

CHAPTER XVII.

A TELEGRAM.

The great work undertaken by the Gun Club was now virtually ended, and yet two months would still elapse before the day the projectile would start for the moon. These two months would seem as long as two years to the universal impatience. Until then the smallest details of each operation had appeared in the newspapers every day, and were eagerly devoured by the public, but now it was to be feared that this "interest dividend" would be much diminished, and every one was afraid of no longer receiving his daily share of emotions.

They were all agreeably disappointed: the most unexpected, extraordinary, incredible, and improbable incident happened in time to keep up the general excitement to its highest pitch.

On September 30th, at 3.47 p.m., a telegram, transmitted through the Atlantic Cable, arrived at Tampa Town for President Barbicane.

He tore open the envelope and read the message, and, notwithstanding his great self-control, his lips grew pale and his eyes dim as he read the telegram.

The following is the text of the message stored in the archives of the

Gun Club:--

"France, Paris,

"September 30th, 4 a.m.

"Barbican, Tampa Town, Florida, United States.

"Substitute a cylindro-conical projectile for your spherical shell.

Shall go inside. Shall arrive by steamer Atlanta.

"MICHEL ARDAN."