and the lips of the stone mask closed.

IN THE NETHER REGIONS

The fire of the nether regions is of liquid blood, and one can see down to the very depths. The heads of suffering have sunk down, and an arm is raised from each body like a tree from the sea bed, stretched to where the fire is abated. There, a serpent darts his

venom. All this blood is aflame and held within the rock whence people are hurled. And there is a red angel for whom one single gesture suffices, which signifies: FROM TOP TO BOTTOM.

FROM BETHLEHEM TO THE GARDEN OF OLIVES

It is a little red star, above the crib of the Mother and Child, and above the ass's cross. The sky is blue. The little star becomes a halo. God has lifted the weight of the cross from the animal and carries it on his brand new man's shoulder. The black cross becomes rose, the blue sky turns violet. The road is as straight and white as the arm of one crucified

Alas! the cross has become bright red. It is a blade steeped in blood from the wound. Above the body, at the end of the road's arm, are eyes and a beard which bleed also, and above his image in the wooden mirror, Christ spells out: J-N-R-I.

JUST A WITCH

Her hump to the rear, belly to the fore, neck twisted, hair whistling in the flight of the broomstick with which she has transfixed herself, she goes under the claws, vegetation of the bright red sky, and the index of the road to the Devil.

EMERGING FROM HIS BLISS, GOD CREATES THE WORLDS

God arises haloed by a blue pentagram, blesses and sows and makes the sky bluer. Fire glows red from the idea of ascension,

and the gold of the stars mirrors the halo. The suns are great four-leaved clovers, in bloom, like the cross. And the only thing not created is the white robe of Form itself.

#### THE DOCTORS AND THE LOVER

In the bed, calm as a green sea, there is a floating of outstretched arms, or rather these are not the arms but the two divisions of the head of hair, vegetating upon the dead man. And the center of this head of hair curves like a dome and undulates like the movement of a leech. Faces, mushrooms bloated with rottenness, spring up evenly and red in the windowpanes of agony. The first doctor, a larger orb behind this dome, trapezoidal in character, becomes slit-eyed and decks his cheeks with bunting. The second rejoices in the external equilibrium of spectacles, twin spheres, and weighs his diagnostic in the libration of dumbbells. The third old man veils himself with the white wing of his hair and announces desperately that beauty returns to the skull by polishing his own. The fourth, without understanding, watches. . . the lover who, against the current of the stream of tears, sails in pursuit of the soul, his eyebrows joined upward by their inner points in the shape of cranes in flight, or the communion of the two palms of one praying or swimming, in the attitude of daily devotion called by the Brahmins KHURMOOKUM.

#### BOOK SEVEN

### KHURMOOKUM

*(The Sundhya, or the daily Prayers of the Brahmins).<sup>48</sup>*

#### 35

#### CONCERNING THE GREAT SHIP MOUR-DE-ZENCLE<sup>49</sup>

The sieve, which would have burst into flames like a puerile resin in the city quietly consumed by fire and death, reared up the head of its prow under the pull of Faustroll's tiller, and its gesture was the opposite of the charitable crosier of Mendacious.

The meshed base, unsinkable because of its oily coating, rested upon the waves' denticulation like a sturgeon upon several harpoons, and beneath it was a keyboard of water and air alternately. The disappearance preceding the apparition of the corpses of the seven day's murder squinted toward us from the other side of the reticular bars protecting us.

The toad from the isle of Shades snapped up the sun for its supper, and the water was night. That is to say, the banks disappeared and the sky and the river became comparable and undifferentiated, and the skiff became the pupil of a great eye, or a stationary balloon, with a dizziness to left and to right whose feathers I was ordered to stroke with my two oars.

Immobile barrels stemmed the current at express speed, rolled into balls.

And to escape these things, as one seeks refuge under one's bedclothes in the once-and-for-all blackness, Faustroll maneuvered the skiff into an aqueduct six hundred meters wide along which the canal barges were vomited into the river.

*(Here ends the narrative of Panmuphle)*

The great ship Mour-de-Zencle, which means Horse-muzzle-bearing-scythe-shaped-patches, loomed up on the immediate horizon like a black sun, having the appearance under the bright arch at the tunnel's end of an eye without its leather blinker, approaching the fixity of its own painted pupils, green in a yellow iris. On the invisible towpath, like a ledge on the vault's brink, cloped the front horseshoes of the file of four animals bearing the sign of death, treading awkwardly with their hooves.

With his topaz-beringed forefinger, moistened in his mouth, Faustroll scraped the paraffin from the bottom of the boat. The

artesian well (hell was in Artois that day) swirled hissing around their feet, with a noise opposite to the deglutition of an emptying bathtub. The sieve rocked in its last pulsation. The penultimate and the last meshes where the water wove its barnacles and let its double hymen be violated by anti-peristaltic tongues, were named the mouths of Panmuphle and Faustroll. The copper shuttle glittering with its setting of air bubbles, and the jaws exhaling the breath from their bones, imitated coins falling in water or the water spider's nest. Faustroll, procuring fresh canvas in the name of God, steeped in the painting machine's lustral water a different sky to that of Tyndall,<sup>50</sup> then joined his palms in an attitude of praying or swimming, in the manner of daily devotion called *Khurmookum* by the Brahmins. The great ship Mour-de-Zencle passed like a black iron over an ironing board; and the echo of the sixteen horny fingers of the preterite horses whispered KHURMOOKUM beneath the vault's exit, fading away with the soul.

Thus did Doctor Faustroll make the gesture of dying, at the age of sixty-three.

## CONCERNING THE LINE

*The bishop reads the letter from God*

TO FÉLIX FÉNEON

In the manuscript, of which Panmuphle, interrupted by the monotonous prolixity of the baboon, could only decipher the prolegomena, Faustroll had noted a small fragment of the Beautiful that he knew, and a small fragment of the True that he knew, during the syzygy of words; and one could have reconstructed, through this facet, all art and all science, which is to say All; but can one tell if All is a regular crystal, rather than more probably a monster (Faustroll defined the universe as that which is the exception to oneself)?

Thus cogitated the marine bishop as he swam over the shipwreck of the mechanical boat, over the sunken quintessential works, over the carcass of Panmuphle and the body of Faustroll.

However, he remembered that, following the proposition of the learned Professor Cayley,<sup>51</sup> a single curve drawn in chalk on a blackboard two and a half meters long can detail all the atmospheres of a season, all the cases of an epidemic, all the haggling of the hosiers of every town, the phrases and pitches of all the sounds

of all the instruments and of all the voices of a hundred singers and two hundred musicians, together with the phases, according to the position of each listener or participant, which the ear is unable to seize.

And behold, the wallpaper of Faustroll's body was unrolled by the saliva and teeth of the water.

Like a musical score, all art and all science were written in the curves of the limbs of the ultrasexagenarian ephebe, and their progression to an infinite degree was prophesied therein. For, just as Professor Cayley recorded the past in the two dimensions of a black surface, so the progress of the solid future entwined the body in spirals. The Morgue harbored for two days on its slab<sup>52</sup> the book revealed by God concerning the glorious truth spread out through the three (four or  $n$  for some people) directions of space.

Meanwhile, Faustroll, finding his soul to be abstract and naked, donned the realm of the unknown dimension.



