

## INTRODUCTION.

*Wherein Baron Munchausen explains the reasons for the writing of his game.*

AS I AM a man who is known as much for his scrupulous honesty in the retelling of his tales as for his amazing adventures around, across and in some cases through the circumference of the globe, I have been asked by my friends why I should wish to put my name—an old and most distinguished name: according to the family records there was a Munchausen stowed away upon the Ark—to a game for the telling of extraordinary tales and unlikely anecdotes.

My answer is simple. My reputation, and with it the retelling of several of my astounding adventures, has spread throughout the civilised world, across oceans, to deepest Afrique and farthest Nippon, to the twin worlds of the Sun and the Moon and the strange peoples who live there, and even into France. Therefore wherever I travel I find that I am constantly prevailed upon to retell these stories, which requests I feel unable to refuse, being a man of noble breeding.

Accordingly I find myself without a moments' peace from nincompoops who would hear once again the tale of how my companions and I were swallowed by a whale, or how I rode a cannonball through the sky over Constantinople. And often I am rewarded with nothing but a small glass of the roughest brandy, or even water! Am I some marketplace storyteller to act and jig for their amusement? No! I am a nobleman, a soldier and an adventurer, while they are ninnies all, and henceforth I will have naught else to do with them, or be damned.

With the publication of this game (which I here humbly  
dedicate



*The BARON journeys to visit the Emperor of the Moon, during which voyage he learned the rules to this Game from an inhabitant of the Dog-Star (page 26).*

dedicate to the two people most important in its writing : viz. myself and the Empress of Russia) I mean to provide those who would harass me with the means to tell astounding stories to each other without my presence. This, not solely a great boon to civilisation and a source of minor income to myself—which reason, I assure my diligent readers, was hindmost in my mind during the composition of this work—will also mean that I am able to spend more time with those to whom my presence and charisma is more desirable : to wit, the ladies of the company. I believe that this may be the greatest innovation in game design since the Collectible Tarot Deck, which I invented while incarcerated in the Bastille on a spurious charge of importing quinces on a Sunday. But I digress.

I shall begin to describe the game presently, but first I must remind my readers of one important fact. This is a game of telling stories, and many of those stories will be based on the astonishing adventures I have had—in their style, if not in their precise content. But while the stories you tell are fictions, my adventures are all true in every detail. To say otherwise is to call me a liar, and to pretend your fancies happened to me is to call me a charlatan, and sirrah, if you do either I shall take you outside and give you a show of swordsmanship that will dazzle you so greatly you will be blinded by its sparks for a month. I am a nobleman, sir, and I am not to be trifled with.

Now pass the cognac. No, clockwise, you oaf.

## THE PLAY OF THE GAME.

**M**Y GAME is a simple one. The players sit around a table, preferably with a bottle of a decent wine or an interesting liqueur to moisten their throats, and each takes a turn to tell a story of an astonishing exploit or adventure.

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The subject of the tale is prompted by one of the others, and the rest of the company may interrupt with questions and observations, as they see fit, and which it is the task of the tale's teller to rebut or avoid. When all are done he who has told the best story buys drinks for his companions and, the players being suitably re-fortified, the game may begin again.

The inspiration for my en-gamification of this ancient and noble pursuit comes not from a ritual of I witnessed among the tribes of the Amazon river, as I have claimed in the past (their game, I am reminded by several noted authorities, is more along the line of spillikins ; in my defence I confess that the tribesmen had forced me to consume a great quantity of sage and onion prior to roasting me, and my senses were confused) but instead from a memorable evening I spent in a coaching-inn outside St Petersburg, in the late winter of 17—.

Myself and several other travellers, many of us adventurers and soldiers of great renown, had been caught by a sudden blizzard and forced to spend the night in the same inn. However, being suddenly crowded the inn had fewer beds than patrons. Having firstly allowed the ladies of the company to retire to sleep, the gentlemen agreed to a contest to see who would receive the remaining unoccupied rooms, and who would be forced to seek their repose in the stables or—worse—with the servants.

Accordingly we sat down to a contest or wager, and when it was discovered that none of the company had cards, dice, teetotums or backgammon board about them, we agreed to a contest of stories. Each man among our number took a turn to ask the neighbour on his right hand to recount one of his most extraordinary adventures ; and the others of us then tested the tale on the wheels of veracity, credibility and laudability.

When all were done a vote was taken and I, by sheer cunning

cunning, came fifth. This position exiled me to a tiny attic garret, the location of which allowed me to sneak out when the rest of the company was asleep, to spend the rest of the night warm beneath the counterpane of the Duke of N—'s daughter, whose beauty and proximate room number I had noted before the game began. Herein lies one of the central principles of the pastime I will shortly describe, and the core of its philosophy : it counts not whether you win or lose, but how you play the game.

This game itself follows in similar fashion, but without the presence of the noble Duke's daughter. More is the pity.

