



***EDWARD WILLIAM  
THOMSON***

***OLD MAN  
SAVARIN,  
AND OTHER  
STORIES***

**Edward William Thomson**

# **Old Man Savarin, and Other Stories**

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# OLD MAN SAVARIN.

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Old Ma'ame Paradis had caught seventeen small doré, four suckers, and eleven channel-catfish before she used up all the worms in her tomato-can. Therefore she was in a cheerful and loquacious humor when I came along and offered her some of my bait.

"Merci; non, M'sieu. Dat's 'nuff fishin' for me. I got too old now for fish too much. You like me make you present of six or seven doré? Yes? All right. Then you make me present of one quarter dollar."

When this transaction was completed, the old lady got out her short black clay pipe, and filled it with *tabac blanc*.

"Ver' good smell for scare mosquitoes," said she. "Sit down, M'sieu. For sure I like to be here, me, for see the river when she's like this."

Indeed the scene was more than picturesque. Her fishing-platform extended twenty feet from the rocky shore of the great Rataplan Rapid of the Ottawa, which, beginning to tumble a mile to the westward, poured a roaring torrent half a mile wide into the broader, calm brown reach below. Noble elms towered on the shores. Between their trunks we could see many whitewashed cabins, whose doors of blue or green or red scarcely disclosed their colors in that light.

The sinking sun, which already touched the river, seemed somehow the source of the vast stream that flowed radiantly from its blaze. Through the glamour of the evening

mist and the maze of June flies we could see a dozen men scooping for fish from platforms like that of Ma'ame Paradis.

Each scooper lifted a great hoop-net set on a handle some fifteen feet long, threw it easily up stream, and swept it on edge with the current to the full length of his reach. Then it was drawn out and at once thrown upward again, if no capture had been made. In case he had taken fish, he came to the inshore edge of his platform, and upset the net's contents into a pool separated from the main rapid by an improvised wall of stones.

"I'm too old for scoop some now," said Ma'ame Paradis, with a sigh.

"You were never strong enough to scoop, surely," said I.

"No, eh? All right, M'sieu. Then you hain't nev' hear 'bout the time Old Man Savarin was catched up with. No, eh? Well, I'll tol' you 'bout that." And this was her story as she told it to me.

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"Der was fun dose time. Nobody ain't nev' catch up with dat old rascal ony other time since I'll know him first. Me, I'll be only fifteen den. Dat's long time 'go, eh? Well, for sure, I ain't so old like what I'll look. But Old Man Savarin was old already. He's old, old, old, when he's only thirty; an' *mean—baptême!* If de old Nick ain' got de hottest place for dat old stingy—yes, for sure!

"You'll see up dere where Frawce Seguin is scoop? Dat's the Laroque platform by right. Me, I was a Laroque. My fader was use for scoop dere, an' my gran'fader—the Laroques scoop dere all de time since ever dere was some Rapid Rataplan. Den Old Man Savarin he's buyed the land up dere

from Felix Ladoucier, an' he's told my fader, 'You can't scoop no more wisout you pay me rent.'

""Rent!' my fader say. '*Saprie!* Dat's my fader's platform for scoop fish! You ask anybody.'

""Oh, I'll know all 'bout dat,' Old Man Savarin is say. 'Ladoucier let you scoop front of his land, for Ladoucier one big fool. De lan's mine now, an' de fishin' right is mine. You can't scoop dere wisout you pay me rent.'

""*Baptême!* I'll show you 'bout dat,' my fader say.

"Next mawny he is go for scoop same like always. Den Old Man Savarin is fetch my fader up before de magistrate. De magistrate make my fader pay nine shillin'!

""Mebbe dat's learn you one lesson,' Old Man Savarin is say.

"My fader swear pretty good, but my moder say: 'Well, Narcisse, dere hain' no use for take it out in *malediction*. De nine shillin' is paid. You scoop more fish—dat's the way.'

"So my fader he is go out early, early nex' mawny. He's scoop, he's scoop. He's catch plenty fish before Old Man Savarin come.