BOOK EIGHT

ETERNITY

TO LOUIS DUMUR

*Leves gustus ad philosophiam movere fortasse ad atheismum,  
sed pleniore haustus ad religionem reducere.*<sup>53</sup>

— FRANCIS BACON

37

CONCERNING THE MEASURING ROD,  
THE WATCH AND THE TUNING FORK

*Telepathic letter from Doctor Faustroll to Lord Kelvin*

“My dear colleague,

“It is a long time since I have sent you news of myself; but I do not think you will have imagined that I was dead. Death is only for common people. It is a fact, nevertheless, that I am no longer on earth. Where I am I have only discovered a very short time ago. For we are both of the opinion that, if one can measure what one is talking about and express it in numbers, which constitute the

sole reality, then one has some knowledge of one's subject. Now, up to the present moment I knew myself to be *elsewhere* than on earth, in the same way that I know that quartz is situated elsewhere, in the realm of hardness, and less honorably so, than the ruby; the ruby elsewhere than the diamond; the diamond than the posterior callosities of Bosse-de-Nage; and their thirty-two skin-folds — more numerous than his teeth, if one includes the wisdom teeth — than the prose of Latent Obscure.

“But was I elsewhere in terms of date or of position, before or to the side, after or nearer? I was in that place where one finds oneself after having left time and space: the infinite eternal, Sir.

“It was natural that, having lost my books, my skiff of metallic cloth, the society of Bosse-de-Nage and Monsieur René-Isidore Panmuphle, bailiff, my senses, the earth, and those two old Kantian aspects of thought, I should suffer the same anguish of isolation as a residual molecule several centimeters distant from the others in a good modern vacuum of Messrs. Tait and Dewar. And, even then, perhaps the molecule knows that it is several centimeters away! For one single centimeter, the only valid sign for me of space, being measurable and a means of measuring, and for the mean solar second, in terms of which the heart of my terrestrial body beat — for these things I would have given my soul, Sir, despite the usefulness to me of this commodity in informing you of these curiosities.

“The body is a more necessary vehicle because it supports

one's clothes, and through clothes one's pockets. I had left in one of my pockets by mistake my centimeter, an authentic copy in brass of the traditional standard, more portable than the earth or even the terrestrial quadrant, which permits the wandering and posthumous souls of interplanetary savants to concern themselves no further with this old globe, nor even with C.G.S.,<sup>54</sup> as far as measurements of size are concerned, thanks to MM. Méchain and Delambre.

"As for my mean solar second, were I to have remained on the earth I still could not have been certain of retaining it safely and of being able to measure time validly through its medium.

"If in the course of a few million years I have not terminated my pataphysical studies, it is certain that the period of the earth's rotation around its axis and of its revolution around the sun will both be very different from what they are now. A good watch, which I would have had running all this time, would have cost me an exorbitant price, and, in any case, I do not perform secular experiments, have nothing but contempt for continuity, and consider it more esthetic to keep Time itself in my pocket, or the unity of time, which is its snapshot.

"For these reasons, I possessed a vibrator better arranged for permanence and for absolute accuracy than the hairspring of a chronometer, one whose period of vibration would have retained the same value over a certain number of million years with an error of less than 1:1,000. A tuning fork. Its period had been carefully

determined, before I embarked in the skiff, according to your instructions, by our colleague Professor Macleod, in terms of mean solar seconds, with the prongs of the tuning fork being pointed successively upward, downward and toward the horizon, in order to eliminate the least effect of terrestrial gravity.

"I no longer had even my tuning fork. Imagine the perplexity of a man outside time and space, who has lost his watch, and his measuring rod, and his tuning fork. I believe, Sir, that it is indeed this state which constitutes death.

"But I suddenly remembered your teachings and my own previous experiments. Since I was simply NOWHERE, or SOMEWHERE, which is the same thing, I found a substance with which to make a piece of glass, having met various demons, including the Sorting Demon of Maxwell,<sup>55</sup> who succeeded in grouping particular types of movement in one continuous widespread liquid (what you call small elastic solids or molecules): a substance as plentiful as one could desire, in the shape of silicate of aluminum. I have engraved the lines and lit the two candles, albeit with a little time and perseverance, having had to work without even the aid of flint implements. I have seen the two rows of spectrums, and the yellow spectrum has returned my centimeter to me by virtue of the figure  $5.892 \times 10^{-5}$ .<sup>56</sup>

"Now that we are happy and comfortable, and on dry land as is my atavistic habit, since I carry on me the one thousand millionth part of a quarter of the earth's circumference,<sup>57</sup> which is

more honorable than being attached to the surface of the globe by attraction, permit me, I pray, to note a few impressions for you.

“Eternity appears to me in the image of an immobile ether, which consequently is not luminiferous. I would describe luminiferous ether as *circularly* mobile and perishable. And I deduce from Aristotle (*Treatise on the Heavens*) that it is appropriate to write ETHERNITY.

“Luminiferous ether together with all material particles, which I can easily distinguish — my astral body having good pataphysical eyes — possesses the form, at first sight, of a system of rigid links joined together, and having rapidly rotating flywheels pivoted on some of the links. Thus it fulfils exactly the mathematical ideal worked out by Navier, Poisson, and Cauchy. Furthermore, it constitutes an elastic solid capable of determining the magnetic rotation of the plane of polarization of light discovered by Faraday. At my posthumous leisure I shall arrange it to have zero moment of momentum as a whole and to reduce it to the state of a mere spring balance.

“Moreover, I am of the opinion that one could reduce considerably the complexity of this spring balance or this luminiferous ether by substituting for the linked gyrostats various systems of circulation of liquids of infinite volume through perforations in infinitely small solids.

“It will lose none of its qualities as a result of these modifications. Ether has always appeared to me, to the touch, to be as

elastic as jelly and yielding under pressure like Scottish shoemakers' wax.”

## 38

## CONCERNING THE SUN AS A COOL SOLID

*Second letter to Lord Kelvin*

“The sun is a cool, solid, and homogeneous globe. Its surface is divided into squares of one meter, which are the bases of long, inverted pyramids, thread-cut, 696,999 kilometers long, their points one kilometer from the center. Each is mounted on a screw and its movement toward the center would cause, *if I had the time*, the rotation of a paddle at the top end of each screw shaft, in a few meters of viscous fluid, with which the whole surface is thinly covered. . .

“I was quite disinterested in this mechanical spectacle, not having found again my mean solar second and being distraught at the loss of my tuning fork. But I took a piece of brass and fashioned a wheel in which I cut two thousand teeth, copying everything which Monsieur Fizeau, Lord Rayleigh, and Mrs. Sidgwick had achieved in similar circumstances.

“Suddenly, the second was rediscovered in the absolute

measure of 9,413 kilometers per mean solar second of the Siemens unit,<sup>58</sup> and the pyramids, forced to descend on their threads since they found themselves, like myself, in the movement of time, were obliged to come into equilibrium, in order to remain stable, by borrowing a sufficient quantity of Sir Humphry Davy's repulsive motion; and the fixed matter, the screw shafts and the screw nuts disappeared. The sun became viscous and began to turn on its axis in twenty-five-day cycles; in a few years you will see sunspots on it, and a few quarter-centuries will determine their periods. Soon, in its great age, it will shrink in a diminution of three-quarters.

