

NOUMEA TO NEWCASTLE : THE STORY OF AN ESCAPE

My voyage¹ to the Antipodes naturally comprises both the journey out and the journey back. About the outward trip I shall remain silent, the lowest deck² of a warship not affording particularly glorious views or leaving the traveller with especially idyllic memories. Nature is an attractive woman who is hardly seen at her best through a ship's cannon-port or across the top of a hedge of bayonets. As an observatory, the half-open lid of a scuttle-hole is not only uncomfortable but deceptive : the eucalypts lined up along the hills look for all the world like soldiers exercising, and the coconut trees along the shoreline seem to be bearing explosive shells rather than fruit.

I shall simply observe that the New Caledonian guest-house in which the Government had cooped us up was signally at variance with what we Parisians had been used to : the food was insufficient, the service wanting, and comfort absolutely non-existent. In response to the lack of consideration shown us by our landlord and the unsuccessful outcome of our complaints, we developed a firm resolve to abscond from our lodgings and not pay the bill.

Nonetheless I promised myself that I would not allow politics any place in the accounts I would provide of our actions, for fear of letting myself make politics pay dearly for all it has cost us. I also beg any reader anxious to acquire information, *cupidus videndi*, not to rely too heavily on me to perfect his knowledge of geography³. On that subject, I shall remain in that uncertain state of mind which was expressed so well by an old sailor who said to one of us:

“Don't believe everything you are told about the navy. For instance, people always talk about degrees of longitude. I've been at sea for twenty years and never seen a single one.”

After a crossing which can sometimes take twenty-five days but in our case took only seven, urged on as we were by an overwhelming desire to see our families again and probably by a strong easterly wind as well, we found ourselves, on the 27th of March 1874, within sight of a land that had been conquered by man. It was Australia. In the course of the four hundred league journey from Noumea, the only distraction from the monotonous rhythm of that “symphony in blue major” known as the Pacific Ocean had been our passing by Lord Howe Island⁴, which is

overlooked from a height of five hundred metres by the dark shelf known as Ball's Pyramid, which seems to threaten nearby ships but in fact warns them, thus combining the useful and the disagreeable.

As we passed by this monument, erected (as a Freemason would say) by the Great Architect of the Universe, and which is reminiscent of an enormous feudal castle once occupied by some sea-monster – perhaps Adamastor whose place of residence Camoëns has not revealed to us⁵ – the captain of the *P.C.E.*⁶ told us that in 1853 four men who were shipwrecked when their boat broke up on the coral surrounding Lord Howe Island had lived for two months on this block of granite. Their only food had been the eggs of seagulls, speckled kestrels and malleucks⁷ which they would pluck from the crevices of the pyramid where these hardy birds had nested.

We saw what looked to be not so much a cloud as a winged waterspout whirling around the top of this Tower of Doom. By the look of things, however, the four above-mentioned travellers had not eaten all the eggs in the henhouse.

The town of Newcastle, which we were approaching, is terraced along a cliff whose barrenness we would have found depressing were it not for the profound joy that overtook us. The dangerous belt of coral⁸ that defends the entry to this harbour seemed to us to be the girdle of Venus herself. This fortress of ocean-level reefs, to which many of the islands of Oceania have long owed their independence, took on in our eyes, lit up as these were by the open blue sky of freedom, the flattering appearance of a corset whose laces our ship's bow, as if it were a lover, was about to cut through.

Until this decisive moment, our journey had to some extent seemed like an escape. The good captain who had welcomed us aboard his ship was almost constantly testing the surrounding space, in case there should suddenly appear some government escort-ship with a mission involving us, and we looked with melancholy eyes at the eight old piston-action rifles banging about in their rack, these constituting the entire arsenal of the three-master the *P.C.E.* and looking as though they had never been loaded with anything except rust.

A final scare⁹ was in store for us. As we gazed like conquerors on this promised though un hoped-for land, we suddenly saw coming out of the harbour, which was about two leagues away, a steam-boat headed very obviously in our direction and proceeding full-steam ahead to meet us. This steam-boat was soon joined by a second, then a third, then a fourth. For a moment we entertained the notion, however preposterous, that the entire French fleet had been awaiting us at the harbour entrance and that it was now coming out to sink us or – an even more painful expectation – to snatch us as it came by.

These frenzied steam-boats were in fact ordinary tugs, the fear of competition being the cause of their alarming energy. Any ship about to touch land is soon surrounded by these supplicants, each trying to grab the “client”. They pester him, they flatter him, they make the most unbelievable effort to be the one to tow him in¹⁰. You would think you were at the railway-station of some spa resort when the hotel bellboys come to harpoon the tourist as he gets off the train. The tugboat operators are not above agreeing to a reduction in price. Nonetheless, they could not possibly, without losing all self-respect, bring safely into harbour a four-hundred-ton ship like ours for less than eighty francs. Offer them seventy-five francs, and they withdraw their labour and leave your sailing ship in distress.

These semi-pirates, no longer being able to take ships’ crews captive, make up for this by attempting to fleece them. But as far as the *P.C.E.* was concerned, they might just as well have spared themselves their seductive coquetries. What, show Captain Law his way, a man brought up amongst reefs and familiar with every channel! A man who, more than two leagues off Ball’s Pyramid, had sniffed the air as if it were a pinch of snuff and told us :

“We’re getting closer, I can smell land.”

The countenance of this old sea-dog has remained vividly present in my mind as a symbol of whatever astounds and upsets human calculations. Short and stocky, with ruddy features, but a keenly sparkling eye and the set lips of a man of responsibility forever on the alert, whenever Captain Law came belting out of his cabin onto the deck at the merest sign of a squall, he seemed to become as one with the atmosphere and to give the word of command to the compass card. He would cast his piercing gaze at the depths of the horizon, take in the clouds with a glance upwards, and announce to us with chronological precision :

“It will last an hour”.

or :

“This one will go on for two hours and a half.”

And, at the minute he had predicted, the wind would drop. Though a great lover of France, in the form of its wines – a fault which is not considered the least bit dishonourable in Australia, where intoxication is as fashionable as heart-shaped waistcoats are among us – he was aware of his weakness and all he took with him to drink on his journeys were barrels of fresh water. He reserved his thirst for his stay on land, and it would become more and more unquenchable as the time to embark grew closer.

