

Heath's Modern Language Series

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LE VOYAGE  
DE  
MONSIEUR PERRICHON

PAR  
LABICHE ET MARTIN

*EDITED WITH INTRODUCTION, NOTES, AND VOCABULARY*

BY  
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## ~~INTRODUCTION.~~

LE VOYAGE ~~DE~~ M. PERRICHON ~~beats off~~ its title-page the names of Labiche ~~and Michel~~. The ~~author~~ ~~writer~~ is a noted writer of farces and light comedy, the latter one of his very numerous collaborators, whose part was probably rather of suggestion than of execution, so that in its literary aspects the play may be regarded as by Labiche alone.

The story of this author's literary career is peculiar. Popular almost from the first, his higher qualities were not appreciated by the critics till he had withdrawn from active literary life to the dignified leisure so dear to the French heart; and it was from his country-house in Normandy that he was called to take his seat in the French Academy, the highest honor that France has to bestow on her men of intellect.

Labiche was born on May 5, 1815, in the midst of the hundred days of Napoleon's desperate attempt to regain his throne. Like his friend Augier and several other of his dramatic associates, he studied for the bar; but this proved distasteful to him, and at twenty he began his literary career with stories in the newspapers, which he followed up, three years later, with a novel and his first drama, "M. de Coyllin," written with the double collaboration of MM. Michel and Lefranc. Though this play had very small success, the stage fascinated him, and for nearly forty years (1838-1876) he continued to

pour out a succession of farces and comedies, of which only the best are gathered in the ten volumes of his so-called *Théâtre Complet*.

In 1876, anticipating the waning of his popularity, he retired to Normandy, wealthy, but with no prospect of enduring fame. He seemed to leave no gap behind in the dramatic world. Fortunately, however, he carried with him the friendship of Augier, the greatest French dramatist of this half-century, who, while visiting him some months after, fell to reading, on a rainy day, some of his friend's comedies, and found in them as much to admire as in their author. Charmed with his discovery, he persuaded Labiche to publish a collected edition of his plays, for which he furnished a warm preface. Others, among them Sarcey, the dramatic autocrat of Paris, chimed in the chorus of praise, and in 1879 no one found it presumptuous that he, whose departure had not left a ripple on the surface of literary Paris, should return as a candidate for the Academy, which, in these latter days, has been peculiarly cordial to playwrights, as though wishing to make honorable amends for the exclusion of Beaumarchais and Molière.<sup>1</sup> Labiche was made an Academician in 1880; but, for him at least, "contentment was better than wealth," and he could not be tempted to resume literary work, though some of his plays were revived with phenomenal success, chief among them "Perrichon," in 1879. Labiche died January 23, 1888.

All critics agree that "Perrichon" is the best of Labiche's plays.<sup>2</sup> While he is always witty, he seldom holds up so true

<sup>1</sup> His dramatic colleagues in the Academy of 1880 were Hugo, Augier, Dumas fils, Feuillet, Sandeau, Sardou, making, with Labiche, more than a sixth of the Forty Immortals.

<sup>2</sup> For critical appreciation of Labiche's comedies, see Augier's preface to the *Théâtre Complet*; *Nouvelle Revue*, Oct. 1, 1880; Dumas, *Entr'actes*, iii, 336;

or so polished a mirror to the foibles of human nature as in this comedy, though the very exuberance of his humor sometimes hides its truth, as it does that of Beaumarchais. This, however, is less true of "Perrichon" than of the majority of his collected plays. Here the humor is rather that of situation and of character than of what Butler calls "cat and puss" dialogue, the classic *stichomachia*, or that riotous fancy that, as Mr. Matthews puts it, "grins through a horse-collar." Behind the mask of caricature, the attentive reader will not fail to see, with Augier, delicacy of tone, accuracy of expression, and an unflagging vivacity. "Seek," the same writer continues, "among the highest works of our generation for a comedy of more profound observation than 'Perrichon.' . . . And Labiche has ten plays of this strength in his repertory." The number is, perhaps, a little too great; but while his farces and extravaganzas won their meed of ephemeral praise, in "Perrichon" and four or five other plays, Labiche rose to pure comedy, and set up in the domain of literature a work whose social philosophy gives it enduring life, and makes him, as Dumas says, "one of the finest and frankest of comic poets since Plautus, and perhaps the only one to be compared with him."<sup>1</sup>

What raises "Perrichon" above the comedy of farcical adventure is the philosophic thread around which the action

and, best of all, Matthews, *French Dramatists*, 224 seq., to whom I am much indebted in what follows. He has traced the well-known English farces, *Box and Cox*, *Little Toddlekins*, and *The Phenomenon in a Smock-Frock*, to Labiche, and has found Papa Perrichon in the repertory of the Boston Museum.

