

When we evacuated Moscow these poor people followed us, accompanying the baggage-train. The two unhappy ladies had to endure much hardship. One of them was already elderly, but a woman of strong will-power and physique. The other was younger and more delicate. One day, during our tragic retreat, I saw the older woman standing among a party of marines around a little camp-fire. The cold was already intense. The marines, who came from Southern France, were badly demoralized, and grumbled over the fearful hardships they had to endure. They blamed the Emperor for all their troubles, especially for bringing them to this accursed country. In fact, they vented their ill-humor upon him in the most violent terms. The woman tried to revive their courage, and I overheard her say:

'So you blame the Emperor. Don't you know that he is suffering as much as you; that it must grieve him deeply to be unable to save so many brave men who have followed him faithfully, as you have done? Don't you see him every day in your midst, marching on foot, and sharing your own sufferings and misfortunes? Remember that you are Frenchmen, and soldiers. . . . Here I am, a poor woman, already old. I have lost everything I owned. I am completely destitute. I have nothing to look forward to. However, I am bearing my hardships with resignation. What is the use of complaining, when that only makes us worse off than we already are? Have hope. Every day we are getting nearer friends and home. But we must be brave and hold out. Nothing ought to daunt young men like you.'

GAUTIER'S ESTIMATE OF BAUDELAIRE

BY MARCEL CLAVIÉ

From *La Nouvelle Revue*, May 15
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VERY recently, in conducting preliminary researches for a study which we intend to devote to Charles Baudelaire and his work, we were led to run through the principal publications of 1867, the year in which perished one of the poets of the nineteenth century whose literary conscience was finest and worthiest. The *Moniteur Universel*, the official journal of the Empire (which is to-day replaced by the *Journal Officiel*), for September 9, 1867, gives an extremely interesting and curious article by Théophile Gautier, of which

the greater part is devoted to Charles Baudelaire.

Although we may regret that in this literary study Théophile Gautier committed a serious blunder, in asserting that Baudelaire was born in India, when the official civil registry of Paris enrolls his birth at Paris, April 11, 1821, it is still a good thing, useful, even salutary, to read over the essay in which one of the masters of nineteenth-century literature gives careful and final judgment on the author of the *Flowers of Evil*.

When he had but recently learned of the death of Charles Baudelaire, Théophile Gautier wrote at the head of his article: 'For a long time death has been hovering over Charles Baudelaire; she had placed her bony finger on his forehead, and paralysis had rendered inert that body which was once so supple and agile. Then she withdrew, grimly certain that henceforward she would find him, motionless, in the place where she had left him. Later she returned, to deprive him of speech, taking the word away from the idea and rendering mute that ever-active brain. His hands could write no longer; and what could they have written, since to them there came no longer anything from those mysterious folds of the cerebral pulp, on which are traced, in invisible characters, that lexicon which the soul must con when it would hold communion with its fellow men? Yet the thought, which could not be transmitted, glowed in the eyes of the sick man; the thought translated itself by unknown formulas, images, gleams, sonorities, harmonies, which replaced the vanished language. Intelligence was not extinct, but glowed like a lamp in a dungeon-cell, visible only through the narrow slits leading up to the air. What a horrible torture! To understand and yet not be able to reply, and to feel the words, once so docile and obedient, take flight at the first attempt to use them, like a swarm of savage birds. Death at last took pity, and the torture reached its end. The executioner let fall the finishing stroke, that had been so long suspended.'

In reading over these pages one can realize easily how great was the influence of Baudelaire upon the generation of 1867; how all its literature was saturated with the works of certain contemporary authors; and to what degree Théophile Gautier had himself felt the influence of Baudelaire's spirit in writ-

ing the lines which I have just quoted, and those which are to follow.

Théophile Gautier then devotes some courageous and vigorous thinking to the literary personality of Baudelaire. 'Although his life was short (he lived scarcely forty-six years), Charles Baudelaire had time to express himself and to write his name on the wall of the nineteenth century, already crowded with signatures of which many can no longer be read. His name will remain there, we do not doubt; for it designates a vigorous and original talent, disdainful, even to excess, of the banalities which win a vogue, caring for nothing but the rare, the difficult, and the strange, with a keen literary conscience, never, for the necessities of life, abandoning a work until he saw that it was perfect, weighing every word as misers weigh a doubtful ducat, looking over a proof ten times, submitting the poem to the subtle criticism of which he was capable, and searching with an indefatigable effort after the particular ideal which he had set up for himself.

'Born in India [a gross error on Gautier's part, against which we warned the reader at the beginning of this article], and understanding English perfectly, he began by translations of Edgar Allan Poe — translations so excellent that they seemed to be original works, and the thought of the author gained in passing from one idiom to the other. Baudelaire naturalized in France this cunningly bizarre spirit, compared to whom Hoffman is merely a Paul de Kock of fantasy.'