""You ain't got 'nuff yet for fishin' on my land, eh? Come out of dat,' Old Man Savarin is say.

""*Saprie!* Ain' I pay nine shillin' for fish here?' my fader say.

""*Oui*—you pay nine shillin' for fish here *wisout* my leave. But you ain't pay nothin' for fish here *wis* my leave. You is goin' up before de magistrate some more.'

"So he is fetch my fader up anoder time. An' de magistrate make my fader pay twelve shillin' more!

"Well, I s'pose I can go fish on my fader's platform now,' my fader is say.

"Old Man Savarin was laugh. 'Your honor, dis man tink he don't have for pay me no rent, because you'll make him pay two fines for trespass on my land.'

"So de magistrate told my fader he hain't got no more right for go on his own platform than he was at the start. My fader is ver' angry. He's cry, he's tear his shirt; but Old Man Savarin only say, 'I guess I learn you one good lesson, Narcisse.'

"De whole village ain't told de old rascal how much dey was angry 'bout dat, for Old Man Savarin is got dem all in debt at his big store. He is grin, grin, and told everybody how he learn my fader two good lesson. An' he is told my fader: 'You see what I'll be goin' for do wis you if ever you go on my land again wisout you pay me rent.'

"How much you want?' my fader say.

"Half de fish you catch.'

"*Monjee!* Never!'

"Five dollar a year, den.'

"*Saprie*, no. Dat's too much.'

"All right. Keep off my lan', if you hain't want anoder lesson.'

"You's a tief,' my fader say.

"Hermidas, make up Narcisse Laroque bill,' de old rascal say to his clerk. 'If he hain't pay dat bill to-morrow, I sue him.'



"So my fader is scare mos' to death. Only my moder she's say, 'I'll pay dat bill, me.'

"So she's take the money she's saved up long time for make my weddin' when it come. An' she's paid de bill. So den my fader hain't scare no more, an' he is shake his fist good under Old Man Savarin's ugly nose. But dat old rascal only laugh an' say, 'Narcisse, you like to be fined some more, eh?'

"*Tort Dieu*. You rob me of my place for fish, but I'll take my platform anyhow,' my fader is say.

"Yes, eh? All right—if you can get him wisout go on my land. But you go on my land, and see if I don't learn you anoder lesson,' Old Savarin is say.

"So my fader is rob of his platform, too. Nex' ting we hear, Frawce Seguin has rent dat platform for five dollar a year.

"Den de big fun begin. My fader an Frawce is cousin. All de time before den dey was good friend. But my fader he is go to Frawce Seguin's place an' he is told him, 'Frawce, I'll goin' lick you so hard you can't nev' scoop on my platform.'

"Frawce only laugh. Den Old Man Savarin come up de hill.

"Fetch him up to de magistrate an' learn him anoder lesson,' he is say to Frawce.

"What for?' Frawce say.

"For try to scare you.'

"He hain't hurt me none.'

"But he's say he will lick you.'

"Dat's only because he's vex,' Frawce say.

"*Baptême! Non!*" my fader say. 'I'll be goin' for lick you good, Frawce.'

"For sure?" Frawce say.

"*Saprie!* Yes; for sure.'

"Well, dat's all right den, Narcisse. When you goin' for lick me?"

"First time I'll get drunk. I'll be goin' for get drunk dis same day.'

"All right, Narcisse. If you goin' get drunk for lick me, I'll be goin' get drunk for lick you"—*Canadien* hain't nev' fool 'nuff for fight, M'sieu, only if dey is got drunk.

"Well, my fader he's go on old Marceau's hotel, an' he's drink all day. Frawce Seguin he's go cross de road on Joe Maufraud's hotel, an' *he's* drink all day. When de night come, dey's bouse stand out in front of de two hotel for fight.

