

PARTING.

"We have had many partings. In the gloom
Of wintry twilights, moaning winds have whirled
Our farewell words afar. A quiet room
Has kept us safe a moment from the world
For fond last words and clinging kisses sweet.
The lark has seen us in a dewy lane
Unclassing hands; in many a busy street;
Beside an angry sea in blinding rain;
Upon a breezy moor at early morn,
Before the butterflies were flown abroad;
Among the standing shocks of yellow corn;
Upon a churchyard's green and hallowed sod;
Have farewell words been spoken, while the smart
Of parting pangs drew closer heart to heart.

"Brave for each other's sake, our partings wear
An aspect almost cheerful, eye meets eye,
As hand holds hand; love gives us strength to bear
Our silent anguish as the moments fly.
We have had many partings, but we know
More solemn farewell doth before us lie,
When death warns one of us to rise and go.
But which shall be the traveller, thou or I?
Shall I stand by to watch thy life eclipse,
To mark the pang that sets thy spirit free?
Will the dark waters gather to my lips,
Or shall I watch them closing over thee?
It matters little; love is very strong,
That parting is our last, and is not long.

NINETY-THREE.

BY VICTOR HUGO.

BOOK THE SECOND.

THE CORVETTE CLAYMORE.

I.—ENGLAND AND FRANCE IN CONCERT.

In the spring of 1793, at the moment when France, simultaneously attacked on all its frontiers, suffered the pathetic distraction of the downfall of the Girondists, this was what happened in the Channel Islands.

At Jersey, on the evening of the 1st of June, about an hour before sunset, a corvette set sail from the solitary little Bay of Bonnevill, in that kind of foggy weather which is favourable to flight because pursuit is rendered dangerous. The vessel was manned by a French crew, though it made part of the English fleet stationed on the look-out at the eastern point of the island. The Prince de la Tour d'Auvergne, who was of the house of Bouillon, commanded the English flotilla, and it was by his orders, and for an urgent and special service, that the corvette had been detached.

This vessel, entered at Trinity House under the name of the *Claymore*, had the appearance of a transport or trader, but was in reality a war corvette. She had the heavy, pacific look of a merchantman, but it would not have been safe to trust that. She had been built for a double purpose—cunning and strength; to deceive if possible, to fight if necessary. For the service before her this night, the lading of the lower deck had been replaced by thirty carronades of heavy calibre. Either because a storm was feared, or because it was desirable to prevent the vessel having a suspicious appearance, these carronades were housed—that is to say, securely fastened within by triple chains, and the hatches above shut close. Nothing was to be seen from without. The ports were blinded; the slides closed; it was as if the corvette had put on a mask. Armed corvettes only carry guns on the upper deck; but this one, built for surprise and cunning, had the deck free, and was able, as we have just seen, to carry a battery below. The *Claymore* was after a heavy squat model, but a good sailer nevertheless—the hull of the most solid sort used in the English navy; and in battle was almost as valuable as a frigate, though for mizzen she had only a small-mast of brigantine rig. Her rudder, of a peculiar and scientific form, had a curved frame, of unique shape, which cost fifty pounds sterling in the dockyards of Southampton. The crew, all French, was composed of refugee officers and deserter sailors. They were tried men; not one but was a good sailor, good soldier, and good royalist. They had a threefold fanaticism—for ship, sword, and king. A half regiment of marines, that could be disembarked in case of need, was added to the crew.

The corvette *Claymore* had as captain a chevalier of Saint Louis, Count de Boisberthelot, one of the best officers of the old Royal Navy; for second, the Chevalier La Vieuville, who had commanded a company of French guards in which Hoche was sergeant; and for pilot, Philip Gacquoil, the most skillful mariner in Jersey.

It was evident that the vessel had unusual business on hand. Indeed, a man who had just come on board had the air of one entering upon an adventure. He was a tall old man, upright and robust, with a severe countenance; whose age it would have been difficult to guess accurately, for he seemed at once old and young; one of those men who are full of years and of vigour; who have white hair on their heads and lightning in their glance; forty in point of energy and eighty in power and authority.