The author of *Émaux et Camées* could not help writing a few lines on the subject of the *Fleurs du Mal*, in which so many of the poets of to-day and yesterday, without even questioning whether it is from the form, the freedom of the thought, or the richness of the images, find themselves akin to Charles Baudelaire. With much liter-

ary feeling he gives an appreciation which even to-day retains all its value and all its flavor. Word for word, this is what he said:—

'We have never read the *Fleurs du Mal* of Charles Baudelaire without involuntarily thinking of a tale of Hawthorne's. They have those sombre and metallic colors, that gray and green foliage, and those odors which rush to the head. His muse is like the daughter of a doctor, whom no poison can affect, but whose complexion, by its bloodless dull color, reveals the nature of her environment.'

That comparison would please Baudelaire and he would have loved to find in it the personification of his talent. He would thus glorify himself in the phrase of a great poet:—

'You endow the heavens with a kind of *macabre* art; you create a new shudder. Yet it would be a serious error to think that among these mandragoras, these poppies, and these saffrons, there is not found here and there a fresh rose with innocent perfume, a great flower from India opening its white cup to the dew from heaven. When Baudelaire paints the uglinesses of humanity and of civilization, it is never without secret horror. He has no complaisance for them and regards them as infractions of the universal rhythm. When he is speaking of the *immoral*, a great word of which one knows the use in France as well as in America, he would have been amazed that he should have been understood to stigmatize the merits of the

jasmine and to extol the wickedness of the bitter *ranunculus*.'

Théophile Gautier ends his article for September 9, 1867 by brief homage, worthy of such a critic as the author of *Paradis artificiel*, and he concludes: 'Baudelaire was an art critic of perfect fairness, and he brought to the appreciation of painting a metaphysical subtlety and an originality of viewpoint which makes one regret that he did not devote more time to work of this kind. The pages which he wrote on Delacroix are most remarkable. . . .'

We have confined ourselves in this article to quoting faithfully the most striking passages in Théophile Gautier's paper, in order to show the fraternal devotion which the author of so many poems of classic form wished to show in his appreciation of the works of Baudelaire, taken as a whole.

To-day our youth is reading Baudelaire passionately, quite unlike the youth of 1868, which was given over to the influence of Romanticism. When the City of Paris honors the house in which he was born by placing a tablet on it; and when literary societies are being formed to perpetuate the cult of the author of the *Fleurs du Mal*, it seems to us that it would be as well to give appreciation to this great poet, and critic,—an appreciation that is authorized and justified,—so that admirers, more numerous to-day than yesterday, may judge in their turn the work of Baudelaire, without any passion and with respect and admiration.

THE RETURN OF SIDI EMMHAMMED

BY RAOUL STOUPAN

From the *Revue Bleue*, July 16

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SIDI EMMHAMMED BEN LACHMI pulled the hood of his burnous down over his eyes as he entered his home. He felt weary, so weary that he wished for, death — good, friendly death, down under the crazy weeds of the cemetery. Squatting in the shadow of his bare room, he lighted a cigarette. His khaki blouse, spangled with the ribbons of his decorations, hung from a nail and the three *galons* of a captain in the French army glistened on the sleeves, bringing back all the memories of the military career that he had abandoned, his flight from his father's house, his enlistment, the constant study of the years of his apprenticeship, the joy of rising in rank, year by year, his pride when he became an officer, his marriage to a daughter of France, the terrible war with the quick promotion that it brought, his citations, his medals —

He had come back to the town of his fathers, after he had been given his discharge — the little town that he had quitted one clear morning in flowery May, so long ago. It had seemed lovelier than ever to him on his return, — his birth-place, Blida, — welcoming him home again, and he had murmured again to himself the words of the old *marabout* (seer): 'You are called a little town, but for my part, I call you a little rose.'

He was glad that he was all alone as he received the first smile of the village. He had urged his wife to stay at Algiers for a little while. He knew that his father was reconciled to him, but he wanted to make sure of his good-will

before bringing home the daughter of a *roumi*. He must prepare things; he must not hurry matters; there was need of tact. No one awaited him at the railway station, — not even old Lakdar who had cared for him when he was only a little fellow, — but, no whit disturbed, he made his way to the Arab quarter of the town, his soul throbbing with his memories.

As he approached the house, apprehension overtook him. How would his father receive him? Sidi Emmhammed's heart, hardened by long service in camp and under hurricanes of fire on the battlefield, failed him, like the heart of a child who knows he has done wrong, so that he almost trembled as he knocked at the discolored door.

It was Lakdar, a broken old man now, who received him with the quiet glance of a good old dog. In the rear of the court, on a frayed old rug, Sidi Lachmi was smoking his *kif*. Sidi Lachmi did not open his arms for the patriarchal embrace, as is the custom of the Arabs. After a quick touch of their hands, he kissed his forefinger negligently and then sat immovable. Only the keen eyes in his brown scarred face were alive, and they pierced down to the very bottom of his son's heart. The captain, humble under his uniform with its stars and crosses, lowered his eyes.

'My father,' he said, finding it difficult even to speak, 'may Allah be blessed for having kept thee in health!'

The old man bowed his head without reply; and then, with a longer glance, he