



ETIENNE MICARD  
His "Ars Amatoria" sold out

all free. In Russia zey encourage ze yout'; ze women zey accept; and zey are close to ze coloured people. So! Russia must dominate ze whole world! Because not only does Russia win ze military war. She is also on ze side of ze yout', ze womanhood, and ze coloured people!" One index finger had been pointing at me all the time. The eyes had locked mine in a gaze from which no escape was permitted. And the other hand had grasped my sleeve. The point had been made, and I had been convinced. I had nodded, and muttered, "Yes, yes" throughout.

#### Played Chopin at 12B

"M. Micard is a man you should interview for *The Listener*," my friend said. "He was on the air the other day. He played some Chopin from 12B. He's quite a pianist, and he's composed a few songs."

"You are not afraid of newspapers?" I asked. He put up both his hands, pursed his lips and frowned, and made me understand that the idea was quite ridiculous.

"I was wanting to be a professional journalist myself, but my parents forbade. Since I am in New Zealand I have written some articles; some on tennis, a naughty one on golf. And zere was an interview about Tahiti. But you want new stuff, yes? We don't talk any more about Tahiti. It is annoying to talk about Tahiti." He frowned, and waved the distasteful idea away. "Your *Listener* is a literary paper? Perhaps we talk more of ze literary side of myself? I am Docteur—perhaps I write it for you—'Docteur ès-lettres'—it means I can take a what-you-call-it, a chair, at ze Collège de France, and deliver lectures, on any subject I choose—on ze sport, or ze history, or ze insects. I had to make two taze—you say theses—to be discussed before a jury. The first on an original subject. I wrote a book about Thomas; he was very famous writer in ze 18th century, a friend of Voltaire. Here, I write for you: 'Antoine Leonard Thomas (1732-1785), author of "Letters," friend of Rousseau and of Voltaire.' He was ze precursor of romanticisme. Also I wrote a book about 'Le Canal de Suez and French Genius.' You have heard of Ferdinand de Lesseps?"

I nodded. He leaned forward again. He tapped my arm. "Here. I tell you ze trut' about de Lesseps. As I wrote in my

book. It was not he who made ze Suez Canal. It was my grandfather. My maternal grandfather, his name was Voisin Bey. He was a self-made man; he was at ze Polytechnic in Paris. And when de Lesseps looked for a good engineer he chose Voisin Bey. And when in 1869 zere was ze great inauguration, de Lesseps was on ze first boat to sail in ze Suez Canal, with Napoleon III.; and Voisin Bey was on ze second, with ze Emperor Francis Joseph of Austria.

#### Rather Complicated

"I tell you about another grandfather—Nicolas Micard. He was secret ambassador to Pope Pius IX. In 1848. The Pope was having trouble with ze Republicans in Rome. In 1848 De Lesseps was French Minister to Rome. And now I tell you how ze Suez Canal was due to de Lesseps being a bad diplomat, but a good sportsman. It is rather complicated, but I tell you how..."

And he did. It was certainly complicated, but when M. Micard had finished I felt convinced that there would not have been any Suez Canal at all if things had not turned out the way he said.

M. Micard thought perhaps I would like to mention some of his other books—there were four on tennis, one on relations between France and Mexico (awarded a Geographical Society Prize and an Academy of Moral Sciences Prize); one of the explorer Champlain; one on "The Vatican and the Second French Republic," and of course his theses. And he mentioned another prize he had received for his book on Thomas—the "Prix Montyon," which many people had confused with another prize which was "For Virtue."

#### "Ars Amatoria"

"And so zey think I am a virtuous man! Perhaps zey might not think so if zey saw my humorous book on 'How to Approach Ladies.'"

I raised my eyebrows. He grinned.

"Oh yes. I have written one: ze're many tricks" (and here he plucked my sleeve and looked sly at me). He stood up and went to the other side of the room. He took a penny from his pocket.

"You are walking behind a pretty lady. So you take a coin—so—you throw it at her feet." He tossed the penny to the floor.

"She turns around. 'Oh!' She thinks: 'My bag!'" M. Micard gave a little representation of how it should be done. With a most gallant bow, and a flourish of his extraordinary hat, he plunged forward and saved the lady the trouble of picking up her penny.

"So. You understand." He sat down again, very pleased with the impression it had evidently made on me. He tapped my arm, and looked into my face.

"Another one. You are walking behind a pretty lady, and you wish to speak with her. So you go beside her and you say, 'Madame, I do not like to walk behind you. For then it looks as if I follow you; and I am sure you do not like to be followed in ze street.' And so! You are talking with her. And you say, 'Because I am sure you are married and very respectable...' You see?" M. Micard smiled with great satisfaction. "My book was a great success. One of ze most clumsy critics wrote about it. He put a review in ze *Comédia*—and so! No copies are left!"

—Staff Reporter



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