As he came on deck his sea-cloak blew open, exposing his large, loose breeches and top-boots, and a goat-skin vest which had one side tanned and embroidered with silk, while on the other the hair was left rough and bristling—a complete costume of the Breton peasant. These old-fashioned jackets answered alike for working and holidays; they could be turned to show the hairy or embroidered side, as one pleased; goat-skin all the week, gala accoutrements on Sunday.

As if to increase a resemblance which had been carefully studied, the peasant dress worn by the old man was threadbare at the knees and elbows, and seemed to have been long in use, while his coarse cloak might have belonged to a fisherman. He had on his head the round hat of that period, high, with a broad rim which, when turned down, gave the wearer a rustic look, but took a military air when fastened up at the side with a loop and cockade. The old man wore his hat with the brim flattened forward, peasant fashion, without either tassels or cockade.

Lord Balcarras, the governor of the island, and the Prince de la Tour d'Auvergne, had in person conducted and installed him on board. The secret agent of the prince, Gélambre, formerly one of the Count d'Artois' body-guard, had superin-

tended the arrangement of the cabin; and, although himself a nobleman, pushed courtesy and respect so far as to walk behind the old man carrying his portmanteau. When they left him to go ashore again, Monsieur de Gélambre saluted the peasant profoundly; Lord Balcarras said to him, "Good luck, general!" and the Prince de la Tour d'Auvergne added: "*Au revoir, my cousin!*"

"The peasant" was the name by which the crew immediately designed their passenger during the short dialogues which seamen hold; but without understanding further about the matter, they comprehended that he was no more a peasant than the corvette was a common sloop.

There was little wind. The *Claymore* left Bonnevill, and passed in front of Boulay Bay, and was for some time in sight, tacking to windward; then she lessened in the gathering night and finally disappeared.

An hour after, Gélambre, having returned to his house at Saint Helier, sent by the Southampton express the following lines to the Count d'Artois, at the Duke of York's headquarters: "Monseigneur,—The departure has just taken place. Success certain. In eight days the whole coast will be on fire from Granville to Saint Malo."

Four days previous, Prieur, the representative of Marne, on a mission to the army along the coast of Cherbourg, and momentarily residing at Granville, had received by a secret emissary this message, written in the same hand as the despatch above:

"Citizen representative,—On the 1st of June, at the hour when the tide serves, the war corvette *Claymore*, with a masked battery, will set sail for the purpose of landing upon the shore of France a man of whom this is the description: tall, old, white hair, peasant's dress, hands of an aristocrat. I will send you more details to-morrow. He will land on the morning of the 2nd. Warn the cruisers; capture the corvette; guillotine the man."

II.—NIGHT ON THE VESSEL AND WITH THE PASSENGER.

The corvette, instead of going south and making for Saint Catherine's, headed north, then veered to the west, and resolutely entered the arm of the sea, between Sark and Jersey, called the Passage de la Déroute. At that time there was no lighthouse upon any point along either coast. The sun had set clear; the night was dark, darker than summer nights ordinarily are: there was a moon, but vast clouds, rather of the equinox than the solstice, veiled the sky, and according to all appearance the moon would not be visible till she touched the horizon at the moment of setting. A few clouds hung low upon the water and covered it with mist.

All this obscurity was favourable.

The intention of pilot Gacquoil was to leave Jersey on the left and Guernsey on the right, and to gain, by bold sailing between the Hanois and the Douvree, some bay of the Saint Malo shore—a route less short than that by the Minquiers, but safer, as the French cruisers had standing orders to keep an especially keen watch between Saint Helier and Granville. If the wind was favourable, and nothing occurred, Gacquoil hoped by setting all sail to touch the French coast at daybreak.

All went well. The corvette had passed Gros-Nez. Toward nine o'clock the weather looked sulky, as sailors say, and there was wind at sea, but the wind was good and the sea strong without being violent. Still, now and then, the waves swept the vessel's bows.