Moreover, his easy-going directness and imperturbable nature were the outward accompaniment of a scrupulously generous heart. In payment for the rescue of all six of us, the sum of ten thousand francs had been, not demanded by him, but offered spontaneously by us, and when I thought I should offer him some guarantees as to payment, which might have seemed to him to pose a number of problems, he replied unhesitatingly :

“My best guarantee is your word.”

Now, in this expedition he was risking his job, and in consequence the livelihoods of his six children. The risk was so real that he did in fact lose it at a later date.

Having a special certificate which authorised him to enter any port in Australia without a pilot, he made straight for the entrance to Newcastle, the town of his birth. We sailed up the harbour at about ten in the morning, in magnificent weather and a sparkling sea, passing through a jumble of vessels of all types of sail and all nationalities. Their every mast was decked with flags, and their rigging festooned with pennants. This jubilation delighted us, though it also took us somewhat by surprise. The captain himself sought an explanation, which the “steward”¹¹ (the ship’s cook) immediately provided. This unfortunate fellow, who had formerly worked as a clown on a fairground stall, found himself one fine day transported on board a ship, in one of those press-gang operations which in England take the place of a vocation to life at sea. In the course of our trip, there was not a single kindness that he did not lavish upon us, doing somersaults in the ship’s shrouds to take our minds off our seasickness, walking on his hands, and cooking for us, with the very same hands he had walked on, large numbers of pastries whose taste and colour, regrettably, consigned them to the category of rock-cakes in every sense of the

word.

“You must have been recognised,” he told us with great conviction. “The harbour has been decked out in your honour.”

This base adulation did not even have the excuse of being flattering. If the people on the jetty looking through their spyglasses had thought we looked like deportees, they must have had a very poor idea of the workforce on the Ducos Peninsula. We were clad in outlandish clothes, pale from the churning of our stomachs due to the rolling of the *P.C.E.*; the latter had come back on ballast but we had rather horribly jettisoned ours; and we were at one and the same time as tattered as a Callot and as bristly as a Herrera the Elder¹². The only hope my costume afforded me was dependent on a shoulder-strap borrowed from the ship's first mate : had it broken, it would have demolished the entire structure on which a strictly decent outfit is based. As to Olivier Pain¹³, my fellow escapee and also my collaborator, for the role of his memories in this account is at least as great as my own¹⁴, Olivier Pain had for shoes a pair of old army boots saved from a shipwreck, and of such enormous size that he could walk around in them without his feet even touching the sides. While still in New Caledonia, the escapees had seriously contemplated fitting a sail to them and returning to Europe inside them. They gave up this plan once they realised that the boots leaked.

As we were tacking in a veritable forest of clippers, brigs and schooners, we found ourselves for a short time alongside a French three-masted barque, the *Saint-Jean*. We greeted the commandant in his own language, and he returned our ‘Bonjour’ without any further attempt to discover the identity of these fellow-countrymen of his who were almost as little clad as his own skipper.

Our inflamed and feverish hands were on the brink of touching land, when we had to stop for a visit by Customs. We had one last meal on board the *P.C.E.* while awaiting the outcome of this formality, which was of some importance to us. The spontaneous generation of six men not listed in the ship's log on departure might well have given the Australian authorities cause for some recrimination, which would have been awkward, to say the least.

A very young man, most distinguished-looking and dressed as if for a dinner in town,

drew up in the Customs Administration's boat, climbed up the *P.C.E.*'s ladder, and seated himself in Captain Law's cabin. The latter brought him his log and engaged with him in a dialogue which was translated for the rest of us by the only one of us who spoke English.

"I had been at sea for about four hours," the Captain related in a somewhat sardonic tone of voice, "when these six¹⁵ gentlemen emerged from the hold of my ship where, so they told me, they had taken refuge the previous evening. They have paid me their passage, but I have reason to believe that the names they have given me are not their own."

We were paying anxious attention. Then, without a glance in our direction or the slightest curiosity concerning us, the young official – demonstrating once again that respect for individual liberty which is innate in the Englishman – replied with chilly indifference :

"Since these gentlemen owe you nothing, they are free to adopt whatever names they wish."

Thereupon, he stood up, good back into his boat and returned to shore, without even mentioning the incident to his oarsman.

We lost no time in following this discreet Customs officer in the *P.C.E.*'s whale boat. We came ashore at the wharf, greeted by a crowd of beaming citizens obviously dressed in their Sunday best even though it was a Thursday. Each of the escapees, who the previous day had been merely "a nameless cipher in a pallid crowd", turned back into a man once he reached dry land. We might even have willingly kissed that *alma parens*, had not our lips first been planted upon the blond head of one of those unbelievably beautiful children of whom we have since seen so many in Australia but whom we could never have imagined in our dreams. That English complexion, its lethargy cancelled out by the tropical sun; those eyes of turquoise blue, in which the shimmering Pacific mother-of-pearl seems to be reflected; that tousled hair framing the rosy cheeks over which it tumbled, called us back to the serenity of life.

Children are precisely what is lacking in prison life. Here and there, through the gaps in a fence, one might perhaps catch a glimpse of a laundress bringing the washing back from the penitentiary; but the "baby" side of things is completely lacking.

The reader can imagine how ardently we cuddled this wondrous little creature. The governess looking after him was young, and we would have thought her pretty were it not for her clothing, which looked as if it had been bought from one of the second-hand clothes dealers in the shabbiest area of Paris¹⁶, and was topped off by a hat that might perhaps have belonged to the Duchess of Angoulême fifty years ago¹⁷. She laughed at the sight of the infant being passed from one pair of arms to another, no doubt considering us to be in all likelihood either travelling acrobats or itinerant musicians. We were certainly highly itinerant, though hardly musicians.

Captain Law, being anxious to introduce us to his fellow-citizens, enquired as to the reasons for the general rejoicing on the wharves. It was caused, not by our arrival, but by that of Sir Hercules Robinson, the Governor of New South Wales, who was expected from Sydney that very morning. As to the explanation that had been provided by our steward, we decided that he was a born courtier.

The view of Newcastle from the jetty reveals a town built higgledy-piggledy to meet the needs of a population which is daily growing at a rate unknown in Europe. With the exception of two or three hotels of fairly lavish appearance, the houses show every sign of improvised construction. Their owners have perched them, without any concern for order or proper alignment, on hills which could perhaps have quite easily been levelled. Still, this very incoherence has a certain agreeable charm about it.

