



## PRELUDE

I have secured for myself in this tempestuous academic climate a short-lived calm, within which I prioritized the publication of this very issue. As tomorrow is St. Valentine's Day, I felt it would be appropriate to honor both the subject of the occasion and the people who are so renowned for promoting that ethereal force that drives good men to do wicked things. For a more detailed discussion of the history of Valentine's Day, see *Quotidian vol. 1 no. 5*.

## QUOTES OF THE WEEK

"We love what we should scorn if we were wiser."  
—Marie de France

"A woman is more responsive to a man's forgetfulness than to his attentions."  
—Jules Janin

"In love, victory goes to the man who runs away."  
—Napoleon Bonaparte

## THIS WEEK IN HISTORY

**FEBRUARY 17, 1877:** André Maginot, French civil servant and veteran of World War I, is born in Paris. Maginot is best remembered for his advocacy of the Maginot Line, a string of concrete forts built along the Franco-German border between 1930 and 1940.

The Maginot Line was a product of post-WWI French thinking. France had suffered millions of casualties and immense physical damage to its landscape, as well as severe damage to its national psyche. There was general discontent with the Treaty of Versailles, as many felt Germany had gotten off too lightly. Others felt that Versailles was more like an armistice, and that war would eventually resume. Plans for the general defense of France became an official matter in 1919, when prime minister Clemenceau discussed various options with Marshal Pétain, head of the French armed forces. Three schools of thought emerged: (1) mimic the fortifications at Verdun, which had sustained little damage. The largest fortress at Verdun, Douaumont, had (*continued on page 2, column 1*)



## 3 WORDS

Memorize these by week's end and you shall quickly develop an enviable lexicon.

This week's theme: thought-encapsulating French phrases.

**esprit d'escalier** (eh-SPREE des-kal-i-YE) *noun* – *literally*, "wit of the staircase"

1. a witty remark thought of too late

*Etym.* From the notion that one thinks of the perfect remark on his way out.

**enfant terrible** (ahn-FAHN ter-EE-bluh) *noun* – *literally*, "terrible child"

1. a child whose inopportune remarks cause embarrassment
2. a person known for shocking comments or outrageous behavior
3. a usu. young and successful person who is strikingly unorthodox or innovative

*Ex.* Five years ago, Napster founder Sean Fanning was the enfant terrible of the file-sharing business.

**noblesse oblige** (no-BLESS uh-BLEEZH) *noun* – *literally*, "nobility obligates"

1. the obligation of those of high rank to be honorable and generous to those of lower status

*Ex.* John D. Rockefeller believed that noblesse oblige was the price of great wealth.

(continued from page 1, column 1) fallen only because it was insufficiently manned, and was subsequently recaptured only after the Germans withdrew. Fortifications like this could be spaced at regular intervals along the French border, and garrisons could issue forth to defend the gaps. (2) Create a long, deep network of fortifications, reminiscent of the German Siegfried Line. Pétain was most favorable to this alternative. (3) Ignore static defenses all together, and focus on building tanks and planes. Charles de Gaulle—who felt that warfare would become more mobile—was a proponent of this view, but it was frowned upon by most in France, since it was seen as inherently aggressive.

In 1922, as the newly appointed Minister of War, Maginot developed a compromise between the first two schools of thought based largely on Pétain's model. There was plenty of opposition to the defense system, but Maginot used compelling arguments to persuade detractors: a defense system was necessary to stop mass bloodshed, which would delay or halt the population recovery; a replacement was needed for the French troops who were to leave the Rhineland buffer zone in 1930 per Versailles; construction of the line would create jobs and stimulate the economy. In 1929, Maginot successfully lobbied the French government to allocate 3.3 billion Francs to the project.

Construction began in earnest in 1930 and was largely completed by 1935, but continued into 1940 after Belgium declared neutrality and hostilities with Germany escalated.

The Maginot Line has long been maligned as a costly failure, largely because it was unable to keep the Germans out of France. Most attribute this to the fact that the fortifications ended at the Belgian border. There are two reasons for this: (1) France and Belgium had signed a treaty of alliance in 1920, so it was inconceivable that a defense system would be necessary along an allied border. When Belgium abrogated the treaty in 1936 and declared neutrality, the Maginot Line *was* extended, though not to the specifications and quality of the rest of the Line. (2) The Ardennes Forest was believed to be impenetrable, so many felt it would be more economical to rely on this natural defense.

In any case, André Maginot did not live to see his eponymous defenses completed. He died in January, 1932 of typhoid fever. A monument in his memory was dedicated in 1966, near Verdun.