The "peasant" whom Lord Balcarras had called "General," and whom the Prince de la Tour d'Auvergne addressed as "My cousin," had a sailor's footing and paced the deck with tranquil gravity. He did not even seem to notice that the corvette rocked considerably. From time to time he took a cake of chocolate out of his pocket and munched a morsel; his white hair did not prevent his having all his teeth.

He spoke to no one, except now and then a few low, quick words to the captain, who listened with deference, and seemed to consider his passenger, rather than himself, the commander.

The *Claymore*, ably piloted, skirted unperceived in the fog the long escarpment north of Jersey, hugging the shore on account of the formidable reef Pierres de Lecq, which is in the middle of the channel between Jersey and Sark. Gacquoil, standing at the helm, signalled in turn the Grève de Lecq, Gros-Nez, and Plémont, and slipped the corvette along among this chain of reefs, feeling his way to a certain extent, but with certitude, like a man familiar with the course and acquainted with the disposition of the sea. The corvette had no light forward, from a fear of betraying its passage through these guarded waters. The fog was a cause for rejoicing. They reached the Grande Étage. The mist was so thick that the outlines of the lofty pinnacle could scarcely be made out. Ten o'clock was heard to sound from the belfry of Saint Ouen, a proof that the wind was still abate. All was yet going well. The sea grew rougher on account of the neighbourhood of La Corbière.

A little after ten, Count du Boisberthelot and the Chevalier La Vieuville reconducted the man in the peasant's garb to his cabin, which was in reality the captain's state room. As he went in, he said to them in a low voice:

"Gentlemen, you understand the importance of a secrecy. Silence up to the moment of explosion. You two are the only ones here who know my name."

"We will carry it with us to the tomb," replied Boisberthelot.

"As for me," added the old man, "were I in face of death, I would not tell it."

He entered his cabin.

III.—NOBLE AND PLEBBIAN IN CONCERT.

The commander and the second officer returned on deck and walked up and down, side by side, in conversation. They were evidently talking of their passenger, and this was the dialogue which the wind dispersed among the shadows.

Boisberthelot grumbled in a half-voice in the ear of La Vieuville, "We shall see if he is really a leader."

La Vieuville replied, "In the meantime he is a prince."

"Almost."

"Nobleman in France, but prince in Brittany."

"Like the La Trémouilles; like the Rohans."

"With whom he is connected."

Boisberthelot resumed:

"In France, and in the king's carriages, he is marquis, as I am count, and you are chevalier."

"The carriages are far off!" cried La Vieuville. "We have got to the tumbrel."

There was a silence.

Boisberthelot began again: "For lack of a French prince, a Breton one is taken."

"For lack of thrushes—no, for want of an eagle—a crow is chosen."

"I should prefer a vulture," said Boisberthelot.

And La Vieuville retorted, "Yes, indeed! a beak and talons."

"We shall see."

"Yes," resumed La Vieuville, "it is time there was a head. I am of Tinténiac's opinion—'A true chief, and—gunpowder!' See commander; I know nearly all the leaders, possible and impossible—those of yesterday, those of to-day, and those of to-morrow; there is not one with the sort of headpiece we need. In that accursed Vendée it wants a general who is a lawyer at the same time. He must worry the enemy, dispute every mill, thicket, ditch, pebble; quarrel with him; take advantage of everything; see to everything; slaughter plentifully; make examples; be sleepless, pitiless. At this hour there are heroes among that army of peasants, but there are no captains. D'Elbée is *nil*; Lescure is ailing; Bonchamp shows mercy—he is kind, that means, stupid; La Rochejacquelin is a magnificent sub-lieutenant; Sils an officer for open country, unfit for a war of expedients; Cathelineau is a simple carter; Stofflet is a cunning gamekeeper; Bérard is inept; Boulainvilliers is ridiculous; Charette is shocking. And I do not speak of the barber Gaston. For, in the name of Mars, what is the good of opposing the Revolution, and what is the difference between the republicans and ourselves, if we set hairdressers to command noblemen?"

"You see that beast of a Revolution has infected us also."

"An itch that France has caught."

"An itch of the Third Estate," replied Boisberthelot. "It is only England that can cure us of it."