<sup>1</sup> To this higher range of comedy belong *Célimare le Bien-Aimé*, *Le Plus Heureux des Trois*, *Cagnotte*, and *Moi*, of which the two latter may be commended for general reading. Among the best of the farces are *Poudre aux Yeux* and *La Grammaire*, both with Perrichon in the second volume of the *Théâtre Complet*.

crystallizes. This thread is the psychological fact that the average man likes better the society of those whom he benefits than of those who benefit him.<sup>1</sup> M. Perrichon is such an average man,—a retired and wealthy carriage-maker, of good and generous but narrow and commercial nature, a rather rank flower of the Parisian middle-class. With his worthy helpmeet and daughter he is taking his first pleasure-trip. Like most of Labiche's women, neither Madame Perrichon nor Henriette are firmly drawn. Indeed, Mr. Matthews quotes the French critic Sarcey as saying: "M. Labiche does not pretend to 'do' girls or women. He says they are not funny." The genial egoism of the father, however, furnishes humor enough for one family. His amiable weakness is brought out by the two suitors for his daughter's hand, Armand and Daniel. The former is evidently the truer lover, the latter the shrewder man. Armand tries to win favor in Perrichon's eyes by putting him under various obligations. Daniel trumps each trick of his rival by making Perrichon think that he has done an equal service for Daniel. So the vanity and egoism of the self-made man are flattered by the sight of the one, while they are hurt and repelled by the thought of the other. With a Perrichon, Daniel must inevitably carry the day. But the public demand the triumph of Armand, since he is not only the lover but the beloved of Henriette. Yet, however we may sympathize with her, French notions of propriety demand that she remain a passive spectator of the contest, whose varying fortunes are at length brought to a satisfactory close, not by any fault in Daniel's plan of action, but by Perrichon's overhearing him as he commends its merits to his rival and friend, a *dénouement*.

<sup>1</sup> La Rochefoucauld's Maxim 245: "It is not so dangerous to do harm to most men as to do them too much good," is the thesis of Perrichon.

whose triteness is the only noteworthy blemish in this admirable comedy.

As M. Lemoinne said, in welcoming Labiche to the Immortals, however light or venturesome his dramas may be, they are never immoral, because they are never sentimental. Like all French and earlier English writers of comedy, Labiche is at times a little broad, but always sound at the core. In "Perrichon" there are but three speeches that could offend our strictest conventions. Since these were absolutely indifferent to the course of the action, and aggregated, with the dialogue that they involved, but sixteen lines of no great wit or value, I have omitted them without regret, as I have also the directions fixing the relative position of the actors on the stage.

Those who use the notes should bear in mind that translations are given because it is thought the dictionary might mislead. They presume a knowledge of academic usage, but go beyond this in an attempt to render slang by slang, colloquial, familiar, or popular French, by corresponding English expressions. Such translations have inevitably much of the personal, subjective element in them. They show, more or less successfully, what the editor conceives to be the spirit of the passage, and they have served their purpose if they bring the reader nearer to the spirit of the author,—it is so easy for students, in their first years of French, to forget that the author has any spirit. They thumb dictionary and grammar, and, reversing Chaucer's suggestion, "choose the chaff, and let the wheat be still."

All teachers know that the rendering of the numerous French oaths and expletives, so harmless and yet so foreign to our ideas, is a source of much embarrassment to pupils at the

stage of progress in which "M. Perrichon" is likely to be read. Peculiar attention has been given to the proper shading in the translation of such expressions, by phrases not unbecoming to the class-room, and yet true to the spirit of the character that uttered and the situation that evoked them.

All social usages that differ from our own have been briefly described, so far as they were necessary to the present purpose, and since French irony, *blague*, and sarcasm are often misapprehended, even by the most careful students, it has seemed best, in a few cases to suggest the spirit of a passage, even though its verbal translation was obvious.