"And now I am being initiated into the science of all things (you will receive three new fragments from two of my forthcoming books), having reconquered all perception, which consists in duration and size. I understand that the weight of my brass wheel, which I clasp between the hebetude of the abstract fingers of my astral body, is the fourth power of eight meters per hour; I hope, deprived of my senses, to recognize color, temperature, taste, and various qualities other than *the six*,<sup>59</sup> in the actual number of revolutions per second. . .

"Farewell: I can glimpse already, perpendicularly to the sun, the cross with a blue center, the red brushes toward the nadir and the zenith, and the horizontal gold of foxes' tails."<sup>60</sup>

## ACCORDING TO IBICRATES THE GEOMETER

*(Little sketches on Pataphysics after Ibicrates the Geometer and his divine teacher Sophrotatos the Armenian, translated and brought to light by Doctor Faustroll.)*

## I

*Fragment of the Dialogue upon the Erotic*

## MATHETES

Tell me, o Ibicrates, thou whom we have named the Geometer because thou knowest all things by the means of lines drawn in different directions, and hast given us the veritable portrait of three persons of God in three escutcheons which are the quart essence of Tarot symbols, the second being barred with bastardy and the *fourth* revealing the distinction and evil engraved in the wood of the tree of knowledge, I hope most ardently, if it pleaseth thee, to know thy thoughts upon love, thou who hast deciphered the imperishable because unknown fragments, inscribed in red on sulphurous papyrus, of the Pataphysics of Sophrotatos the Armenian. Answer, I pray thee, for I shall question thee, and thou wilt instruct me.

## IBICRATES

That at least is exactly true, o Mathetes. Then speak, therefore.

MATHETES

Before all else, having noticed how all the philosophers have incarnated love in beings and have expressed it in different symbols of contingency, instruct me, o Ibicrates, in the eternal significance of these.

IBICRATES

The Greek poets, o Mathetes, corbeled the forehead of Eros with a horizontal bandelet, which is the bend or fess of the blazon, and the sign Minus of those who study mathematics. And Eros being the son of Aphrodite, his hereditary arms were ostentative of woman. And contradictorily Egypt erected its steles and obelisks perpendicularly to the cruciferous horizon, thus creating the sign *Plus*, which is male. The juxtaposition of the two signs of the binary and the ternary gives the shape of the letter H, which is Chronos, father of Time or Life, and thus embraces mankind. For the Geometer, these two signs cancel each other out or impregnate each other, and there results simply their progeny, which becomes egg or zero, all the more identical because they are contrary. And in the matter of the dispute between the sign Plus and the sign Minus, the Reverend Father Ubu, of the Society of Jesus, ex-king of Poland, has written a great tome entitled *Caesar-Antichrist*,<sup>61</sup> in which is to be found the sole practical demonstration of the identity of opposites, by means of the mechanical device called *physick-stick*.

MATHETES

Is this possible, o Ibicrates?

IBICRATES

Absolutely indeed, veritably. And the third abstract sign of the tarots, according to Sophrotatos the Armenian, is what we call the Club, which is the Holy Ghost in his four directions, the two wings, the tail, and the head of the bird; or, reversed, Lucifer erect horned with his belly and his two wings, like the medicinal cuttlefish; more particularly, at least, when one eliminates from the latter object all negative — that is to say, horizontal — lines; or, thirdly, it represents the Tau or the cross, emblem of the religion of charity and love; or, finally, the phallus which is dactylically triple, in truth, o Mathetes

MATHETES

Then to some extent in our temples today, love may still be considered to be God, although, I agree, in somewhat abstruse forms, o Ibicrates?

IBICRATES

The tetragon of Sophrotatos, contemplating itself, inscribes within itself another tetragon half as great as itself, and evil is the symmetrical and necessary reflection of good, these being the unity of two ideas, or the idea of the number two; good, in consequence,

to a certain degree, indeed, I believe, or indifferent at the very least, o Mathetes. The tetragon, being hermaphroditic, engenders God by interior intuition, while Evil, likewise hermaphroditic, engenders parturition. . .

#### 4 ①

### PANTAPHYSICS<sup>62</sup> AND CATACHEMY

#### II

#### *Further fragment*

God transcendent is trigonal and the soul transcendent theogonal, consequently trigonal also.

God immanent is trihedral and the soul immanent equally trihedral.

There are three souls (*cf.* Plato).

Man is tetrahedral because his souls are not independent.

Therefore he is a solid, and God is spirit.

If souls are independent, man is God (MORAL SCIENCE).

*Dialogue between the three thirds of the number three.*

MAN: The three persons are the three souls of God.

DEUS: *Tres animae sunt tres personae hominis.*

TOGETHER: *Homo est Deus.*

#### 4 II

### CONCERNING THE SURFACE OF GOD

God is, by definition, without dimension; it is permissible, however, for the clarity of our exposition, and though he possesses no dimensions, to endow him with any number of them greater than zero, if these dimensions vanish on both sides of our identities. We shall content ourselves with two dimensions, so that these flat geometrical signs may easily be written down on a sheet of paper.

Symbolically God is signified by a triangle, but the three Persons should not be regarded as being either its angles or its sides. They are *the three apexes* of another equilateral triangle circumscribed around the traditional one. This hypothesis conforms to the revelations of Anna Katherina Emmerick, who saw the cross (which we may consider to be the *symbol of the Verb of God*) in the form of a Y, a fact which she explains only by the physical reason that no arm of human length could be outstretched far enough to reach the nails of the branches of a Tau.

Therefore, POSTULATE:

Until we are furnished with more ample information and for greater ease in our provisional estimates, let us suppose God to have the shape and symbolic appearance of three equal straight lines of length *a*, emanating from the same point and having between them angles of 120 degrees. From the space enclosed



between these lines, or from the triangle obtained by joining the three farthest points of these straight lines, we propose to calculate the surface.

Let  $x$  be the median extension of one of the Persons  $a$ ,  $2y$  the side of the triangle to which it is perpendicular,  $N$  and  $P$  the extensions of the straight line  $(a+x)$  in both directions *ad infinitum*.

Thus we have:

$$x = \infty - N - a - P.$$

But

$$N = \infty - 0$$

and

$$P = 0.$$

Therefore

$$\begin{aligned} x &= \infty - (\infty - 0) - a - 0 = \infty - \infty + 0 - a - 0 \\ x &= -a. \end{aligned}$$

In another respect, the right triangle whose sides are  $a$ ,  $x$ , and  $y$  give us

$$a^2 = x^2 + y^2.$$

By substituting for  $x$  its value of  $(-a)$  one arrives at

$$a^2 = (-a)^2 + y^2 = a^2 + y^2.$$

Whence

$$y^2 = a^2 - a^2 = 0$$

and

$$y \sqrt{0}.$$

Therefore the surface of the equilateral triangle having for bisectors of its angles the three straight lines  $a$  will be

$$\begin{aligned} S &= y(x+a) = \sqrt{0}(-a+a) \\ S &= 0\sqrt{0}. \end{aligned}$$

COROLLARY: At first consideration of the radical  $\sqrt{0}$ , we can affirm that *the surface* calculated is *one line at the most*; in the second place, if we construct the figure according to the values obtained for  $x$  and  $y$ , we can determine:

That the straight line  $2y$ , which we now know to be  $2\sqrt{0}$ , has its point of intersection on one of the straight lines  $a$  in the opposite direction to that of our first hypothesis, since  $x = -a$ ; also, that the base of our triangle coincides with its apex;

That the two straight lines  $a$  make, together with the first one,

angles at least smaller than  $60^\circ$ , and what is more can only attain  $2\sqrt{0}$  by coinciding with the first straight line  $a$ .