"Dey's bouse yell an' yell for make de oder feller scare bad before dey begin. Hermidas Laronde an' Jawunny Leroi dey's hold my fader for fear he's go 'cross de road for keel Frawce Seguin dead. Pierre Seguin an' Magloire Sauve is hold Frawce for fear he's come 'cross de road for keel my fader dead. And dose men fight dat way 'cross de road, till dey hain't hardly able for stand up no more.

"My fader he's tear his shirt and he's yell, 'Let me at him!' Frawce he's tear his shirt and he's yell, 'Let me at him!' But de men hain't goin' for let dem loose, for fear one is strike de oder ver' hard. De whole village is shiver 'bout dat offle fight—yes, seh, shiver bad!

"Well, dey's fight like dat for more as four hours, till dey hain't able for yell no more, an' dey hain't got no money left for buy wheeskey for de crowd. Den Marceau and Joe

Maufraud tol' dem bouse it was a shame for two cousins to fight so bad. An' my fader he's say he's ver' sorry dat he lick Frawce so hard, and dey's bouse sorry. So dey's kiss one anoder good—only all their close is tore to pieces.

"An' what you tink 'bout Old Man Savarin? Old Man Savarin is just stand in front of his store all de time, an' he's say: 'I'll tink I'll fetch him *bouse* hup to de magistrate, an' I'll learn him *bouse* a lesson.'

"Me, I'll be only fifteen, but I hain't scare 'bout dat fight same like my moder is scare. No more is Alphonsine Seguin scare. She's seventeen, an' she wait for de fight to be all over. Den she take her fader home, same like I'll take my fader home for bed. Dat's after twelve o'clock of night.

"Nex' mawny early my fader he's groaned and he's groaned: 'Ah—ugh—I'm sick, sick, me. I'll be goin' for die dis time, for sure.'

"'You get up an' scoop some fish,' my moder she's say, angry. 'Den you hain't be sick no more.'

"'Ach—ugh—I'll hain't be able. Oh, I'll be so sick. An' I hain' got no place for scoop fish now no more. Frawce Seguin has rob my platform.'

"'Take de nex' one lower down,' my moder she's say.

"'Dat's Jawnny Leroi's.'

"'All right for dat. Jawnny he's hire for run timber to-day.'

"'Ugh—I'll not be able for get up. Send for M'sieu le Curé—I'll be goin' for die for sure.'

"'*Mis re*, but dat's no *man*! Dat's a drunk pig,' my moder she's say, angry. 'Sick, eh? Lazy, lazy—dat's so. An' dere

hain't no fish for de little chilluns, an' it's Friday mawny.' So my moder she's begin for cry.

"Well, M'sieu, I'll make de rest short; for de sun is all gone now. What you tink I do dat mawny? I take de big scoop-net an' I'll come up here for see if I'll be able for scoop some fish on Jawnny Leroi's platform. Only dere hain't nev' much fish dere.

"Pretty quick I'll look up and I'll see Alphonsine Seguin scoop, scoop on my fader's old platform. Alphonsine's fader is sick, sick, same like my fader, an' all de Seguin boys is too little for scoop, same like my brudders is too little. So dere Alphonsine she's scoop, scoop for breakfas'.

"What you tink I'll see some more? I'll see Old Man Savarin. He's watchin' from de corner of de cedar bush, an' I'll know ver' good what he's watch for. He's watch for catch my fader go on his own platform. He's want for learn my fader anoder lesson. *Saprie!* dat's make me ver' angry, M'sieu!

"Alphonsine she's scoop, scoop plenty fish. I'll not be scoop none. Dat's make me more angry. I'll look up where Alphonsine is, an' I'll talk to myself:—

"'Dat's my fader's platform,' I'll be say. 'Dat's my fader's fish what you catch, Alphonsine. You hain't nev' be my cousin no more. It is mean, mean for Frawce Seguin to rent my fader's platform for please dat old rascal Savarin.' Mebby I'll not be so angry at Alphonsine, M'sieu, if I was able for catch some fish; but I hain't able—I don't catch none.