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SEWANEE, TENN.

# COMPOSITION EXERCISES

BY CAROLINE SHELDON

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## I. *Act I, Sc. 1.*

1. Majorin was in the station of the Lyons railway. 2. He was waiting for Perrichon. He had been waiting for an hour. 3. He was walking impatiently upon the platform.<sup>1</sup> 4. The cake-seller could be seen; also a row of doors. 5. In the French stations, the waiting-rooms are of three classes. 6. Perrichon was a carriage-maker, but Majorin was a clerk. 7. He wished to ask Perrichon to advance his quarter's salary. 8. He would put on a condescending air. 9. Ask the official at what time the train leaves for Lyons. 10. Is it a through train?

<sup>1</sup> *le quai.*

## II. *Act I, Sc. 2.*

1. Perrichon's straw hat was left in the cab. 2. The Perrichons<sup>1</sup> were all very warm. 3. It was Perrichon's fault. 4. He hurried his wife and daughter. 5. He said to them, "Stay here, I am going to buy the tickets." 6. He told them he was going to buy the tickets. 7. He bought three first-class tickets for Lyons. 8. This was the first time he had ever traveled. 9. He wished to be early (in order) to look at the station. 10. He has been promising them this trip for two years. 11. He had been waiting only until his daughter's education was finished.

<sup>1</sup> What about the plural of family names?



III. *Act I, Sc. 3 and 4.*

1. Daniel entered with a porter who was carrying his trunk. 2. He did not know where he was going and Madame Perrichon would not tell<sup>1</sup> (it) him. 3. He thought they were going to Marseilles. 4. He wished to know where they were going, before buying his tickets. 5. Armand also wished to buy tickets for Lyons. 6. The two young men<sup>2</sup> wished to have their trunks registered. 7. Perrichon had gone to the baggage room. 8. There were many trunks on the scales. 9. Armand asked, "Can I do anything<sup>3</sup> for the ladies?" 10. Porters and travelers were coming and going on the platform.

<sup>1</sup> not the conditional of *dire*. <sup>2</sup> *jeunes gens*. <sup>3</sup> *servir à*.

IV. *Act I, Sc. 5-7.*

1. Majorin was mistaken, the train would not start for two hours. 2. Perrichon was busy with the baggage. 3. It was very kind of Majorin to come. 4. The ticket-office was not open, and he was obliged to wait. 5. Hurry and drink your coffee. 6. They had a little favor to ask him. 7. He is anxious to state it to them. 8. He was to receive his steamship dividends on the eighth of the month. 9. Joseph did not know when the major would return. 10. He is to write to the major at Geneva, general delivery.

V. *Act I, Sc. 8, 9.*

1. They (*fem.*) were tired of sitting, when Perrichon came with the baggage-receipt. 2. The porter put the baggage on a truck, and Perrichon gave him a franc, but fifty centimes was enough. 3. Henriette began writing the expenses and her father's impression of the journey in a notebook. 4. Perrichon disputed with his wife, when the official asked him for their tickets. 5. Daniel had some first-class chocolate lozenges and so had Armand. 6. They both admired the carriage-maker's daughter. 7. The two young men promised each other to be straightforward. 8. Perrichon wished

a book free from nonsense, for his wife and daughter. 9. They were on the steps of the railway-carriage. 10. The contest was<sup>1</sup> to be honorable.

<sup>1</sup> *Devoir.*

#### VI. *Act. II, Sc. 1.*

1. We will take our coffee pretty soon. Mr. Perrichon has just taken his. 2. They told the innkeeper to give<sup>1</sup> the guide something to eat. 3. They got into the (same) compartment with the Perrichons. 4. Armand lent his newspaper to Perrichon, who went to sleep over it. 5. It must have tired the young man. 6. We got our board free. 7. The matter was very serious. 8. It would be still more so, if she were not a carriage-maker's daughter. 9. She looked at them several times. 10. They stopped at the same hotel.

<sup>1</sup> Subjunctive.