Which conforms to the dogma of the equivalence of the three Persons between themselves and in their totality.

We can say that  $a$  is a straight line connecting 0 and  $\infty$ , and can define God thus:

DEFINITION: God is the shortest distance between zero and infinity.

In which direction? one may ask.

We shall reply that His first name is not Jack, but *Plus-and-Minus*. And one should say:

$\pm$  God is the shortest distance between 0 and  $\infty$ , in either direction.

Which conforms to the belief in the two principles; but it is more correct to attribute the sign + to that of the subject's faith.

But God being without dimension is not a line.

— Let us note, in fact, that, according to the formula

$$\infty - 0 - a + a + 0 = \infty$$

the length  $a$  is nil, so that  $a$  is not a line but a point.

Therefore, *definitively*:

GOD IS THE TANGENTIAL POINT BETWEEN ZERO AND INFINITY. Pataphysics is the science. . .

## NOTES

BY SIMON WATSON TAYLOR

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The translator wishes to express his great indebtedness to the Collège de 'Pataphysique, and in particular to M. Latis and to Jean Ferry, without whose advice and criticism this English version could not have been undertaken — nor even envisaged. Thanks are also due to Roger Shattuck, Stanley Chapman and Stefan Themerson for valuable suggestions and criticisms.

### TITLE AND CONTENTS

As Roger Shattuck points out in the section he devotes to "Alfred Jarry: Poet and 'Pataphysician" in his *The Banquet Years* (see Bibliography), the name of the hero, Faustroll, may be taken to be a combination of the words *Faust* and *Troll* (a goblin or imp). In 1896 Jarry appeared as one of the trolls in Lugué-Poe's production of *Peer Gynt* (the Scandinavian *Faust!*) at the Théâtre de l'Œuvre. Jarry's intention was perhaps to imply that his (autobiographical) hero was "the imp of science."

The subtitle, "a neo-scientific novel," is printed only in the first edition (1911).

The epigraph from the Upanishads is omitted from later editions, as is the table of contents. The 1955 edition of *Faustroll* even goes so far as to omit the

marginal bailiff's seals from the heads of chapters 1, 3, 5; and the word "pataphysician" from the title!

This translation is from the first edition (which contains the fewest typographical errors, misreadings, and omissions) collated where necessary with the original MSS.

## BOOK ONE

### CHAPTER 2

1. "A few sea-green mustachios." *Sic*, Jarry wrote in both MSS of *Faustroll* "unes moustaches vert de mer."
2. In English in the original.
3. The "Ordre de la Grande Gidouille" was promulgated by Jarry in his *Almanach du Père Ubu* (1899), and has been revived by the Collège de 'Pataphysique. The word "gidouille" appears frequently throughout the cycle of Ubu plays in general reference to Father Ubu's regally protruding stomach. "Strumpot" is an inspired verbal invention by Cyril Connolly.

### CHAPTER 4

Doctor Faustroll's equivalent authors:

LÉON BLOY: see notes, Ch. 15.

COLERIDGE: Jarry's translation of the *Rime of the Ancient Mariner* was first published in 1921.

GEORGES DARIEN: *The Thief*, an astonishing and hitherto rare book, published in 1898, has been republished by Jean-Jacques Pauvert (Paris, 1955).

MARCELINE DESBORDES-VALMORE: French writer and poet (1785-1859).

MAX ELSKAMP: Belgian poet (1862-1931).

CHRISTIAN DIETRICH GRABBE: German poet (1801-1836). Jarry made a free translation of this play under the title of *Les Silènes*. It has been translated into

English by Barbara Wright: *Comedy, Satire, Irony and Deeper Meaning* (Gaberbochus, London, 1955).

GUSTAVE KAHN: see notes, Ch. 18.

MALLARMÉ: see notes, Ch. 19.

CATULLE MENDÈS: French writer (1841-1909).

JOSÉPHIN (SÂR) PÉLADAN: French writer (1858-1918), founder of the *Salon de la Rose-Croix*.

JEAN DE CHILRA: a pen name (and anagram) of Rachilde, for whom see notes, Ch. 24, and note to Book Three.

RÉGNIER: see notes, Ch. 20.

MARCEL SCHWOB: see notes, Ch. 21.

PIERRE BONNARD: see notes, Chs. 23 and 32. For the *Revue Blanche*, see note to Book Two.

AUBREY BEARDSLEY: see notes, Ch. 13.

4. "Delmor de Pionsec" is a near-anagram of "Demolder espion," and "Pionsec" also means "stale pedant"; for the real Demolder, see note on Claude Terrasse, Ch. 23. "Troccon" can be taken as a play on the name Trochon; "troc con" means a "damn stupid bargain." Trochon was a bicycle dealer who tried persistently but unsuccessfully until Jarry's death to collect from him the balance due on the bicycle Jarry had bought.

5. "Lourdeau" means blockhead.

6. "Panmuphle" is the equivalent of universal snout.

7. "Liconet" can be read "lui con est."

### CHAPTER 6

C. V. BOYS: English physicist (1855-1944), inventor of the radio-micrometer, etc., author of several popular scientific texts, including *Soap Bubbles and The Forces Which Mould Them* (London, 1890; see illustration on title page),

translated into French in 1892, and now reprinted (Doubleday, New York, 1959; Heinemann, London, 1960). The general sense of this chapter is largely derived from these short essays (although the application, I need hardly say, is entirely pataphysical).

8. This paragraph is a paraphrase from Sir William Crooke's presidential address to the Society for Psychical Research, London, 1897. See notes, Ch. 9.  
9. In French, "skiff" is "as" — a single-sculler; "as" also means an ace in cards, and a "one" in dominoes. . . A dry joke of Jarry's.

#### CHAPTER 7

ELSKAMP: Jarry had originally made the eighth seized book *Salutations dont d'Angéliques*. Though he changed this to *Enluminures* in his MS, he retained the quotation from the first volume, from the poem "Consolatrice des affligés."

FLORIAN: quotation from his play *Les Deux Billets*.

GRABBE: "the knight of the papal order of Civil Merit" is the Devil, in Grabbe's play, Act II, scene 1. In *Les Silènes* (see note, Ch. 4, Grabbe), Jarry turned the Freiherr von Mordax into "Baron Tual."

*The Thousand and One Nights*: LXIIInd night.

*Ubu Roi*: i.e., "merdre," the celebrated word invented by Jarry which provoked the disorders that continued throughout the first performance of the play at the Théâtre de l'Œuvre in 1896.

VERNE: the expedition in fact reached 35 leagues beneath the earth's surface. Faustroll must have grown weary at the 2 1/2 league stage. See Jean Ferry's article in *Les Cahiers du Collège de Pataphysique*, 22-23, Paris, May 1956.

## BOOK TWO

THADÉE NATANSON: a collaborator on the *Revue Blanche*, which was directed by his brother Alexandre, to which Jarry began to contribute in 1896. The *Revue Blanche* published his *Messaline* and *Le Surmâle*, but refused *Faustroll*, which Jarry offered to them after it had been turned down by the *Mercure de France*.