Sources: Wikipedia, About.com.

## ETYMOLOGY 101

### *The origin of: gorgeous*

We owe this word's origins to an article of clothing commonly worn by women in the late Middle Ages, the wimple. The wimple was a cloth headdress worn around the head, neck and chin that left only the face exposed. It was called the *gorgias* in Middle French, from the word *gorge*, meaning "throat." The *gorgias* was, strictly speaking, the part of the garment that covered the throat and shoulders, but the word was also used to describe the whole headdress. Apparently, an elegant and

elaborate *gorgias* was so much the mark of a well-to-do lady that it became an adjective meaning "elegant" or "fond of dress." The word entered Middle English as *gorgayse* and was later anglicized to its present form.

Source: *The Merriam-Webster New Book of Word Histories*.

## WELL I'LL BE! THE ANSWER TO A QUESTION YOU NEVER ASKED

*Why do people say "pardon my French" when they swear?*

The phrase was first used in *Harper's Magazine* in 1895, and follows a centuries-old tradition of labeling any promiscuous or unsavory behavior "French." Just think "French kiss" (making liberal use of the tongue while kissing), "French leave" (departing without informing the host), and "French letter" (condom).

The reason "French" precedes so many insalubrious acts has a lot to do with a general perception of French culture, which is considered more tolerant than most others, especially when it comes to all things sexual.

Thus, something that may not be tolerated in one culture (like swearing) would conceivably be acceptable in "French" culture.

Source: Google Answers, Online Etymology Dictionary.

## LITERARY GENIUS

Alexandre Dumas has secured for himself the enviable position as the most widely read French author in the world, thanks to his predilection for writing action-packed historical fiction. Among his best known works are *Les Trois Mousquetaires* (*The Three Musketeers*) and *Le Comte de Monte Cristo*. The latter, completed in 1844 and released as an 18-part series over the following two years, is considered by many to be Dumas' best work. The excerpt that follows details the escape of the main character, Edmond Dantès, from his prison cell in Château d'If.

FROM *LE COMTE DE MONTE CRISTO* (*THE COUNT OF MONTE CRISTO*)

by Alexandre Dumas

### Chapter XXI – The Island of Tiboulén

DANTÈS, ALTHOUGH STUNNED and almost suffocated, had sufficient presence of mind to hold his breath, and as his right hand (prepared as he was for every chance) held his knife open, he rapidly ripped up the sack, extricated his arm, and then his body; but in spite of all his efforts to free himself from the shot, he felt it dragging him down still lower. He then bent his body, and by a desperate effort severed the cord that bound his legs, at the moment when it seemed as if he were actually strangled. With a mighty leap he rose to the surface of the sea, while the shot dragged down to the depths the sack that had so nearly become his shroud.

Dantès waited only to get breath, and then dived, in order to avoid being seen. When he arose a second time, he was fifty paces from where he had first sunk. He saw overhead a black and tempestuous sky, across which the wind was driving clouds that occasionally suffered a twinkling star to appear; before him was the vast expanse of waters, somber and terrible, whose waves foamed and roared as if before the approach of a storm. Behind him, blacker than the sea, blacker than the sky, rose phantom-like the vast stone structure, whose projecting crags seemed like arms extended to seize their prey, and on the highest rock was a torch lighting two figures. He fancied that these two forms were looking at the sea; doubtless these strange grave-diggers had heard his cry. Dantès dived again, and remained a long time beneath the water. This was an easy feat to him, for he usually attracted a crowd of spectators in the bay before the lighthouse at Marseilles when he swam there, and was unanimously declared to be the best swimmer in the port. When he came up again the light had disappeared.

He must now get his bearings. Ratonneau and Pomegue are the nearest islands of all those that surround the Château d'If, but Ratonneau and Pomegue are inhabited, as is also the islet of Daume, Tiboulén and Lemaire were therefore the safest for Dantès' venture. The islands of Tiboulén and Lemaire are a league from the Château d'If; Dantès, nevertheless, determined to make for them. But how could he find his way in the darkness of the night? At this moment he saw the light of Planier, gleaming in front of him like a star. By leaving this light on the right, he kept the Island of Tiboulén a little on the left; by turning to the left, therefore, he would find it. But, as we have said, it was at least a league from the Château d'If to this island. Often in prison Faria had said to him, when he saw him idle and inactive, "Dantès, you must not give way to this listlessness; you will be drowned if you seek to escape, and your strength has not been properly exercised and prepared for exertion." These words rang in Dantès' ears, even beneath the waves; he hastened to cleave his way through them to see if he had not lost his strength. He found with pleasure that his captivity had taken away nothing of his power, and that he was still master of that element on whose bosom he had so often sported as a boy.