Having once (“once” means the year 1850) been inhabited by shepherds and bushmen¹⁸, the town of Newcastle, stranded on a steep sandbank between the Hunter River and the sea, would have had nothing to recommend it except the safety of its anchorage and the low cost of land, had not the discovery and extraction of coal made it *par excellence* Australia’s city of the “black diamond”. From fifteen hundred inhabitants, it quickly rose to twenty thousand.

The lack of drinking water is the main problem in the Hunter River district, of which Maitland and Morpeth form part. Everything that happens does so underground, and visitors are entertained in one’s mine just as elsewhere they are in one’s drawing-room. The only productive crop in this coal-bearing area is sugar-cane¹⁹, which can be grown without watering. But the heat is so intense in the cane fields and the sun’s reflection from the ground so dangerous for

European brains, that the cane farmers cannot employ any workers except natives. A Kanak woman sometimes spends eight hours a day in a plantation in fifty-seven degrees centigrade with her child on her back. The very idea fills you with admiration for beetroot.

But before inquiring further as to the fate of these natives of Oceania, we had to concern ourselves with our own. Our combined resources amounted to three hundred francs in colonial bonds drawn on the Bank of Noumea. Even the most trusting of shopkeepers would not have accepted our banknotes as wrapping for her hairpins.

The captain, who had himself now assumed the role of tugboat, towed us to one of those banks which accept paper-money from all over the world. But the world from which we had just come apparently extended beyond the limits of outlandishness, the teller hurling at us from deep behind his window :

“We don’t take that,”

which our strict sense of impartiality obliges us to translate as follows :

“As if I couldn’t guess that you produced these banknotes with your own hands this very morning.”

The bank next door extended to us a very different kind of welcome. This was where our incognito existence came to an end. As soon as we produced our “securities”, the whispering began. Could it be that the *P.C.E.*’s crew, as it mingled with the townspeople, had given away the story of our escape? Had the Customs officer been more communicative with others than he had with us? The fact is that, at the mere sight of the words “Bank of New Caledonia”, the entire establishment was abuzz.

“Are you the escaped French prisoners? You’ve just come in on the *P.C.E.* Tell us all about your escape.”²⁰

They crowded around us, calling out to one another to come and meet us and insisting we tell them everything. Although, like most financial establishments in such countries, the bank was unfamiliar with the mysteries of backwardation, contangoing and declaration of options²¹, it did also operate as a commission agency.

They produced a sample cask of madeira, and proceeded to pour us each a glass, this

giving the excellent Captain Law an even more exalted idea of who his passengers were. He related how, having seen my portrait and biography in an illustrated journal, he had recognised me at once. In consideration of our notoriety and our misfortunes, our money-changers discounted our bills by only a little over twenty-two per cent. Never have Bank of Noumea bonds been so dearly traded!

But business is business, and while we were unsuspectingly conversing, the chief associate of the bank was taking notes in the next room and dashing off a wire which reached Paris before we could transmit our own message from the Newcastle Telegraph Office to the Reuters agency. A most regrettable contretemps, since it had the effect of sending to France, along with news of our escape, a list of escapees' names which was so garbled that their families could not begin to get confirmation of their identity until they had sent off a dozen or so telegrams of enquiry.

Our arrival was soon what is called in English "the day's lion"²². They say about a ship putting in, a roof blown off in a gale, or a locomotive exploding, "it's today's lion". They also speak of "lionising", meaning capturing public attention. So we eagerly lionised²³, since that is the term for it, our every step from then on being followed by an invitation. As deprived as we were of the barest necessities of life and depleted of pounds sterling, we could do no less than take lodgings in the best hotel in town, which is the Great Northern Hotel.

The commandant of the *P.C.E.* was the recipient of congratulations all round, which added to the flush of his visage by the minute. He had never imagined, when he undertook our liberation, that its happy success would create such a stir. Full of pride and joy at an act of generosity and courage whose significance he had not at first realised, not only would he not leave our side from now on, but he steadfastly refused to let us leave his. He linked arms with me and dragged me along through the streets, showing me off to all his acquaintances. Now, as the whole population was out-of-doors to welcome the provincial Governor, the aforesaid acquaintances had never been so numerous. Groups of people turned before one's very eyes into hives of activity. And, each time, our story had to be told over again! After less than two hours ashore, we were already up to our thirty-second report.

However, we could not allow our lack of decent clothing to continue heaping dishonour upon Paris, our native city and the capital of supreme elegance. Although everything is sold at exorbitant prices in these new countries, where there is less merchandise than there is gold to pay for it, and although the unit of currency almost everywhere here is the twenty-five franc pound, we nonetheless felt obliged, even at the risk of bankruptcy, to withdraw sufficient funds from our nest-egg to buy Olivier Pain a proper pair of shoes.

In one of the arcades housing various types of shop selling books or linen or furs, he espied a shoemaker's establishment which appeared to be well stocked and awaiting customers. He went in : the shop was empty, the counter unattended. He sat down, grew impatient and ended up banging on the floor with his famous army boots, which produced a cavernous noise. After a quarter hour of this castanet-like tapping, the crisp sound of a starched dress could be heard coming from the interior staircase that linked the shop to the living-quarters. A dark-eyed girl, who naturally seemed exquisitely beautiful to men who had spent three years cut off from society in a fortified enclosure, made her appearance on the bottom step.

"Miss," said Olivier Pain, summoning up all the English he could muster, "I should like to try on a pair of boots."

"That can be easily arranged, sir, but we shall have to wait until my master returns."

"Will that take long?"

"I can't tell you, sir; he left the day before yesterday for the goldfields. But if you are really anxious to speak with him, you can find him in the Blue Mountains district. It seems an excellent seam of gold has just been found there."

Olivier Pain had no wish to venture into the blue yonder of those mountains, so he left still wearing his army boots. But it sums up the typical Australian : above all else, he is a seeker after gold – has been, is, and always will be. Any other profession he may adopt is temporary and aimed purely at diverting suspicion. What he is seeking in Australia is not social position but a vein of gold.

On leaving this highly peculiar shoemaker's shop, we met up at the Great Northern Hotel with our companions, who were already deep in conference with the newspaper reporters of the

region. We shook hands with Mr Bonnard, the proprietor and editor of the *Australian Review*, to thank him for having been so kind as to send us a copy of it from time to time (even though he was not acquainted with us) while we were condemned to our rock in New Caledonia – a place as lacking in news as it was in vegetation. Unfortunately, despatches from France were generally so distorted because of the six thousand leagues they had to travel along the wires of the transatlantic cable, that by the time they reached us they were veritable enigmas. Imagine our surprise when one day, sitting in our straw hut, we received the following telegram, couched in terms calculated to throw every deportee into a kind of daydream :

“M. Guizot has just proclaimed an amnesty.”²⁴

As Guizot could not possibly have proclaimed an amnesty unless he had been appointed President of the Grand Council of France, it was clear that the Count of Paris must have acceded to the throne. A few days later, we received an explanation of this misguided story : M. Guizot had merely declared, within the Protestant committee over which he presided, that an “armistice” currently existed between orthodox and liberal economists.