#### CHAPTER 8

10. A simple pun in French, e.g., "patte à physique."

#### CHAPTER 9

SIR WILLIAM CROOKES, F.R.S.: his presidential address to the Society for Psychical Research in London on January 29, 1897, is largely responsible for the theme and some of the phraseology of this chapter. The address was translated into French and printed in the *Revue Scientifique*, Paris, May, 1897.

#### CHAPTER 10

CHRISTIAN BECK: Belgian writer (1879-1916), friend of Jarry and fellow contributor to the review *Mercur*. Wrote also under the pen name of Joseph Bossi a novel *Les Erreurs* and later another novel *Le Papillon* (in French, "baboon" is "papion").

BOSSE-DE-NAGE: "nage" or "nache" means "buttocks" in old French, thus Bosse-de-Nage can mean "bottom-face," as Jarry suggests. For an erudite discussion of the possible origins of the name, see Noël Arnaud in the *Cahiers du Collège de Pataphysique*, no. 22-23.

11. Quotation from Sue, *La Salamandre*, Ch. XIV. "Le pichon joueic deis diables" is Provençal dialect for "le petit jeu des diables," the name of a strange traditional procession in which the participants were dressed as devils and satyrs.

12. PLATO: the translation is as follows:

- Thou speakest truth, he replies.
- It is true.
- It is very true.
- It is clear, he replies, even to a blind man.
- It is obvious.
- It is an obvious fact.
- That is so.
- It seems.
- That is also my opinion.
- It does in fact appear to be so.
- That is so, he replies.
- I am also of that persuasion.
- Absolutely, he replies.
- Thou speakest wisely.
- Well.
- Certainly, indeed.
- I recall.
- Yes.
- It is thus.
- I think so, and most strongly.
- I agree.
- Very right.
- That is doubtless right, he replies.
- That is true, he replies.
- That is indeed necessary.
- By all means.
- By all means indeed.
- By all manner of means.

- We admit it.
- It is absolutely necessary.
- Very much.
- Very much indeed, in fact.
- That is logical, indeed.
- How could that be so?
- How could that be otherwise?
- How could it be otherwise?
- What then?
- What?
- Thou speakest truth.
- How true that seems.

### BOOK THREE

ALFRED VALLETTE: French writer, married to Rachilde (see notes, Ch. 24) and Jarry's greatest and most faithful friend. At the time of writing *Faustroll*, Jarry shared a house at Corbeil, the "Phalanstère," with Vallette, Rachilde, Hérold (see notes, Ch. 26) and two other friends. In 1890, Vallette, with a group of writers belonging to the "symbolist" movement, founded a fortnightly review, the *Mercure de France*. Jarry contributed regularly to the *Mercure* and extracts from *Faustroll* were originally published in the review (chapters 6 and 10 to 25).

### CHAPTER 12

LOUIS LORMEL: Louis Lormel, pen name of Louis Libaude (1869-1922). Founded in 1892 *L'Art Littéraire* which published Jarry's first texts. They quarrelled, and Lormel published in 1897 a story called *Entre Soi* in which Jarry and his friend Léon-Paul Fargue appear as "la Tête de Mort" and "l'Androgyne" — not to

their advantage. This is Jarry's riposte, attacking Lormel and his collaborators, ultra-symbolists and Catholics.

13. The author has "mer d'Habundes," phonetically "merde abunde" derived from Rabelais (I, 9): "a cul foyard toujours abunde merde" ("squitty ass never lacks for shit").

14. The author has "île de Bran," phonetically "Hildebrand." But the identity of Baron Hildebrand remains obscure.

15. Derived from Rabelais (IV, 22); a lighthouse in the form of an obelisk.

16. The author has "halbran" which is phonetically equivalent to "hale-bran" — "heave-cack."

#### CHAPTER 13

AUBREY BEARDSLEY: a friend of Jarry who made a portrait of him (see Ch. 4) which has apparently not survived. This chapter is full of allusions to different drawings by Beardsley.

#### CHAPTER 14

EMILE BERNARD: the French painter who invented the "symbolist" technique in painting and influenced Gauguin. Le Bois d'Amour is a locality of Pont-Aven in Brittany, an artists' colony at that time, frequented by Bernard, Gauguin, Jarry, among others. Bernard collaborated with Jarry on the latter's luxuriously illustrated *L'Ymagier* and *Perhinderion*. "Le Bois d'Amour" is also the title of a painting by Bernard.

17. François-Marie Arouet who took the pen name Voltaire; Ernest Renan, French historian, author of *La Vie de Jésus*, etc.; Victor Charbonnel, French writer and journalist, originally a priest, who quit Holy Orders in 1897 and gave a series of anticlerical lectures. He founded *La Raison* in 1901.

#### CHAPTER 15

LÉON BLOY: one of the six writers included in the twenty-seven "equivalent" books of Doctor Faustroll to whom a subsequent chapter is also dedicated; the author of, among many other works, *Le Désespéré*, in which he appears as the hero Marchenoir (Blackstep), a name which inspires the title of this chapter.

18. In the French, "monumental autel de messe, noir." Jarry originally wrote in his MS "autel de messe noir," but changed it, no doubt out of deference for Bloy's susceptibilities.

#### CHAPTER 16

FRANC-NOHAIN: French poet, founded the review *Canard Sauvage* in 1903, to which Jarry was a regular contributor. One of Franc-Nohain's collections of verse was entitled *Flûtes, poèmes amorphes* (1898). He appears as the last of the six kings in this chapter; the reference in the last paragraph is to a poem, *Ronde des Neveux Inattentionés*, from *Flûtes*, whose refrain was:

SOUS LES QUINCONCES  
NOUS NE RETROUVONS PAS NOS ONCLES.

As regards the other five kings in this chapter, the third king may be identified as Jules Renard, author of *Histoires Naturelles*. The others remain obscure.

#### CHAPTER 17

PAUL GAUGUIN: Jarry and Gauguin were together at Pont-Aven in 1894 (see note, Ch. 14) and probably knew each other previously, since both were contributors to the review *Essais d'Art Libre* (1892-94), edited first by Remy de Gourmont, subsequently by Léon-Paul Fargue and Jarry.

The unfortunate Pierre Loti makes his first (anonymous) appearance in *Faustroll* at the end of this chapter, as the legless cripple ("cul de jatte"). The



*Omnibus de Corinthe* on which he fails to get a footing was a short-lived quarterly satirical review, edited by Marc Mouclier, describing itself as an “illustrated vehicle of general ideas,” the title of which was doubtless derived from the Latin proverb *Non licet omnibus adire Corinthum*. For more about Loti, see Ch. 30 and notes thereto.

#### CHAPTER 18

GUSTAVE KAHN: French poet and literary critic, one of Jarry’s earliest admirers. The title of this chapter is derived from Kahn’s first book of poems, *Les Palais Nomades*, in which occurs the line: “Finir loin des ports en jonque bizarre.”

This island represents the coast at Knocke in Belgium, where Kahn used to spend holidays; Jarry was his guest there in 1895. Kahn is one of the six writers included in Doctor Faustroll’s library to whom a chapter is subsequently dedicated.