Fear, that relentless pursuer, clogged Dantès' efforts. He listened for any sound that might be audible, and every time that he rose to the top of a wave he scanned the horizon, and strove to penetrate the darkness. He fancied that every wave behind him was a pursuing boat, and he redoubled his exertions, increasing rapidly his distance from the chateau, but exhausting his strength. He swam on still, and already the terrible chateau had disappeared in the darkness. He could not see it, but he felt its presence. An hour passed, during which Dantès, excited by the feeling of freedom, continued to cleave the waves. "Let us see," said he, "I have swum above an hour, but as the wind is against me, that has retarded my speed; however, if I am not mistaken, I must be close to



Tiboulen. But what if I were mistaken?" A shudder passed over him. He sought to tread water, in order to rest himself; but the sea was too violent, and he felt that he could not make use of this means of recuperation.

"Well," said he, "I will swim on until I am worn out, or the cramp seizes me, and then I shall sink;" and he struck out with the energy of despair.

Suddenly the sky seemed to him to become still darker and more dense, and heavy clouds seemed to sweep down towards him; at the same time he felt a sharp pain in his knee. He fancied for a moment that he had been shot, and listened for the report; but he heard nothing. Then he put out his hand, and encountered an obstacle and with another stroke knew that he had gained the shore.

Before him rose a grotesque mass of rocks, that resembled nothing so much as a vast fire petrified at the moment of its most fervent combustion. It was the Island of Tiboulen. Dantès rose, advanced a few steps, and, with a fervent prayer of gratitude, stretched himself on the granite, which seemed to him softer than down. Then, in spite of the wind and rain, he fell into the deep, sweet sleep of utter exhaustion. At the expiration of an hour Edmond was awakened by the roar of thunder. The tempest was let loose and beating the atmosphere with its mighty wings; from time to time a flash of lightning stretched across the heavens like a fiery serpent, lighting up the clouds that rolled on in vast chaotic waves.

Dantès had not been deceived—he had reached the first of the two islands, which was, in fact, Tiboulen. He knew that it was barren and without shelter; but when the sea became more calm, he resolved to plunge into its waves again, and swim to Lemaire, equally arid, but larger, and consequently better adapted for concealment.

An overhanging rock offered him a temporary shelter, and scarcely had he availed himself of it when the tempest burst forth in all its fury. Edmond felt the trembling of the rock beneath which he lay; the waves, dashing themselves against it, wetted him with their spray. He was safely sheltered, and yet he felt dizzy in the midst of the warring of the elements and the dazzling brightness of the lightning. It seemed to him that the island trembled to its base, and that it would, like a vessel at anchor, break moorings, and bear him off into the centre of the storm. He then recollected that he had not eaten or drunk for four-and-twenty hours. He extended his hands, and drank greedily of the rainwater that had lodged in a hollow of the rock...

By degrees the wind abated, vast gray clouds rolled towards the west, and the blue firmament appeared studded with bright stars. Soon a red streak became visible in the horizon, the waves whitened, a light played over them, and gilded their foaming crests with gold. It was day.

Dantès stood mute and motionless before this majestic spectacle, as if he now beheld it for the first time; and indeed since his captivity in the Château d'If he had forgotten that such scenes were ever to be witnessed. He turned towards the fortress, and looked at both sea and land. The gloomy building rose from the bosom of the ocean with imposing majesty and seemed to dominate the scene. It was about five o'clock. The sea continued to get calmer.

"In two or three hours," thought Dantès, "the turnkey will enter my chamber, find the body of my poor friend, recognize it, seek for me in vain, and give the alarm. Then the tunnel will be discovered; the men who cast me into the sea and who must have heard the cry I uttered, will be questioned. Then boats filled with armed soldiers will pursue the wretched fugitive. The cannon will warn every one to refuse shelter to a man wandering about naked and famished. The police of Marseilles will be on the alert by land, whilst the governor pursues me by sea. I am cold, I am hungry. I have lost even the knife that saved me. O my God, I have suffered enough surely! Have pity on me, and do for me what I am unable to do for myself."