### EQUIPMENT.

**T**O PLAY my game you will require three or more stout friends, preferably of noble or at least gentle birth ; a table ; several chairs ; a copious supply of drinks, preferably with a charming wench to serve them ; and some coins to serve as stakes and to pay the reckoning when all is done. If you have such things to hand then some parchment, pens and ink, a cold night, a roaring fire and a good supply of food are also advised, and it is always provident to have a manservant or two in attendance. You will need naught else, save for a few trifles such as I shall set forth hereto.

### STARTING THE GAME.

**G**ATHER THE company and count its members. If it is late in the evening then ask a manservant or potboy to do it for you. Make sure that each player has a purse of coins before them equal to the total number of players—do not ask a servant to do this, servants being by nature

nature a shifty and feckless lot who will as soon rob a man blind as help him out of a ditch, and I have been robbed in enough ditches to know. If your company numbers less than five, then give each one five coins. If it numbers more than twenty then think not of playing the game : instead I advise you to pool your purses, hire some mercenaries and plan an invasion of Belgium.

The exact nature of the coin you use is not important but I will make a few salient observations on the subject, drawn from my experiences of testing this game in the courts of the Orient where, despite the fact that I spoke none of their language and they none of mine, it played tolerably well. First, all the coins should be of the same value, to save on arguments. Second, they need not actually be coins—I have played with coloured glass baubles in darkest Afrique, where the natives possess such things in abundance—they are given them by missionaries and, having eaten the missionaries, have no more use for the beads. Third, anyone who proposes playing with paper money—fit for nothing more than wiping one's a—e—is clearly no gentleman and should be drummed out of your company and your club forthwith.

If the company are not too drunk, tired or bored, then you should move to Character Generation. Otherwise you may omit it. Or omit it altogether.

### CHARACTER GENERATION.

**M**Y PUBLISHER'S son, who serves me in the office of scribe and editor, claims that he has consulted with the greatest living authorities on such matters, and that it is necessary for games such as this, in which one must 'play' a 'role', to have a section of this ilk if they are to find any success with the educated reading public. I am hoping that

that these few lines will suffice, and that he will have been so far in his cups last night that he will recognise the heading above and will not notice, his senses still befuddled by cheap gin, that below it I have merely made a few pointed observations to my readers on the perils of dealing with such Grub Street types.

No. It seems he has detected my subterfuge and has confiscated the second bottle of the excellent cognac which we had been enjoying. I am not accustomed to giving in to kidnapping, blackmail and threats of ransom, but in this case it seems preferable to spilling my host's son's blood on his drawing-room carpet.

To the matter then. In essaying the business of character generation you will require a piece of parchment and a pen—I assume that, having received a proper education, you are able to read and write ; in Latin at least. If not, it is my experience that passing priests will often agree to perform the service of writing your name for you. If no priest or clerk is handy, summon one. If one is not to be found, or you are unable to procure the services of one through pecuniary difficulties, say by having lost your purse in an ill-advised bet on the growth of an asparagus-spear with the King of the Moon, then I advise you to pass this section without a second thought.

Write, or ask your companion to write, your name at the top of the paper, with the prefix 'Baron'—or 'Count', 'Lord', 'Duke', 'Archbishop' or whatsoever honorific is appropriate. If your company includes those of foreign extraction they may instead wish to use titles such as 'Graaf', 'Don', 'Sultan', 'Sheikh', 'Amir' or, as I gather is the fashion in the Americas, 'Chief Executive Officer'. In this age of universal suffrage, now that women have finally won the right they have gainsaid for generations, to own property, we must not forget the frailer sex too : 'Baroness', 'Countess',

tess', 'Empress' and so forth are equally permissible, on the sole condition that they promise not to dot their 'i's with small love-hearts.

If you were not born to such rank then, since this is naught but a game, you may write whatever takes your fancy—but sirrah, I warn you that should I meet a man who claims to be of noble blood but who is not—and with my age, experience and prodigious nose, together with the art of scent-scriving as taught to me by an Esquimau in reward for saving him from a herd of mad walruses, I can smell them, sirrah, I can smell them—then I shall so dizzy him with my rapier that he be unable to remember his own name and the direction he faces, much less the noble title he pretends to.

Beneath this, write whatsoever takes your fancy. I have found it most useful for recording the calling-addresses and pedigree of any especially charming ladies who catch my eye during the evening. This is the most important purpose of one's 'character sheet', or with any so-named 'character' thus created.

For character, as the most oafish baronet's son can tell you, is not generated but forged on the anvil of life. It is only when the blows of experience ring in our ears that we move another step on life's path, becoming by stages more rounded or sharpened, our corners knocked off or our features more pointedly defined ; and not by some artificial process of tossing teetotums or juggling figures like some ink-stained clerk in a windowless cellar hard by Threadneedle Street. Our souls are formed by first doing and then recollecting the experience of those deeds so that we and others might learn from them, and that is the very process which my game—nay, my life—describes. Character generation ? *{Here the Baron made an unpleasant noise in his throat.}* I'll none of it.

BEGINNING