#### CHAPTER 19

MALLARMÉ: another of the six among the twenty-seven “equivalents” to whom a chapter is also dedicated. The title of this chapter is inspired by Mallarmé’s sonnet based on the ending —yx. In a letter, addressed to Lefebvre and Casalis, Mallarmé writes: “. . . I only have three rhymes in ix, do your best to send me the real meaning of the word *ptyx*: I am assured that it does not exist in any language, which I would far prefer so that I may have the pleasure of creating it through the magic of rhyme.” To answer Mallarmé’s query: the word is, in this nominative singular form, unknown in ancient Greek, but is found often in its conjugation, *ptykos*, *ptyki*, etc. In the nominative, the alternative *ptykhê* was used (from which we derive “trptych”), the sense being a *fold* or *thickness*.

Jarry’s footnote refers to Mallarmé’s death in 1898. He attended the latter’s funeral, and wrote a homage *Le Grand Pan est Mort!* in the *Almanach du Père Ubu Illustré* (January, 1899).

#### CHAPTER 20

HENRI DE RÉGNIER: another of the six writers to whom a chapter is also dedicated. *La Canne de Jaspe* (1897), the twenty-first of Doctor Faustroll’s “equivalent” books, consists of three collections of stories, all of which contain a number of characters whose names begin with Her (Hermes, Hermotine, Hermagore, Hermocrate, Hermogene).

19. In the French, “pavonne,” a word coined by Régnier in the above text, meaning “spread like a peacock.”

20. In Jarry’s *Almanach du Père Ubu*, Régnier is described as “celui qui cyclope” because of the monocle he wore.

21. “cut. . . according to the erstwhile hierarchy of the syrinx,” i.e. as an heraldic shield is parted per bend sinister, the word “taillé” (“cut”) having that meaning in heraldic terminology; and, in addition, a syrinx is a pipe made of reeds (Panpipes) cut in this manner. There is also, no doubt, a reference here to *La Syrinx*, one of the many small literary and poetry reviews of the epoch.

22. In the French, “poncire”; from Provençal *pomsire* (*pomme de Syrie*), a kind of lemon, not strictly a citron perhaps.

#### CHAPTER 21

MARCEL SCHWOB: friend of Jarry, who dedicated *Ubu Roi* to him. Among his works, *Les Vies Imaginaires* included sections devoted to Cyril Tourneur and Captain Kidd. Schwob is also one of the six writers in Doctor Faustroll’s library to whom a chapter is subsequently dedicated.

23. “the skull and kid”: Jarry writes “la tête de mort et le chevreau” instead of “la tête de mort et les tibias” (“skull and crossbones”) for a pun on the name of this chapter’s hero.

## CHAPTER 22

LAURENT TAILHADE: French poet (1854-1919). Author of *Au Pays du Mufle*, ballads ("mufle" means "snout," "muzzle," or, as a term of opprobrium, "cad," "lout"). On the evening of the anarchist Vaillant's terrorist attack in the Chamber of Deputies (1893) Tailhade said: "Qu'important les victimes, si le geste est beau! Qu'importe la mort de vagues humanités, si par elle s'affirme l'individu!" Shortly afterward he was himself severely wounded when an anarchist bomb exploded in the restaurant Foyot (1894). He was a collaborator of the anarchist journal *Le Libertaire*.

Chapter title: in French, "la grande église de Muflefiguière." This is derived by suggestion from Rabelais' word "papefiguière" (IV, 45).

## CHAPTER 23

CLAUDE TERRASSE: composer, friend of Jarry, wrote music for *Ubu Roi* (*Ouverture d'Ubu Roi, Marche des Polonais, La Chanson du Décervelage*) and composed the music for *Pantagruel*, the "opéra bouffe" which Jarry wrote in collaboration with Eugène Demolder. Jarry lived at the home of Terrasse during 1904-05, the name of the house being *L'Île Sonnante*.

The line of music: from Mozart's *Motet Burlesque*, which was played in 1897 at the Théâtre des Pantins in Paris, a theater launched by Jarry and Terrasse together with the painters Pierre Bonnard, Vuillard, and Sérusier, the poet Franc-Nohain, and a group of actors.

The musical instruments: *ravanastron*, an ancient violin of India; *sambuca*, an ancient stringed instrument of dubious identity, the Bible's sackbut; *bandore*, a lute-like instrument of the Middle Ages; *kin*, a seven-stringed Chinese lute; *tché*, a Chinese flute with mouthpiece in center and three holes on each side; *beggar's guitar*, generally accepted translation for "turlurette" (era Charles VI), perhaps incorrect: Wright prefers "a kind of bagpipe in the Middle Ages"; *vina*, the primary and most ancient instrument of India — a seven-stringed lute;

*magrepha*, a small Hebrew organ; *hydraulus*, an ancient form of organ; *sarrusophone*, a mid 19th-century brass instrument invented for military bands; *zampogna*, an Italian peasant bagpipe; *chéré*, a large Bengali trumpet; *coelophone*, a late 19th-century hybrid "organ."

## BOOK FOUR

### CHAPTER 24

In explanation of the chapter title: Rachilde wrote in 1896, under the pen name Jean de Chilra, a novel *La Princesse des Ténèbres*. She had also written a novel *Madame la Mort* (1898) and a collection of stories *Imitation de la Mort* (1903). She liked Rachilde to be taken as a man's name: hence "the king." The "hermetic shades" invoke Mercury, of course, i.e. the *Mercure de France* (see note to Book Three) whose offices were in the rue de l'Echaudé (celebrated by Jarry in the *Chanson du Décervelage*).

The "river Ocean" may be considered to be the Boulevard St. Germain. The *Mercure* is again evoked by the monthly orgies of the transpontine lords: i.e. the Tuesday salons held by Rachilde on its premises. Among the visitors, Christian Beck (see notes, Ch. 10) can be distinguished by his Belgian hat. The image of the toad was inspired by an indignant article in the review *La Plume* (1897) comparing Rachilde to "a little toad trying to fly." The identity of "the devil Plural" remains inscrutably obscure; but perhaps he represents simply the "vulgar mob of detractors" of the *Mercure*.

In 1928, Rachilde wrote a book about Jarry, *Alfred Jarry ou le Surmâle des Lettres*, (one of Jarry's novels is entitled *Le Surmâle*).

### CHAPTER 25

PAUL VALÉRY: friend of Jarry and contributor, at one time, to the same reviews. In this and the following chapters of Faustroll, the persons to whom

the chapters are dedicated are no longer “described” in the text.

The marine bishop Mendacious (Mensonger): in Book XIII of the 16th-century naturalist Ulissi Aldrovandi’s *De animalibus infectis, de serpentibus et dracontibus, de monstis*, the phenomenon is illustrated with a commentary indicating that “this creature was captured on the coast of Poland in 1531; offered to the king, it became restless and was thrown back into the sea. It was as tall as a man; it seemed to bear a miter on its head and to be clad in an episcopal robe.” This print was first reproduced in 1895 in the fifth number of *L’Ymagier*, an illustrated review edited by Jarry and Remy de Gourmont.