#### VII. *Act II, Sc. 1.*

1. Armand wished to warn Daniel, so he had stayed. 2. Daniel asked for a holiday, and the manager did not hesitate to give it to him. 3. Perrichon had not come, he had changed his route. 4. They all intended leaving for Ferney. 5. They went to Lausanne, expecting to find him. 6. Armand could not sit still. 7. They both went to meet the ladies, who had just left Lausanne. 8. Daniel offered him some coffee, but he would not take any. 9. They are anxious to visit Chamounix. 10. They were looking through the window at the mountains covered with snow.

#### VIII. *Act II, Sc. 2, 3.*

1. Armand was a fine fellow, all enthusiasm and feeling. 2. They did not know how to take comfort. 3. His father-in-law tried to have him sit down. 4. He sat behind the table, reading the fable of "The Hare and the Tortoise."

5. The travelers had written stupid things in the register. 6. Daniel came near being killed. 7. He had mounted a horse, with spurs too, he, who was no horseman. 8. The horse was skittish and shied. 9. He did it unintentionally; he had just mounted. 10. Madame Perrichon thought the father of a family ought not to ride horseback.

IX. *Act II, Sc. 3.*

1. Henriette would have disappeared over the precipice, if it had not been for this gentleman. 2. I was in there already. Didn't you see me rolling? 3. He rushed forward, cool and courageous. 4. There was no danger, so we calmed ourselves. 5. It did her good to cry. 6. She said that she would remember that day all her life. 7. I shall speak in my turn. 8. He was certainly wrong in staying at the inn. 9. He had the horse led back. 10. We all went to the inn for breakfast.

X. *Act II, Sc. 4.*

1. What did he say to that? 2. He said it was pure luck. 3. Daniel was joking, but Armand was serious. 4. He leaves this very night for Paris. 5. He wished them all happiness. 6. They understand each other well. 7. Daniel understood that Armand wished to ask a favor of him. 8. He begged it of him, we beg it of you. 9. He could not do it himself. 10. Daniel said he would propose for Armand.

XI. *Act II, Sc. 5, 6.*

1. Of course Perrichon saved his life. They saved each other's lives. 2. You will have a place in his heart as long as it beats. 3. My gratitude will never fail. 4. But he is a banker. I am director of a steamship company. 5. O, these women, you understand, they are always getting excited. 6. O, yes: I am grateful to him for what he has done, and shall repeat my thanks to him. 7. He thought about it, while putting

on his overshoes. 8. Had Armand seen her? 9. But the contest will be none the less honorable on that account. 10. He has no motives, but I have a powerful one.

XII. *Act II, Sc. 7, 8.*

1. Perrichon was ready, but where was Armand? 2. The accident was forgotten; they were leaving for the *Mer de Glace*. 3. It seems that he found his beautiful thought; it was not an ordinary idea. 4. The guide was waiting for the gentlemen. 5. The major was to stay only a minute. 6. While he was writing in the register, the major began talking to Armand. 7. Seven persons have come here today. Among them is a young man who says he is a banker. 8. He was particular to say that he did not wish to escape prosecution. 9. As soon as Armand returned to Paris, he had the major put in prison. 10. The latter was desirous of being imprisoned.

XIII. *Act II, Sc. 9.*

1. Armand thought the major was commonplace. 2. Madame Perrichon thought that Armand was going with the others. 3. Armand thought his firm probably had a branch at Etampes. 4. She considered Switzerland too mountainous. 5. He meant that Mr. Pingley was a banker. 6. He had been following them for days. 7. Daniel had just fallen into an abyss; but Mr. Perrichon restored a man to society. 8. Yes, that is correct; he knows it very well. 9. Before leaving the place, he again wrote in the register. 10. The major called Perrichon's attention to the fact that *mer* has no final *e*.

XIV. *Act II, Sc. 10; Act III, Sc. 1, 2, 3.*

1. It was raining torrents; no one could go on horseback in such weather as that. 2. They will arrive on Wednesday, July 10, at noon. 3. I have had the curtains put up, I am cleaning the flat. 4. Here are his papers; there are a great many cards. 5. John thought Perrichon had grown stout.

6. John was a servant, he did not go to Switzerland. 7. Perrichon changed his mind; he preferred Daniel. 8. He is grateful to him for it; but he never mentions it to him. 9. Perrichon said he had no vanity, but thought he had a right to have a little. 10. What did Henriette know about it? They will choose the one whom she prefers.

