

THREE ROMANCES

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Three romances by Théophile Gautier & Victorien Sardou & Paul Feval

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THÉOPHILE GAUTIER & VICTORIEN SARDOU & PAUL FEVAL

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GEMS FROM THE FRENCH

THREE ROMANCES

BY

THÉOPHILE GAUTIER,
PAUL FÉVAL AND
VICTORIEN SARDOU

TRANSLATED BY M. DE L.——

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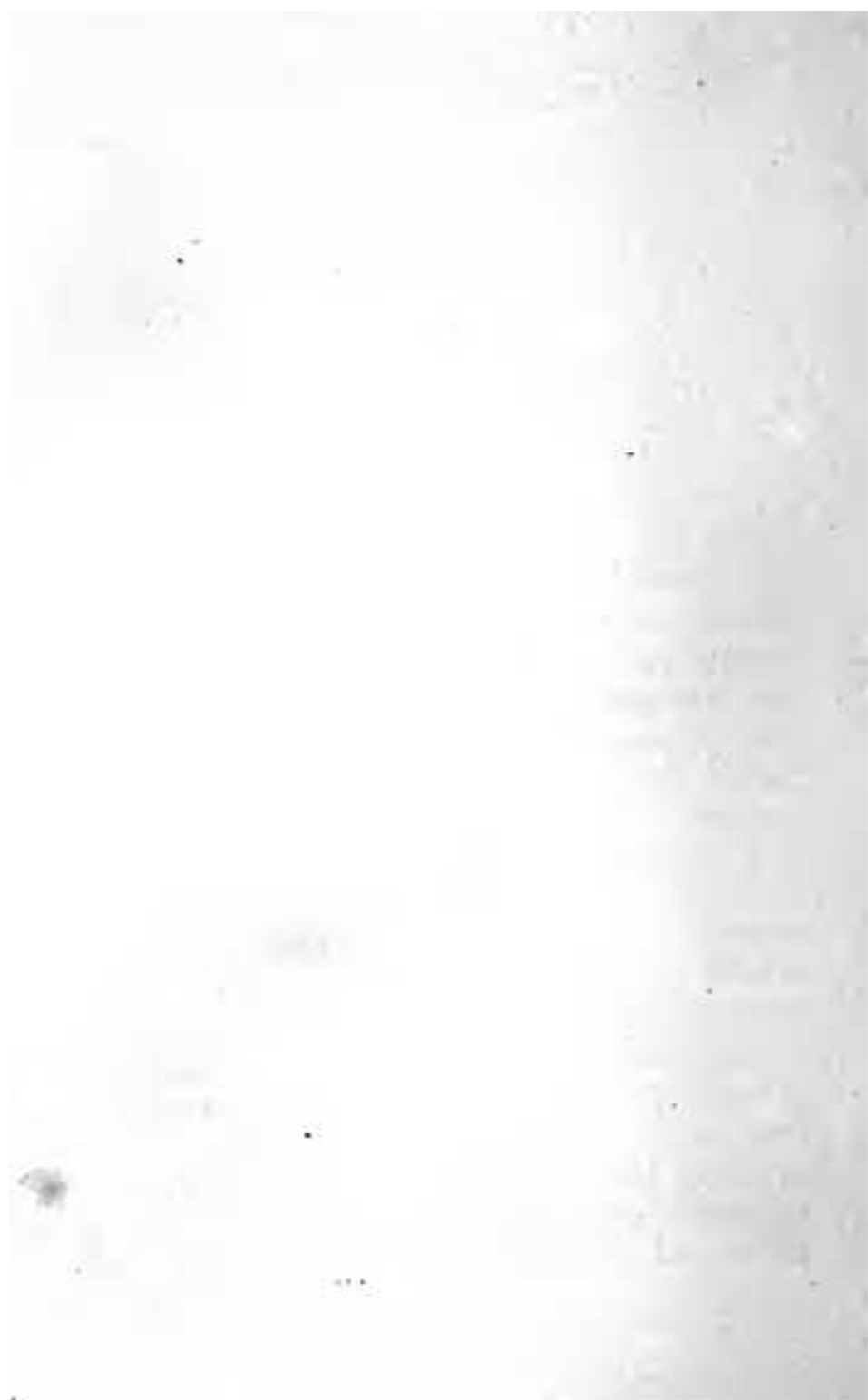
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JETTATURA.

BY THÉOPHILE GAUTIER.

CHAPTER I.

THE good ship *Léopold*, the large steamer which plies between Marseilles and Naples, had just doubled Cape Procida. The passengers were all on deck, suddenly cured of their sea-sickness by the sight of land, a more efficacious remedy than Malta pills and other recipes prescribed by physicians for this purpose.

A group of Englishmen were assembled on the upper deck, reserved for first-class passengers. They were all close-shaven, their cravats were tied with religious care, and their high, straight collars were as stiff as bristol-board ; their hands were encased in Suède gloves, and the varnish on their boots shone brightly in the sun. This group was composed of lords, members of the House of Commons, great merchants, Regent Street tailors, and Sheffield cutlers—all very serious,

very dignified, and unspeakably bored. There were women in profusion, too, as Englishwomen are not as sedentary as the females of other countries, and rarely miss an opportunity to get away from their little island. These charming persons murmured the sacramental phrase: "*Vedi Napolie poi mori,*" with the most delicious English accent, while they consulted their tourist guides or made notes of their impressions in their little memorandum-books, without paying the least attention to the tender glances cast upon them, *à la* don Juan, by a number of conceited Parisians who hovered about this bevy of loveliness, while the indignant mammas read long lectures to these fair misses on the impropriety of the French.

Three or four young men puffed away at their cigars as they walked up and down the quarter-deck, and eagerly noted the ever-changing panorama which was passing before their enchanted eyes. It was evident that these young men were artists, judging by their straw hats, their sack coats ornamented with huge horn buttons, and their wide duck trousers, without taking into consideration the fact that they wore their moustaches *à la* Van Dyck, and their hair either curled *à la* Rubens or cut straight *à la* Paul Véronèse.

The third-class passengers were grouped

in the bow of the steamer, leaning against the rigging or seated on coils of rope, munching away contentedly at the remnants of their provisions, and totally oblivious of the magnificence of their surroundings.

It was a glorious day; the blue waves came in gentle ripples, having barely the strength to obliterate the foaming wake of the vessel; the vapor from the smoke-stack, which formed in clouds in the beautiful sky, gradually dissolved in snowy flakes, while the paddle-wheels, revolving in a shower of liquid gold, joyfully churned the waters as if conscious of the proximity of a port.

The long line of hills extending from Pausicilippi to Vesuvius which forms the wonderful gulf in which Naples lies like a nymph reposing on the banks of a stream after a bath, began to unfold itself in the distance in purple undulations, and stood out in bold relief against the azure sky; several little white specks on the dark background denoted the presence of villas, scattered here and there over the country. The sails of the fishing-smacks as they entered the harbor glided over the blue waters like the feathers of a swan scattered by the breeze, proving the activity of man even in the midst of the majestic solitude of the ocean.

A few more turns of the paddle-wheels and