Cheering from the street interrupted our toasts. The townspeople, gathered along the shore, were welcoming the Governor of New South Wales as he sailed into the good town of Newcastle. He was travelling on the *Kembla*, a fifteen-hundred ton steamboat which came into the harbour at top speed. This steamer²⁵, which was considered the fastest in Australia, had entered into competition with the *Coonambara*, another steamboat of the same tonnage, and large bets had been placed on this steeplechase, in which the hurdles of Irish racecourses had been replaced by dangerous reefs.

If over-adventurous captains heat the steamers’ engines beyond their capacity, they are at risk of exploding, and this hazard had in fact been discussed, with unshakeable calm, by the punters the previous evening. Supposing the *Kembla* had blown up, then the Governor on board would have disappeared among the debris, and with that practical bent that never deserts the English, the name of Sir Hercules’ probable successor was already being suggested.

So the arrival of the colony’s leader, who had left Sydney, eighty miles distant, a few hours before, held just as much interest as the Paris Grand Prix. The *Coonambara* was beaten hollow, being a good hour away from the finishing line when the *Kembla* crossed the bar, to the

frantic applause of ten thousand onlookers – applause which was all the more unanimous as everyone from the Queen’s representative to the ship’s stoker took part in it.

Sir Hercules Robinson, who had boldly punted on the steamer chosen by him for his journey, won a large sum of money and appeared unconscious of the danger to which his recklessness had exposed him.

The French Consular Agent in Newcastle had come to present his heartiest congratulations on our happy deliverance. This worthy *chargé d’affaires* combined the functions of State official and liquor merchant. Whenever his girded himself with his sash to receive a French national who was taking himself a wife under the protection of French law, once he had presented the couple with the marriage register he would always take the opportunity of recommending to them a “little domestic wine” he was sure they would enjoy. Before offering us a sample of his products, he proposed introducing us to the Governor, but we would have had to repeat the famous story for the thirty-third time. So we pleaded for a postponement, which we had some difficulty in obtaining.

The next morning, all the newspapers were full of stories about us. I have kept an article from *The Newcastle Chronicle*, from which I translate the following lines :

“Yesterday, the city was thrown into a state of some excitement by the arrival of the P.C.E. from New Caledonia, having on board six of the most prominent French State prisoners recently exiled to that colony.

It was widely noted that at the time of these men’s arrival all the vessels in the harbour were arrayed with a display of flags, as if to celebrate their return to freedom.”²⁶

We consumed a copious dinner, quite an ordinary event in these countries where there is an abundance of cattle and a bullock costs scarcely more than a gentleman’s long tie. After this dinner, to which we invited all those who had shaken our hands to mark their tender feelings towards us, we travelled with Captain Law at our head through the entire town, which was lit up by specially-erected lamps, and spent the rest of the evening leading what is called “the bar life”.

Bars are not even taverns, but common counters at which people have a bite to eat,

washed down with a glass of whatever they fancy. These stopping-places, which in France would have given us a reputation for being habitués of the *bal de la Reine-Blanche*²⁷, neither infringe the proprieties in Australia nor detract from one's good character. Members of Parliament come into them to chat about the country's future and the bills being debated, without their prestige being in the least diminished.

Young women, almost invariably charming, serve the customers, whose familiarity always remains within strictly-observed bounds. Despite her continual contact with the public, a barmaid²⁸ is on the same level of respectability as the most genteel of young ladies. If there were a slight difference to be discerned, it would be to the advantage of the former : being generally more attractive and more seductively displayed than the latter, they more easily end up making a lucrative marriage. Two Ministers in the Australian Parliament²⁹ had in fact married barmaids from the bars at which they stopped on their way to the House, and this outcome had not elicited any comment. Between the legislators drinking and these pretty young women pouring their drinks, public opinion made no distinction.

In one of the bars³⁰, we admired a young woman of seventeen, of Swiss origin, whom we had seen riding by on horseback during the afternoon; from her distinguished appearance and elegance, we had assumed her to belong to the highest aristocracy of the region. Imagine our surprise that evening when we saw this princess, as in a scene from the opera *Martha*³¹, drawing pint after pint of beer from a barrel, gracefully serving slices of ham to visitors who called her simply Kitty³², showing her teeth in all their pearly whiteness whenever she laughed confidently at our jokes, which were perhaps not always in irreproachable taste.

The fact is that equality in that country is not merely something written into the Code by recalcitrant legislators, as it is in Europe. It has to do with the necessities of personal relations and it springs, as it were, from the very soil. Traditions of nobility, class privileges and feudal legends cannot exist on a continent which has been opened up for cultivation for scarcely a hundred years. The memory of the Crusades has left no trace in families where it is more important to take a husband or wife than to take the Cross³³. The axiom "Happy those peoples who have no history!" cannot be too often repeated. In fact the aristocracy of wealth, the only sort which is known here, can have but a purely material influence amongst people who are

disreputable one day and wake up millionaires the next, only to fall back into a state close to destitution a few months later. The veneration that we feel, however reluctantly, for a major capitalist is unknown among the colonial people of Oceania. They admit the efficacy of wealth, but not its superiority. The poor man no more respects the rich man in Australia than the rich man despises the poor man.

Many fatalists are unable to find themselves out of doors wearing a new hat and being caught in a sudden shower, without complaining :

“These sorts of things only happen to me!”

Nonetheless, it was true that the mistake which was to mark our evening could only have happened to us. All the windows in town were open to the sea breeze; the sounds of pianos, their keys tinkling beneath the delicate touch of young “misses”³⁴, came wafting through the air towards us. (In countries that are still savage, the piano is the first step towards civilisation.) Barrel-organs, having been banished from the mother country, had crossed the seas and now sought noisy hospitality in her fairest colony. But both organs and spinets seemed to have conspired to play the same tunes. As soon as a phrase died away on one instrument, it was taken up by another. The music was cheerful and lively, though without much variety of texture.

“There are some delightful pieces among this suite of English airs,” said one of us. “Just listen to that waltz.”