24. Jarry has “une figue d’oreille.” A literal rendering of the German “Ohrfeige,” “a box on the ears.”

#### CHAPTER 26

PIERRE QUILLARD: founded the review *La Pléiade*; a writer, translator, and eventually expert in political science and ethnology. A fishing (and drinking) companion of Jarry at Corbeil. The March, 1897 issue of the *Mercur*e contains a *Ballade à la louange de quelques-uns* with the following quatrain:

*Quillard plaint celles que le fer  
Du sombre Abd-ul-Hamid a fait veuves;  
Jarry dit Merdre d’un ton fier  
Et Vallette lit des épreuves*

A.-FERDINAND HÉROLD (to whom the “Fable” is dedicated): a poet and dramatist, but more particularly a translator (Greek, Latin, Sanskrit, German. . .). The quotation from the *A’ranyaka Upanishad* at the beginning of *Faustroll* is, in the original French edition, from Hérol’d’s translation. Hérol’d was a cycling (and drinking) companion of Jarry’s, and an unusual telegram from

Hérol’d to Jarry at Corbeil during 1898 has survived:

I HAVE JUST DRUNK AN EXCELLENT MARC BRANDY — HÉROLD

25. The author has “le renard fraîchement écorché d’un ivrogne”: “écorcher un renard” means “to vomit.” See Rabelais, I, 11.

26. This line is in English in the original.

#### CHAPTER 27

27. “the bruchus, the attacus, the ophiomachus and the locust”: Septuagint, Lev. XI, 22. Authorized Version: “locust, bald locust, beetle and grasshopper”; Moffatt: “migratory locust, bald locust, chopping locust, grasshopper.”

28. An imaginary word that can be read phonetically “c’est sous la taille” (“it’s below the waist”).

#### CHAPTER 28

MONSIEUR DEIBLER: Anatole Deibler is, one may notice, the only one among those to whom chapters of *Faustroll* are dedicated to benefit by an added adjective, in this case “sympathetically.” Deibler was France’s Public Executioner of the epoch. The nephew of Deibler’s wife, André Obrecht, was one of France’s last Public Executioners.

29. *Le Moyen de Parvenir / Oeuvre contenant la raison de tout ce qui a esté, est, & sera / . . .* etc. (*How to Succeed . . .*) attributed to François Béroalde (ca. 1556—ca. 1629). Originally published about 1610, without date, place, or name of author, the name of Béroalde only appears in 18th-century editions, and his authorship is problematical. This astonishing book is presented in the form of a banquet attended by historical personages of different eras discoursing on every possible theme, with satirical anecdotes, erotic stories, puns, parodies, erudite

quotations, obscure allegories and indiscriminate attacks upon both the Catholic and Protestant churches, womankind, the aristocracy, and all manner of temporal and spiritual pretensions. Béroalde was a convert to Catholicism, and became Canon of Tours. According to Colletet "he frequented gambling dens and taverns, devoted the revenue of his canonry to debauchery, and finally, being without religious conviction, returned to Protestantism."

30. A horse's head.

#### CHAPTER 29

31. Translation of the verse from Piron by Stanley Chapman.

32. "Iron kiosques. . .," i.e. "pissotière," phonetically "pisse au tiers."

33. "A special sail placed beneath the jibs." Bonnefoux (*Dictionnaire de marine à voiles et à vapeur*, 1855) describes this little known sail as a "petite voile de fantaisie et d'un usage peu utile"! It was known in England as a "Jimmy Green."

#### BOOK FIVE

#### CHAPTER 30

In this chapter Jarry makes use (a posteriori, so to speak) of Loti's *Livre de la Pitié et de la Mort*, more especially of the story therein, *Tante Claire nous quitte*. This story becomes *La Mort de Latente Obscure* (phonetically, *La Tante Obscure*).

All the words in italics in this chapter are quotations from the above-mentioned book (sometimes the order is transposed in the cause of the pataphysical analogy).

34. Loti's dedication of *Le Livre de la Pitié et de la Mort* actually reads: "A ma mère bien-aimée / Je dédie ce livre / Sans crainte, parce que la foi chrétienne lui permet de lire avec sérénité les plus sombres choses." And the author's preface

begins: "Ce livre est encore plus moi. . ."

35. "It would b. . . you so, if only you knew!" The closing words of Loti's preface (addressed to his literary enemies, imploring them not to mock a theme which is "sacred" to him!) are in fact "il vous ennuiera tant, si vous saviez!" Jarry has simply *en. . . ra*, which ambiguity I have preserved in the English.

36. "I alone. . . ABYSS": transcribed literally from Loti's story *Rêve*, except that Jarry places the last two (significant!) words in capital letters.

37. Super-patriotic poets of the era. A *mirliton* is a "toy musical instrument with vibrating parchment reinforcing the voice, usually adorned with strips of paper and humorous verse." "Vers de mirliton" is a phrase meaning vulgar doggerel or trashy verse.

38. *Sic*.

39. Kaka-San really is the name of a character in Loti's story *La chanson des vieux époux*. Kaka-San and Toto-San are beggars, and Toto-San draws Kaka-San, who is paralyzed, along in a box on rollers. She dies eventually in her box, and the italicized last paragraph of the chapter, which is a quotation from the story, means exactly what it appears to mean!

#### CHAPTER 31

The musical jet: a scientific experiment described by C. V. Boys (see notes, Ch. 6) in his *Soap Bubbles* (Lecture III) and invoked here by Jarry (in an entirely pataphysical application, of course).

#### CHAPTER 32

PIERRE BONNARD: friend of Jarry since 1893, illustrator of Jarry's *Almanach du Père Ubu*, and fellow contributor to the *Revue Blanche*.

40. The *Musée du Luxembourg*, where academic paintings acquired by the State were exhibited. The "department managers" mentioned by Doctor Faustroll in

the following paragraph are identifiable as fashionable painters of the time, all exhibitors at the Beaux Arts in 1897.

41. "The Poor Fisherman" is by Puvis de Chavannes, "Olympia" by Manet.

42. "How beautiful is yellow!": inspired by Gauguin's text *Natures Mortes*, on Van Gogh, published in 1894, which says: "Oh! oui, il l'a aimé le jaune, ce bon Vincent, ce peintre de Hollande; lueurs de soleil qui réchauffaient son âme, en horreur du brouillard. Un besoin de chaleur."

43. In the French, "toiles non déclouées," which could also mean "pictures still hanging on the walls."

44. "Discovered" as a painter by Jarry, who probably met him in 1893. From 1894 Jarry wrote articles on Rousseau and published the latter's lithograph of "La Guerre" in his *L'Ymagier*. Jarry lived briefly with Rousseau in 1897 during one of the former's periodic domestic crises. Rousseau painted a portrait of Jarry which was exhibited at the Salon des Indépendants in 1895; a contemporary critic remarked of this painting: "Notice his portrait of a poet (M. Alfred Jarry) whose hair was so long that the catalogue thought fit to describe the picture as 'Portrait of Mme. A. J.'"

## BOOK SIX

### CHAPTER 33

45. An equivocal Latin word, which can signify "a green and living branch," "a young bough cut off" or in late Latin "a wood-worm." Larousse (19th-c. ed.) gives the meaning "termite." The sense here is of priapic ejaculation, which Jarry associates in the following chapter to the artistic ejaculation of the "unforeseen beast Clinamen" (q.v. notes, Ch. 34.)

### CHAPTER 34

PAUL FORT: founded the Théâtre d'Art in 1891; in 1893 this became the

Théâtre de l'Œuvre, where *Ubu Roi* was produced by Lugné-Poe in 1896. Fort edited a review, *Le Livre d'Art*, which published the first extracts from *Ubu Roi*.