XV. *Act III, Sc. 4, 5, 6, 7.*

1. Her father had something serious to say to her. One suits you; the other, me. 2. She was ready to accept the one they preferred. 3. Yes. Come in; they have just returned. 4. I learned that they were to return today. 5. He lost the watch by refusing to pay the duty. 6. You are welcome. Come in; we expected you. 7. I introduced him to you; we saved each other's lives. 8. This (He) is one of his best friends. If it were not for him, I could not pay you your dividend to-morrow. 9. Do read; your name is in the paper; it cost three francs a line. 10. The janitor received the summons. Perrichon owed no one anything, but people owed him.

XVI. *Act III, Sc. 7, 8, 9, 10, 12.*

1. There is no use in talking, he lost that watch. 2. Daniel had no grudge against him, on the contrary he was grateful to him for his kindness. 3. The visits might be embarrassing for the young lady. 4. He was particular about the likeness. 5. They were to see each other no more. 6. There were many Perrichons in Paris. He had already called upon ten. 7. No; I do not wish to teach the gentleman a lesson. 8. Perrichon was going to fight. 9. I can not let him fight a zouave. 10. He thought he ought to notify the prefect of police that two madmen were going to fight. One of them was a carriage-maker.

XVII. *Act III, Sc. 18; Act IV, Sc. 1, 2, 3, 4.*

1. Perrichon could not accompany his wife and daughter; it was impossible. 2. John carried their letters to the Prefect of Police. 3. Daniel was not making any noise. How was Perrichon feeling? 4. They wished to arrive before three o'clock. 5. What is going on? He does not wish to be a second; that would cause him to lose his job. 6. There was nothing to fear, the authorities had been notified of what was going on. 7. Perrichon was disappointed because Armand had the major imprisoned. 8. I thought you were in prison. I was, but I have come out. 9. He was very sorry to have kept them waiting. 10. They are all unfeeling; why, his daughter was calmly watering her flowers.

XVIII. *General Exercise.*

There was once a family named Perrichon. They lived in Paris. The father had been a carriage-maker, but at the time of our story had retired from business, and planned to travel with his wife and daughter. Their first journey was to Switzerland. The father was much excited, took a great deal of trouble, and hurried his wife and daughter. He wished to take notes on the journey and gave his daughter a note-book for recording his impressions. He used fine language, which was not pleasing to his wife, a woman of good sense, and no foolish notions. However, he thought she was cross, because she had come without having had her coffee.

XIX. *General Exercise.*

Armand and Daniel were two young men who admired Henriette and wished to marry her. Of course she could not marry both of them, because that was against the law in France. So they promised each other to be friendly rivals and carry on a straightforward contest. They followed the Perrichons to Switzerland, where the men of the company

seem to have spent their time saving each other's lives, like three well-trained Newfoundland dogs.

When the major appeared, a new element was added, because he was in debt to Armand and had offended Perrichon by correcting the latter's spelling.

## XX. *General Exercise.*

Finally, Perrichon, by listening at the door, learns that Daniel does not think him very wise, and decides to give his daughter to Armand, whom she prefers. Also, the duel is prevented, the major's anger calmed, and the debt to Arnold paid. Every one is happy, except Majorin, who is quick to take offense, jealous of Perrichon's prosperity, and always ready to believe that every careless word is meant for him.<sup>1</sup> Even John, though he is told to pack up his baggage and go, is happy, because before leaving he knows what is going on.

<sup>1</sup> *à son adresse or une pierre dans son jardin.*

Le

# VOYAGE DE MONSIEUR PERRICHON

COMÉDIE

Représentée pour la première fois, à Paris, sur le théâtre du Gymnase  
le 10 septembre 1860.

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## PERSONNAGES.

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**PERRICHON.**

**LE COMMANDANT MATHIEU.**

**MAJORIN.**

**ARMAND DESROCHES.**

**DANIEL SAVARY.**

**JOSEPH, domestique du commandant.**

**JEAN, domestique de Perrichon.**

**MADAME PERRICHON.**

**HENRIETTE, sa fille.**

**UN AUBERGISTE.**

**UN GUIDE.**

**UN EMPLOYÉ DU CHEMIN DE FER.**

**COMMISSIONNAIRES, VOYAGEURS.**