“What?” replied Mr Bonnard, “You take that for an English tune?”

“What is it, then?”

“You must be joking! It’s the waltz from *La Fille de Madame Angot*.”³⁵

Washed up by the storms of life at the farthest end of the earth, we Frenchmen, we Parisians, in the midst of all the foreigners around us, were the only ones who had never before heard this music, the work of a fellow-countryman of ours. Why, the Aborigines themselves knew it by heart.

This episode led us to the observation that no glory is as enviable as that attaching to the musician. The success of the finest book cannot be compared, in terms of universality of distribution throughout the world, with that of an opera or love-song which achieves popularity. The *Barber of Seville* is sixty years old, and for sixty years not a day has gone by without it being played by thousands of fingers or emerging from a thousand throats. The fact is that music

finds a place in every home without the need for examinations or diplomas. It enters every ear without distinction of education. Whoever has once acquired this special glory comes across it everywhere; he meets it at every street-corner, he bumps into it every step he takes; it comes to meet him, accompanies or pursues him. Even to the point at which, in the case of a work like *La Fille de Madame Angot*, one might add that it obsesses him.

Back in our hotel rooms after this explosion of *Angotmania*, we examined the state of our finances. It was quite simple : a void. If we paid the hotel bill, we would not be able to go to Sydney, the only town that offered us some hope of escaping from our predicament; but we could not leave for Sydney unless we had paid our account at the hotel.

A number of unscrupulous tourists are in the habit of leaving behind very heavy suitcases by way of payment; after their departure, it is discovered that the cases are full of pebbles gathered at the seashore. But even this dishonourable course of action would have been denied us, in the unthinkable eventuality of our having contemplated it, since we did not even own the indispensable suitcase. Shipwrecked as we were of our own free will, we had plunged into the waters of Noumea in the garb of expert swimmers. It was not so much a case of “poverty clad in genteel dress” as of “poverty clad in bathing suits”.

We decided that three of us escapees would stay in Newcastle as security, whilst the other three would travel to Sydney and send to the Great Northern Hotel the sum required in order to “redeem” their companions. Above all, we were determined to keep the promise we had made to Captain Law and obtain the ten thousand francs we owed him, even though that honest and cordial mariner had completely overlooked this commitment on our part. I knew that, in that respect, I could count on my friends in France; but if a letter takes two months to get there, a telegraph message costs four hundred francs to transmit. And we had at our disposal neither the two months nor the four hundred francs.

I boarded the *Kembla*, which was returning to Sydney that very night; its victorious propellor was already churning the water in impatience. The captain, first mate and also the steward of the *P.C.E.* showed the passengers to their cabins. We embraced one another on the steamer’s deck, and promised to send one another photographs, since photography – like music,

of which I spoke above, and also like love – can be understood in any language.

Olivier Pain stayed in Newcastle, in charge of our imperceptibly small finances. But although something of a prisoner, he knew that those on their way to Sydney were working to ransom him, and he philosophically allowed himself to accept an invitation to visit a coal-mine the following day.

The train from Newcastle to Maitland picks up and sets down passengers at about fifteen stations, taking an hour and a half for the journey. The only sign that one has reached Maitland is that the train has stopped. The slowness of the railways is so extreme that one might almost think it deliberate.

Coal has such commercial value for the district that people economise on it in their personal use. Just as cobblers are always the worst-shod of people, so the worst heated may well be coal-merchants. After gold, which is mined throughout Australia, in New South Wales coal is the largest export and the most sought-after component of the economy. At the time when we were there, the most recent statistics relating to the wealth of the area quoted the following figures for the previous year :

Gold : 18,075,000 francs.

Coal shipped from Newcastle : 7,900,000 francs.

This huge output is due to the extreme ease of drilling in a soil where coal is almost always close to surface level.

Our friends who had been expecting a dizzying descent down mine-shafts of which Jules Verne's *Journey to the Centre of the Earth* can give only a mild idea, were extremely surprised to find themselves walking straight into a ground-level tunnel which went right through the mountain, at the base of which a vein had been discovered reaching from one side right to the other. On leaving this tunnel, whose length increases daily as mining continues, they found themselves back in the open, only to enter another horizontal gallery shortly thereafter. This latter continued as far as the cliff-face overlooking the ocean, such that the mine's output can be loaded through the hole in the rock directly onto the ships that are waiting to take it on board, without incurring any additional transport costs.

This simplification of operations, moreover, had been plain for us to see. As we approached Newcastle, even when we observed it from the ocean we were struck by the appearance of the coastline, which was marked by large black patches. On the other hand, approaching the coast is generally impossible because of the coral reefs³⁶ which oblige ships to keep their distance and necessitate the concentration of coal-loading at the least dangerous points of access.

These outcrops are so common at ground level that men ploughing often come across them beneath the ploughshare, scattering them far and wide. We are in Australia and not Greece, where the wielding of a pickaxe is likely to damage the torso of a buried Venus or the shield of some anonymous Epaminondas. Nor are we in France, where the digging of a furrow may uncover old helmets that have lain buried since 1814, or the last cannonballs to have been fired at Montmirail.

Each of us takes his myths where he finds them. These sabre-hilts, parts of swords, Roman camps and other remnants of death, cause the European who comes across them to reflect on those who must have left them there. The colonist in Oceania is both less violent and more practical. Discoveries of a mineral order do not take his mind back to Bouvines, Agincourt or Poitiers : they simply remind him that coal sells for fifty francs a ton.

Let us not forget that we were travelling through a part of the world where a man's importance is appraised like that of a ship, where each individual merely represents the cargo it has on board, and where every biography is summed up in a dialogue which runs as follows :

“What is he worth?”

“He's worth ten thousand pounds sterling.”

In the exceptional conditions in which the coal-mines are worked, it is no exaggeration to say that one has only to bend down in order pick it up. One no longer has to deal with underground diggings that stretch into the unknown; with retaining walls, props and constructions of all kinds which are meant to guard against the caving-in of quarries but in fact cause the collapse of fortunes.

As if they were beneath the vaults of the catacombs, our friends suddenly found themselves proceeding along galleries that ran underground like the streets of some city suffering an eternal eclipse of the sun. Railway tracks are generally laid along the main thoroughfares, and the streets themselves are given their own names. One of them displayed on the wall to the left of its entrance a plaque reading *Victoria Street*³⁷. There is constant and frenzied bustle in these channels, which one might imagine to have been dug by prehistoric moles.