46. "Inclination," "bias." But the *clinamen principiorum* or "swerve" of Lucretius is a more complicated concept, a philosophic theory central to the Epicurean system which Lucretius explains in *De Rerum Natura* as follows: Atoms fall head-long through space, carried on by their own weight. At undetermined moments and in undetermined points of space, they manifest a minute quasi-deviation, only just sufficient for one to be able to speak of a modification of equilibrium. It is as a result of this "swerve" or *clinamen* that so-called solid bodies are formed from the atoms or *primordia*. Lord Kelvin (see notes, Ch. 37) claims (in his essay *Steps towards a kinetic theory of matter*) the ideas of Epicurus and Lucretius as the basis of the modern theory of matter, in which all its properties are seen to be merely attributes of motion.

47. "Woan't yew p'-lay with me, mistuh Loyal?": in French "voulez-vous jouer avec moa, mister Loyal?" the dialect indicating the fact that the great clowns in French 19th-century circus were English. "Mister Loyal" is, in French circus parlance, the traditional name of the blue-coated Equestrian Director, and the sentence is a classic part of the duologue between a clown and this ringmaster. The name is derived from a famous circus family.

## BOOK SEVEN

### CHAPTER 35

48. In English in the original.

49. "Mour" (mourre) means "muzzle" and is found in Rabelais (III, 20). The word "zenclé" was invented by Rabelais (I, 12) from the Greek word for "sickle."

50. John Tyndall, 19th-century Irish physicist, whose chemical experiment with

vacuum tubes is referred to by Kelvin (see notes, Ch. 37) in his *Popular Lectures and Addresses* as “Tyndall’s blue sky.”

#### CHAPTER 36

FÉLIX FÉNEON: writer and a collaborator on the *Revue Blanche*, one of the first to encourage Jarry as a writer.

51. Arthur Cayley, 19th-century English mathematician, one of whose experiments (relative to the law of variation) is quoted by Kelvin, op. cit.

52. “The Morgue. . . slab. . .” might also be rendered “Pride displayed for two days on her lectern. . .”

#### BOOK EIGHT

LOUIS DUMUR: playwright and one of the founders of the *Mercure de France*. The reason for this dedication is certainly the long article which Dumur wrote on *Ubu Roi* in the *Mercure* in 1896.

53. “A light sip will incline one to philosophy, possibly to atheism, but a fuller draught will lead one back to religion.”

#### CHAPTER 37

LORD KELVIN: i.e. Sir William Thomson, English physicist whose *Popular Lectures and Addresses, Vol. I, Constitution of Matter*, 2nd (enlarged) edition, London, 1891, was translated into French in 1893, and which Jarry interprets from a pataphysical standpoint while adhering closely to the letter — if not the spirit — of the original. He makes use especially of the chapters *Electrical units of measurement*, *Steps towards a kinetic theory of matter* and *The wave theory of light*. The reader is referred to the above-mentioned work for a full appreciation of

Jarry’s splendid interpretation of Kelvin. As two examples out of many, compare Jarry, the sentence beginning at the bottom of p. 100, with Kelvin, op. cit., p. 80: “I often say that when you can measure what you are speaking about and express it in numbers you know something about it”; and Jarry, the next sentence on p. 101, with Kelvin, p. 81: “. . . diamond is reckoned harder than ruby; ruby than quartz; quartz than glasshard steel. . .”

The names mentioned in this chapter are all those of distinguished scientists — astronomers, physicists, mathematicians mentioned by Kelvin. Needless to say, the measuring rod, the watch, the tuning fork, the luminiferous ether, the rotating flywheels and linked gyrostats, even the Scottish shoemaker’s wax are to be found seriously expounded in the pages of Kelvin in connection with practical scientific experiments.

54. “Centimeter gramme second” (the unit of force defined in terms of the units of mass, length, and time).

55. The title of one of the chapters in *Popular Lectures*, describing the experiment in “dissipation of energy” of James Clerk Maxwell, the Scottish physicist.

56. This amount of a centimeter is the wave length of yellow light in the spectrum (Kelvin, pp. 144 seq.)

57. A centimeter.

#### CHAPTER 38

The title of this chapter is derived from the essay *On the sun’s heat* from Kelvin, op. cit. In this essay Kelvin does indeed describe the sun as “a cool solid,” and the squares, pyramids, screws, paddles and other paraphernalia are all invoked by him to illustrate his scientific expositions.

58. Compare Kelvin, op. cit., pp. 118-119, “. . . the Siemens unit in absolute measure is 9,413 kilometers per mean solar second.”



59. This refers to Kelvin's remark at the beginning of his essay *The six gateways of knowledge* (op. cit. p. 261): "I am going to prove to you, that we have six senses — that if we are to number the senses at all, we must make them six."

60. Even this superbly poetic paragraph is derived directly from Kelvin, in his essay *The wave theory of light* (op. cit., p. 341), describing a phenomenon known in physical optics as "Haidinger's Brushes."

#### CHAPTER 39

61. *Caesar-Antichrist* is a "drama" by Jarry originally published in 1895 by the *Mercure de France*.

#### CHAPTER 40

62. *Sic*.

#### CHAPTER 41

ANNA KATHERINA EMMERICK: an unlettered mystical fantasist, who produced some highly imaginative revelations of the life of Christ (e.g. *Meditations on the Passion*) under the influence of divine inspiration.

The final sentence, "Pataphysics is *the* science. . .": In the original, "La Pataphysique est la science. . ." The French may be translated with important differences in nuance; either as the beginning of a deliberately unfinished sentence ("Pataphysics is the science. . .") or, if one takes it to be a complete sentence, it might equally well read "Pataphysics is science. . ." Let this remain, textually, the final pataphysical mystery.

In the original MS of *Faustroll*, the last words of the book are followed by the word END in the center of the page, and, underneath this, Jarry's remark: "This book will not be published integrally until the author has acquired sufficient experience to savor all its beauties in full." (See illustration on inside back cover.)

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BY ALASTAIR BROTCHE

It is thirty years since the first appearance of the English translation of *Faustroll*, and this period has seen no slackening of interest in Jarry's works in either France or the English-speaking world — quite to the contrary. In view of this, Simon Watson Taylor has suggested I provide a brief bibliography covering the years since 1965 to accompany the republication of his translation. This list is not intended to be exhaustive, the bibliographies below should be consulted by readers requiring more detailed information.

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Dieu et le point tangent de zéro  
et de l'infini.

La Pataphysique est la science...

.....

FIN

Alfred Jarry

Ce livre ne sera publié  
qu'après l'absence aura acquis  
toutes les beautés en savourées  
A. J.

EXPLOITS & OPINIONS OF  
DR. FAUSTROLL, PATAPHYSICIAN

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“Pataphysics... is the science of that which is superinduced upon metaphysics, whether within or beyond the latter’s limitations, extending as far beyond metaphysics as the latter extends beyond physics... Pataphysics will be, above all, the science of the particular, despite the common opinion that the only science is that of the general. Pataphysics will examine the laws governing exceptions, and will explain the universe supplementary to this one... *Pataphysics is the science of imaginary solutions...* Pataphysics is *the science...*”

— Alfred Jarry