"Well, M'sieu, dat's de way for long time—half-hour mebby. Den I'll hear Alphonsine yell good. I'll look up de river some more. She's try for lift her net. She's try hard, hard, but she hain't able. De net is down in de rapid, an' she's only able for hang on to de hannel. Den I'll know she's got one big sturgeon, an' he's so big she can't pull him up.

"*Monjee!* what I care 'bout dat! I'll laugh me. Den I'll laugh good some more, for I'll want Alphonsine for see how I'll laugh big. And I'll talk to myself:—

"'Dat's good for dose Seguins,' I'll say. 'De big sturgeon will pull away de net. Den Alphonsine she will lose her fader's scoop wis de sturgeon. Dat's good 'nuff for dose Seguins! Take my fader platform, eh?'

"For sure, I'll want for go an' help Alphonsine all de same—she's my cousin, an' I'll want for see de sturgeon, me. But I'll only just laugh, laugh. *Non, M'sieu;* dere was not one man out on any of de oder platform dat mawny for to help Alphonsine. Dey was all sleep ver' late, for dey was all out ver' late for see de offle fight I told you 'bout.

"Well, pretty quick, what you tink? I'll see Old Man Savarin goin' to my fader's platform. He's take hold for help Alphonsine an' dey's bose pull, and pretty quick de big sturgeon is up on de platform. I'll be more angry as before.

"Oh, *tort Dieu!* What you tink come den? Why, dat Old Man Savarin is want for take de sturgeon!

"First dey hain't speak so I can hear, for de Rapid is too loud. But pretty quick dey's bose angry, and I hear dem talk.

"'Dat's my fish,' Old Man Savarin is say. 'Didn't I save him? Wasn't you goin' for lose him, for sure?'

"Me—I'll laugh good. Dass *such* an old rascal.

"'You get off dis platform, quick!' Alphonsine she's say.

"'Give me my sturgeon,' he's say.

"'Dat's a lie—it hain't your sturgeon. It's *my* sturgeon,' she's yell.

"'I'll learn you one lesson 'bout dat,' he's say.

"Well, M'sieu, Alphonsine she's pull back de fish just when Old Man Savarin is make one grab. An' when she's pull back, she's step to one side, an' de old rascal he is, grab at de fish, an' de heft of de sturgeon is make him fall on his face, so he's tumble in de Rapid when Alphonsine let go de sturgeon. So dere's Old Man Savarin floating in de river—and *me!* I'll don' care eef he's drown one bit!

"One time he is on his back, one time he is on his face, one time he is all under de water. For sure he's goin' for be draw into de *culbute* an' get drown' dead, if I'll not be able for scoop him when he's go by my platform. I'll want for laugh, but I'll be too much scare.

"Well, M'sieu, I'll pick up my fader's scoop and I'll stand out on de edge of de platform. De water is run so fast, I'm mos' 'fraid de old man is boun' for pull me in when I'll scoop him. But I'll not mind for dat, I'll throw de scoop an' catch him; an' for sure, he's hold on good.

"So dere's de old rascal in de scoop, but when I'll get him safe, I hain't able for pull him in one bit. I'll only be able for hold on an' laugh, laugh—he's look *ver'* queer! All I can do is to hold him dere so he can't go down de *culbute*. I'll can't pull him up if I'll want to.

"De old man is scare *ver'* bad. But pretty quick he's got hold of de cross-bar of de hoop, an' he's got his ugly old head up good.

"'Pull me in,' he say, *ver'* angry.

"'I'll hain't be able,' I'll say.

"Jus' den Alphonsine she come 'long, an' she's laugh so she can't hardly hold on wis me to de hannle. I was laugh good some more. When de old villain see us have fun, he's yell: 'I'll learn you bouse one lesson for this. Pull me ashore!'

"Oh! you's learn, us bose one lesson, M'sieu Savarin, eh?' Alphonsine she's say. 'Well, den, us bose will learn M'sieu Savarin one lesson first. Pull him up a little,' she's say to me.