Never has Darwin's theory of environment³⁸ produced more striking results than the difference in customs, behaviour and even in type which are clearly observable between the coal miner and the gold miner. The former is a worker, the latter merely a gambler. Workers in the coal-mines rely entirely on their strong arms and their energy; the others merely take a punt on chance. Whereas the profession of one group is based on normal and more or less unfailing production, the fate of the other group is determined by the chance outcome of a game of trente et quarante³⁹.

The coal miners have brought with them from the Mother Country their love of cottages and a passion for comfort. Almost all of them married, they lead the regular life of the family man who comes home at the usual time each evening. They have set up libraries for their own use, established canteens and even founded newspapers to report on matters relating to their industry. The frenetic activity of the gold-digger, on the other hand, is comparable only in the ill-kempt style of his existence. There is no question for him of a household to keep, children to bring up, or a future to be provided for. The female population of a gold-diggings consists almost exclusively of four or five suspicious-looking creatures who – given the often large size of the male population – achieve a predominance in that place whose effect can easily be guessed at. All one hears of are knife-wounds suffered in their honour and migrants killing one another over them. On days when ore has been unearthed, indescribable dramas are played out, being best summed up in the phrase of a character from *La Dame aux camélias* :

“You speak to me fondly when I win.”⁴⁰

The unattached women of Australia do the “Goldfields season”⁴¹, just as those on the European Continent used once to do the Baden or Homburg season.

It is not exactly on a whim or out of fondness for travel that these women venture into regions that are almost always uncultivated, where the lack of water, the pestilential fumes and the snakes would need a great deal of compensation. When I relate the story of my stay in San Francisco, I shall return to these bizarre scenes, in which a man will sometimes throw away in an orgy of spending lasting a few hours the fruit of three months' hard labour and heroic privation. The fact is that, not only does gold fever lead to other fevers, but that these special kinds of hunter are more attached to the hunt than they are to the quarry. Finding gold is the main thing; after that, you spend it how you will.

It was in Maitland that we first saw, in all its astounding growth, the great Tasmanian gum-tree, better known by the name of *Eucalyptus globulus*. Protected by bark which can be peeled off like a bandage, its trunk thrusts itself out of the earth with the vigour and zest of a firework rocket. Only at the summit does the rocket open out into a canopy of dark green leaves, somewhat reminiscent of those of the olive tree. Although its circumference is often huge at the base, its height is normally so phenomenal that it still retains the appearance of an enormous artichoke gone to seed. It easily grows four or even five metres a year in that country, which almost makes one prepared to accept the claim made by the hero of a certain fantastic tale that he could actually see the grass grow.

M. Louis Figuier mentions some eucalypts growing to a hundred and fifty metres in height, in other words eight metres higher than the tallest pyramid, which rises to a hundred and forty-two metres. It is hard to imagine anything surpassing this; yet examples growing up to a hundred and sixty and even a hundred and sixty-five metres are by no means rare, and there is no more gripping spectacle than that of natives climbing, as a man climbs a pole, that is, pressing himself up against it, the length of those smooth trunks that sway in the wind like the masts of some gigantic ship.

Modern science attributes to this remarkable tree anti-febrile properties which I am not competent to dispute. There has been, and still is, in many quarters a proposal to plant eucalypts in the Roman campagna, the alluvial plains of the Sea of Azov⁴² and the African marshlands. I do not wish to discourage anyone, but it is impossible not to observe that the Australian inland, the native region of this great plant which one comes across at every step, is the home of a

continual marsh-fever⁴³ which very few travellers have been able to withstand. In 1860, Burke, Wills⁴⁴, King and Gray attempted to cross the Continent from Melbourne to the Gulf of Carpentaria. Three of the four explorers died as a result of endemic illnesses which they contracted at the edge of swamps, accompanied, it is true, by a frightening dose of hardship and fatigue.

The Aborigines are fond of eucalyptus resin, which feeds them and – where drinking water is not available – also serves to slake their thirst. They dig a deep hole in the tree at the exact spot at which the trunk emerges from the soil, and it is through this artificially-produced ulcer that the sticky sap flows. They lie flat on their stomachs and drink from the tree as if from a stream. But, if the hole is not plugged after a certain time, one can see the life of the condemned plant ebbing away through this deep gash; its branches dry out like the limbs of someone dying of consumption, its variegated colours take on that onion-skin hue which is the mark of decay in plant-life just as white hair is in man. We were shown one of these giants that had been shockingly torn open. It seemed to be growing more and more wrinkled and straggling before our very eyes. At the slightest breeze, it quivered like an old man. And yet it still struggled and held on to life

“Like a wounded soldier determined to die on his feet”,
as Théophile Gautier has put it in a wonderful sonnet entitled *The Pine of the Landes*.

While we were in New Caledonia, we had attempted to plant a number of eucalypts around our straw hut, which was situated on the eastern slope of the mountain range that cuts the Ducos Peninsula in two. The seeds from which this impressive product grows are scarcely one-eighth the size of a millet seed. Never did anything rise so high from such lowly origins. We would have been keen to inspect for ourselves the rapid growth of our plantation, but we had so many other things to see to that we had no hesitation in abandoning our newly-sprung eucalypts to the care of Providence. Did they adapt to that country better than we ourselves had been able to? We are proud of having planted them, but as the reader can imagine we have no regrets about having seen so little of their development.

On leaving the mine, the escapees went to visit M. Terrier, a Frenchman who had been banished as a result of the Coup d’Etat⁴⁵. Since those happy days he had settled in Lochinvar⁴⁶

near Maitland. M. and Mme Terrier received them cordially, the sincerity of their greeting being proved when they showed their guests my portrait displayed in the same frame as those of Gambetta and Ledru-Rollin⁴⁷. They offered their fellow-countrymen an excellent colonial wine made from grapes grown on the property. Although it originated from vine-stock that had been brought from the Bordeaux district, the Australian sun had lent it the warmth and bouquet of the best burgundies. Their host had also experimented with champagne-making, but that drink of heterogeneous ingredients, whose tricks are usually limited to sending the drinker's cork flying up to the ceiling, loses its verve in the fiery tropics, so that out of ten thousand bottles M. Terrier was able to save only nine hundred at most.