As Dantès (his eyes turned in the direction of the Château d'If) uttered this prayer, he saw off the farther point of the Island of Pomegue a small vessel with lateen sail skimming the sea like a gull in search of prey; and with his sailor's eye he knew it to be a Genoese tartan. She was coming out of Marseilles harbor, and was standing out to sea rapidly, her sharp prow cleaving through the waves. "Oh," cried Edmond, "to think that in half an hour I could join her, did I not fear being questioned, detected, and conveyed back to Marseilles! What can I do? What story can I invent? under pretext of trading along the coast, these men, who are in reality smugglers, will prefer selling me to doing a good action. I must wait. But I cannot—I am starving. In a few hours my strength will be utterly exhausted; besides, perhaps I have not been missed at the fortress..."

In an instant Dantès' plan was formed...and [he] struck out so as to cut across the course the vessel was taking. "I am saved!" murmured he. And this conviction restored his strength.

He soon saw that the vessel, with the wind dead ahead, was tacking between the Château d'If and the tower of Planier. For an instant he feared lest, instead of keeping in shore, she should stand out to sea; but he soon

saw that she would pass, like most vessels bound for Italy, between the islands of Jaros and Calaseraigne. However, the vessel and the swimmer insensibly neared one another, and in one of its tacks the tartan bore down within a quarter of a mile of him. He rose on the waves, making signs of distress; but no one on board saw him, and the vessel stood on another tack. Dantès would have shouted, but he knew that the wind would drown his voice...

Dantès, though almost sure as to what course the vessel would take, had yet watched it anxiously until it tacked and stood towards him. Then he advanced; but before they could meet, the vessel again changed her course. By a violent effort he rose half out of the water, waving his cap, and uttering a loud shout peculiar to sailors. This time he was both seen and heard, and the tartan instantly steered towards him. At the same time, he saw they were about to lower the boat.

An instant after, the boat, rowed by two men, advanced rapidly towards him...He shouted again. The two sailors redoubled their efforts, and one of them cried in Italian, "Courage!"

The word reached his ear as a wave which he no longer had the strength to surmount passed over his head. He rose again to the surface, struggled with the last desperate effort of a drowning man, uttered a third cry, and felt himself sinking, as if the fatal cannon shot were again tied to his feet. The water passed over his head, and the sky turned gray. A convulsive movement again brought him to the surface. He felt himself seized by the hair, then he saw and heard nothing. He had fainted.

When he opened his eyes, Dantès found himself on the deck of the tartan. His first care was to see what course they were taking. They were rapidly leaving the Château d'If behind. Dantès was so exhausted that the exclamation of joy he uttered was mistaken for a sigh.

As we have said, he was lying on the deck. A sailor was rubbing his limbs with a woollen cloth; another, whom he recognized as the one who had cried out "Courage!" held a gourd full of rum to his mouth; while the third, an old sailor, at once the pilot and captain, looked on with that egotistical pity men feel for a misfortune that they have escaped yesterday, and which may overtake them tomorrow...

"Who are you?" said the pilot in bad French.

"I am," replied Dantès, in bad Italian, "a Maltese sailor. We were coming from Syracuse laden with grain. The storm of last night overtook us at Cape Morgion, and we were wrecked on these rocks."

"Where do you come from?"

"From these rocks that I had the good luck to cling to while our captain and the rest of the crew were all lost...You have saved my life, and I thank you," continued Dantès. "I was lost when one of your sailors caught hold of my hair."

"It was I," said a sailor of a frank and manly appearance; "and it was time, for you were sinking."

"Yes," returned Dantès, holding out his hand, "I thank you again."

"I almost hesitated, though," replied the sailor; "you looked more like a brigand than an honest man, with your beard six inches, and your hair a foot long." Dantès recollected that his hair and beard had not been cut all the time he was at the Château d'If.

"Where are you going?" asked Dantès.

"To Leghorn." ...

"What is the day of the month?" asked [Dantès] of Jacopo, who sat down beside him.

"The 28th of February."

"In what year?"

"In what year—you ask me in what year?"

"Yes," replied the young man, "I ask you in what year!" ...

"The year 1829," returned Jacopo. It was fourteen years day for day since Dantès' arrest. He was nineteen when he entered the Château d'If; he was thirty-three when he escaped. A sorrowful smile passed over his face; he asked himself what had become of Mercédès, who must believe him dead. Then his eyes lighted up with hatred as he thought of the three men who had caused him so long and wretched a captivity. He renewed against Danglars, Fernand, and Villefort the oath of implacable vengeance he had made in his dungeon. This oath was no longer a vain menace; for the fastest sailor in the Mediterranean would have been unable to overtake the little tartan, that with every stitch of canvas set was flying before the wind to Leghorn.