"And she will cure us, do not doubt it, captain."

"In the meanwhile it is ugly."

"Indeed, yes. Clowns everywhere! The monarchy which has Stofflet for commander-in-chief and De Maulevrier for lieutenant, has nothing to envy in the republic that has for minister Pache, son of the Duke de Castries' porter. What men this Vendean war brings out against each other! On one side Santerre the brewer, on the other Gaston the wig-maker!"

"My dear Vieuville, I have a certain respect for Gaston. He did not conduct himself ill in his command of Gueménée. He very neatly shot three hundred Blues, after making them dig their own graves."

"Well and good; but I could have done that as well as he."

"Zounds! no doubt; and I also."

"The great acts of war," resumed La Vieuville, "require to be undertaken by noblemen. They are matters for knights and not hairdressers."

"Still there are some estimable men among this 'Third Estate,'" returned Boisberthelot. "Take, for example, Joby the clockmaker. He had been a sergeant in a Flanders regiment; he gets himself made a Vendean chief; he commands a coast band; he has a son who is a Republican, and while the son serves among the Blues, the father serves among the Whites. Encounter. Battle. The father takes the son prisoner, and blows out his brains."

"He's a good one," said La Vieuville.

"A royalist Brutus," replied Boisberthelot.

"All that does not hinder the fact that it is insupportable to be commanded by a Coquereau, a Jean-Jean, a Mouline, a Focart, a Bouju, a Chouppes!"

"My dear chevalier, the other side is equally disgusted. We are full of plebeians—they are full of nobles. Do you suppose the *sans-culottes* are content to be commanded by the Count de Candaux, the Viscount de Miranda, the Viscount de Beauharnais, the Count de Valence, the Marquis de Custine, and the Duke de Biron!"

"What a hash!"

"And the Duke de Chartres!"

"Son of Egalité. Ah, then, when will he ever be king?"

"Never."

"He mounts towards the throne. He is aided by his crimes."

"And held back by his vices," said Boisberthelot.

There was silence again: then Boisberthelot continued: "Still he tried to bring about a reconciliation. He went to see the king. I was at Versailles when somebody spat on his back."

"From the top of the grand staircase?"

"Yes."

"It was well done."

"We call him Bourbon the Bourbeux."

"He is bald; he has pimples; he is a regicide—poh!"

Then La Vieuville added, "I was at Ouessant with him."

"On the *Saint-Esprit*?"

"Yes."

"If he had obeyed the signal that the Admiral d'Orvilliers made him, to keep to the windward, he would have kept the English from passing."

"Certainly."

"Is it true that he was hidden at the bottom of the hold?"

"No; but it must be said all the same."

And La Vieuville burst out laughing.

Boisberthelot observed, "There are idiots enough! Hold! that Boulainvilliers you were speaking of, La Vieuville. I knew him. I had a chance of studying him. In the beginning, the peasants were armed with pikes; if he did not get it into his head to make pikemen of them! He wanted to teach them the manual exercise, *de la pique-en-biais et de la pique-trainante-le-fer-devant*. He dreamed of transforming those savages into soldiers of the line. He proposed to show them how to mass battalions and form hollow squares. He jabbered the old-fashioned military dialect to them; for chief of a squad he said *un cap d'escade*, which was the appellation of corporals under Louis XIV. He persisted in forming a regiment of those poachers: he had regular companies. The sergeants ranged themselves in a circle every evening to take the countersign from the colonel's sergeant, who whispered it to the sergeant of the lieutenants; he repeated it to his neighbour, and he to the man nearest; and so on, from ear to ear, down to the last. He cashiered an officer because he did not stand bareheaded to receive the watchword from the sergeant's mouth. You can fancy how all succeeded. The booby could not understand that peasants must be led peasant fashion, and that one cannot make drilled soldiers out of woodchoppers. Yes, I knew that Boulainvilliers."

They moved on a few steps, each pursuing his own thoughts. Then the conversation was renewed.

"By the way, is it true that Dampierre is killed?"

"Yes, commander."