"So we pull him up, an' den Alphonsine she's say to me: 'Let out de hannel, quick'—and he's under de water some more. When we stop de net, he's got hees head up pretty quick.

"*Monjee!* I'll be drown' if you don't pull me out,' he's mos' cry.

"Ver' well—if you's drown, your family be ver' glad,' Alphonsine she's say. 'Den they's got all your money for spend quick, quick.'

"M'sieu, dat scare him offle. He's begin for cry like one baby.

"Save me out,' he's say. 'I'll give you anything I've got.'

"How much?' Alphonsine she's say.

"He's tink, and he's say, 'Quarter dollar.'

"Alphonsine an' me is laugh, laugh.

"Save me,' he's cry some more. 'I hain't fit for die dis mawny.'

"You hain' fit for live no mawny,' Alphonsine she's say. 'One quarter dollar, eh? Where's my sturgeon?'

"He's got away when, I fall in,' he's say.

"How much you goin' give me for lose my big sturgeon?' she's ask.

"How much you'll want, Alphonsine?'

"Two dollare.'

"Dat's too much for one sturgeon,' he's say. For all he was not feel fit for die, he was more 'fraid for pay out his money.

"Let him down some more,' Alphonsine she's say.

"Oh. *misère, misère!* I'll pay de two dollare,' he's say when his head come up some more.

"Ver' well, den,' Alphonsine she's say; 'I'll be willin' for save you, *me*. But you hain't scooped by *me*. You's in Marie's net. I'll only come for help Marie. You's her sturgeon;' an' Alphonsine she's laugh an' laugh.

"I didn't lose no sturgeon for Marie,' he's say.

"No, eh?" I'll say myself. 'But you's steal my fader's platform. You's take his fishin' place. You's got him fined two times. You's make my moder pay his bill wis *my* weddin' money. What you goin' pay for all dat? You tink I'll be goin' for mos' kill myself pullin' you out for noting? When you ever do someting for anybody for noting, eh, M'sieu Savarin?'

"How much you want?' he's say.

"Ten dollare for de platform, dat's all.'

"Never—dat's robbery,' he's say, an' he's begin to cry like *ver'* li'll baby.

"Pull him hup, Marie, an' give him some more,' Alphonsine she's say.

"But de old rascal is so scare 'bout dat, dat he's say he's pay right off. So we's pull him up near to de platform, only we hain't big 'nuff fool for let him out of de net till he's take out his purse an' pay de twelve dollare.

"*Monjee*, M'sieu! If ever you see one angry old rascal! He not even stop for say: 'Tank you for save me from be drown' dead in the *culbute!*' He's run for his house an' he's put on



dry clo'es, an' he's go up to de magistrate first ting for learn me an' Alphonsine one big lesson.

"But de magistrate hain' ver' bad magistrate. He's only laugh an' he's say:—

"M'sieu Savarin, de whole river will be laugh at you for let two young girl take eet out of smart man like you like dat. Hain't you tink your life worth twelve dollare? Didn't dey save you from de *culbute*? *Monjee!* I'll tink de whole river not laugh so ver' bad if you pay dose young girl one hunder dollare for save you so kind.'

"One hunder dollare!' he's mos' cry. 'Hain't you goin' to learn dose girl one lesson for take advantage of me dat way?'

"Didn't you pay dose girl yourself? Didn't you took out your purse yourself? Yes, eh? Well, den, I'll goin' for learn you one lesson yourself, M'sieu Savarin.' de magistrate is say. 'Dose two young girl is ver' wicked, eh? Yes, dat's so. But for why? Hain't dey just do to you what you been doin' ever since you was in beesness? Don' I know? You hain' never yet got advantage of nobody wisout you rob him all you can, an' dose wicked young girl only act just like you give dem a lesson all your life.'

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"An' de best fun was de whole river *did* laugh at M'sieu Savarin. An' my fader and Frawce Seguin is laugh most of all, till he's catch hup wis bose of dem anoder time. You come for see me some more, an' I'll tol' you 'bout dat."

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