Although the morals of the colonists, who are mainly Protestants⁴⁸, are generally refined, English Puritanism had a little surprise in store for us – one which might have provided less discreet men with the elements of a good vaudeville sketch. After visits to churches and the hospital, our friends were presented to the director of a boys' boarding-school, who insisted on showing them everything down to the last penholder. They were taken to the dormitory, the refectory, the bathroom. Although the school consisted of only about fifteen pupils, it appeared to be thriving. But the headmaster's tender care was conspicuously lavished on a fair-haired lad whom nothing in particular would have singled out had it not been for these special marks of attention.

“Toby, did you sleep well last night?”

“Toby, did you enjoy the pudding at lunch?”

“Toby, if you're good, I'll take you for a walk this evening.”

Then, able to restrain himself no longer, the headmaster drew Olivier Pain aside in a window-recess and confided in him as follows :

“Young Toby is a lad whom we value highly⁴⁹. You would never believe it, but four of the wealthiest property-owners in the town mysteriously come and see him at least once a week, and each of them pays me Toby's entire boarding fee, requesting me to keep it a secret.”

“What about his mother?”

“She comes less often.”

“She is probably very busy. All the same, having her son's boarding-school fees paid four times over, by four different friends, is something that couldn't be

bettered even in the heart of Paris.”

The *P.C.E.*, which had taken us on board, belonged to the Montefiores, the biggest merchants in Sydney. Though full of admiration for the courage shown by Captain Law, they were too Israelitish not to work out straight away what its consequence would be in terms of their relations with the government in New Caledonia. So, without hesitation, they distantly imitated Abraham and sacrificed the skipper of their three-master.

Our deliverer received the notice of his dismissal without apparent emotion. Financial catastrophes are too frequent in this reckless society for a falling from favour to be of any more importance than a hand at cards. The director of the *Argus*, the largest newspaper in Melbourne, one day found himself abandoned by his editors and printing staff, all of them having gone off to the gold-mines. The very natural idea of making an announcement that the *Argus* would not appear next day did not even enter his head. He went to the printery, sat down in front of a deserted typesetting machine and put together the newspaper himself. In it, improvising with lead type, he related the misadventure which had obliged him to become a typographer on the spot.

The firm of Montefiore, in removing the captain from his command, pleaded the impossibility of his going ashore in a New Caledonian port from now on without running the risk of being arrested as chief perpetrator of an offence which would be all the more severely punished in France because of the annoyance caused to those who had allowed it to be committed.

Our friend fortunately did not have to reflect for long on the situation in which this deprivation of office placed him. He was known as the most skilful “old salt” in the region, and his bold stroke had just given a fresh boost to his popularity. A number of ship-owners came to him that very day to invite him to enter their service.

This commercial death-sentence went directly counter to its aim. The first journey undertaken on the *P.C.E.* by Captain Law’s replacement was unfortunately the last. Manned by an entirely new crew, since everyone down to the last sailor had been replaced, the ship probably

went aground on a reef because of an error in handling. The fact is, as soon became certain, that she was lost with all hands.

If the same event had happened to us, our enemies would have been quick to attribute to Providence the entire honour of our being swallowed up by the sea. I see things, however, with less superstition and more logic. The *P.C.E.* had kept the sea for as long as she had a capable man in command, and she sank because Captain Law's successor was an incompetent.

NOTES

[The abbreviation *R* refers to Rochefort's original text.]

1. *R* : "Notre voyage". Rochefort uses the editorial "we" throughout his account. The translation reads more naturally if "I" is used whenever "nous" in the original is purely editorial, as distinct from cases where it relates to both him and his companions ("we" or "us").

2. The technical translation of the French term *faux pont*, here used by Rochefort, is "orlop deck", which the *OED* defines as "the single floor or deck with which the hold of a ship was covered in, which, by the successive addition of one, two, or three complete decks above, became the lowest deck of a ship of the line; occas. applied to the lowest deck of a steamer, etc."

3. A number of Rochefort's geographical references are indeed inaccurate, notably his reference to Newcastle and the Hunter Valley as the site of sugar-cane plantations.

4. *R* : L'île Howe.

5. Adamastor is the spirit of the Cape of Storms (or Good Hope) described by the Portuguese poet Luis de Camoëns or Camões (1524-1580) in his *Lusiads*. Adamastor was said to have appeared to Vasco da Gama and foretold disaster to all attempting the voyage to India.

6. The full name of the vessel was the *Peace, Comfort and Ease*.

7. *R* : “les œufs de goëlands, de damiers et de monomochs”. Whilst *goëland* is a perfectly normal word meaning “seagull”, *damier* usually means chequerboard. The sense in which it is used here is noted in only one major dictionary, *Le Robert*, which states that it may be used in reference to animals and plants with colours that alternate like those on a chequerboard. In this sense, it is used of the *pétrel brun* (ou «à lunettes»). The word *monomoch* is found in no French dictionary, and is perhaps a misprint. It seems at least possible that Rochefort, writing some years after the events related, has mis-remembered a term used by the captain of the *P.C.E.*, who is being indirectly quoted here : a malle-muck (or mollymawk) is defined by *Macquarie* as “any of various oceanic birds, as the fulmar or albatross”; if the 19th-century pronunciation (or that of Captain Law) was closer to the Dutch origin of the word [*malle-mok*], this hypothesis is even more plausible.

8. An example of Rochefort’s poor geography, or of a lapse of memory. He presumably has in mind the Continental Shelf.

9. *R* : “Une dernière souleur”. The word *souleur* (originally a corruption of *douleur*) is extremely rare, antiquated and not found in most dictionaries. It means a sudden fright.

10. Convicts in whaleboats had begun to provide a pilot service as early as 1812, operating from the beach at the foot of what is today Watt Street. In 1870, quarters for harbour pilots were erected on the bank of one of the four boat harbours once provided on the Newcastle waterfront, the dock situated near the present Pilot Station. [Source : Mike Scanlon.] It is clear that, at the time of Rochefort’s visit, competition between pilots was intense.

11. *R* : Le «stewart».

12. Jacques Callot (1592-1635) was a painter and engraver whose work includes series such as *Les Gueux* and *Misères de la guerre*, which are presumably what Rochefort has in mind here. Herrera the Elder (Francisco de Herrera, 1576-1656) was a Spanish painter whose work is known for its brutal realism.

13. On Olivier Pain, see Introduction.

14. Pain, for instance, is presumably at the origin of the account of visits to coal mines and a boarding school later in this chapter, since Rochefort had by that time left for Sydney.

15. *R* : “ces sept gentlemen”. Presumably Rochefort means “six” instead of “sept”.

16. *R* : “achetée au «décrochez-moi ça» des piliers du Temple”. The expression “décrochez-moi ça” (literally “take that off the peg for me”) refers to the stalls of the *fripiers* or second-hand clothes dealers; the area of the Temple (the main Protestant church in Paris) in the third arrondissement was a centre for the second-hand clothing trade.

17. The Duchesse d’Angoulême (Marie-Thérèse de Bourbon) (1778-1851) was the daughter of Louis XVI. She married Louis, duc d’Angoulême (1775-1844), the elder son of Charles

X. She was an influential figure at the courts of Louis XVIII and her father-in-law. Rochefort seems to have found her taste in hats somewhat extravagant.

18. *R* : “de bergers et de *bushmen*”.

19. Cf. note 2, above. Jean-Paul Delamotte comments : “Rochefort seems to have confused Queensland, where Kanaks were indeed brought unwillingly to grow sugar-cane, with the Newcastle region, where grape-vines were planted in the Hunter Valley in the colonial period.” [French edition]

20. *R* : “Contez-nous votre «escape».”

21. *R* : “aux mystères du déport, du report et de la réponse des primes”. These unusual terms were part of the language of the Stock Exchange in Rochefort’s day. “Backwardation” is the percentage paid by a seller of stock for the privilege of postponing delivery till the next account or to any other future day; “cotango” or “cotangoing” is the continuation or carrying over of stock.

22. The *OED* gives as one of the meanings of “lion”: “things of note (in a town, etc.); sights worth seeing; esp. in phr. *to see* or *show the lions*. (This use is derived from the practice of taking visitors to see the lions formerly kept in the Tower of London.) 1590. Hence : A person of note who is much sought after 1715.” To “lionise” is defined as : “to treat a person as a ‘lion’; to make a ‘lion’ of 1809.”

23. *R* : “Nous lionisâmes donc à bouche que veux-tu”.

24. Rochefort and his companions would have been excited by any news of an amnesty (for Communards and their supporters); they would have to wait several years more before it came through. François Guizot (1787-1874) had been a Minister under Louis-Philippe, and was a defender of conservative ideas. Rochefort is suggesting that, if Guizot was in a position to declare an amnesty, there must have been a revolution in France and the comte de Paris (the duc d’Orléans) must have mounted the throne. [He was one of two claimants to the throne, the other being the comte de Chambord, on whom see Notes to the *Newcastle Chronicle* article of 2 April 1874.] The reference to a “Protestant committee” probably reflects the fact that, although France was a predominantly Catholic country, financial policy (especially in the world of banking) was disproportionately influenced by Protestants and Jews. One leading bank, the Union Générale, was established under Catholic influence precisely with the aim of challenging this domination.

25. *R* : “steamer”. In the previous sentence, the word “vapeur” is used with the same meaning.

26. It is noteworthy that Rochefort has changed the second sentence, which in the *Newcastle Chronicle* gave the visit of Sir Hercules Robinson as the reason for the flags.

27. Bal de la Reine-Blanche. A cabaret?

28. *R* : “une *barmesse*”. Rochefort’s memory of the Australian term has presumably failed

him; perhaps he has confused the term “barmaid” with the French word *kermesse*, meaning a fair or bazaar.

29. Presumably Rochefort is referring to the New South Wales Parliament, given that he was referring to a period well before Federation.

30. *R* : “dans un bar ou une bar, car on n’est pas fixé sur le sexe de ce substantif”. It is impossible to render in English Rochefort’s hesitation as to the gender of the word “bar” in French. [In contemporary French it is masculine.]

31. In the opera *Martha* by Friedrich von Flotow (1812-1883), Lady Harriet Durham and her maid Nancy go to Richmond Fair dressed as peasant girls; they eventually find themselves in a farm-house, where they are told to prepare supper.

32. *R* : Ketty. Presumably Kitty is meant.

33. It is not possible to reproduce accurately the play on words in Rochefort’s text, which reads : “Le souvenir des croisades n’a laissé aucune trace dans des familles où on se croise de temps en temps pour la reproduction, mais non pour la foi.” The words “croisade” (crusade) and “se croiser” (to meet) are cognate.

34. *R* : “les doigts des jeunes miss”.

35. Lecocq’s operetta *La Fille de Mme Angot* was written in 1872.

36. Once again, Rochefort reveals that he is no geographer. On his trip from Nouméa, he may well have heard about the Great Barrier Reef, without realising that it did not stretch as far south as Newcastle.

37. Victoria Street is still the name of a railway station on the Newcastle to Maitland line. As Rochefort himself did not travel to Maitland but is relying here on the memories of Olivier Pain, he is perhaps confusing the Victoria Street railway station with one of the railway tracks built inside the mine.

38. *R* : “la théorie «des milieux» inaugurée par Darwin”.

39. Trente et quarante is a card game in which thirty and forty are respectively winning and losing numbers.

40. *R* : «Tu me tutoies quand je gagne.» English does not have a distinction equivalent to that between “vous” and “tu” in French.

41. *R* : “vont faire leur «saison de placers»”. “Un placer” in French is a mineral deposit, especially of gold, in a sandbank or alluvial stream. The term “placer” in this sense also exists in English, but is not in common use outside the U.S.A.

42. *R* : “les palus méotides”. A highly esoteric reference to what was known in Latin as *palus maeotica* (the ancient name of the Sea of Azov, near the Black Sea in Russia), an

alluvial area.

43. *R* : “une *mal’aria* continuelle”. Presumably the broader sense of the word (where it is equivalent to “le paludisme”) is intended here, rather than the more limited sense in which it refers to the mosquito-borne disease.

44. *R* : Wils.

45. This is a reference to the Coup d’Etat of 2 December 1851, by which Louis Napoléon, the future Napoléon III, who had been President of the Republic since 10 December 1848, dissolved the Assemblée and set about the process of establishing the Second Empire (1852).

46. *R* : “Looking-War”.

47. Léon Gambetta (1838-1882) was a leading Republican figure of the day. Alexandre-Auguste Ledru-Rollin (1807-1874) had been a member of the Provisional Government in 1848.

48. *R* : “luthériens pour la plupart”. Rochefort is clearly using the term “Lutheran” in a very broad (and misleading) sense. The great majority of colonists, to whom he refers, would have been members of the Church of England.

49. *R* : “Ce petit Toby est un précieux enfant.” Presumably there is a play on words here, Toby being “precious” in the sense of being especially dear to the headmaster but also in the sense of being very good for the school’s finances.