

## DROWNING.

I lie amid the short green grass,  
Whose whispering is too fine for sound,  
And watch the coupled outlines pass  
Of bird and shadow on the ground.

Oh, blithe bird, home from alien shores,  
What romance can you tell for me—  
Brought from the sea-bound blue Azores  
To our barbarian Tappan Zee?

Pipe me a strain of warm love-lay,  
Such as the grave Greek sweethearts sing.  
But no! farewell! he will not stay  
For me his upward soaring wing.

A single pearl of liquid song  
Drops through the dark blue heaven above;  
I hear it lulling, low and long,  
The echo of the sigh of love.

Hah! half the day has sauntered by;  
A snake winds through the billowy moss  
Beneath my head, and on the sky  
The crossed and bent birch branches toss.

From leaf to leaf a tumult creeps,  
A coolness drops upon my face,  
And down the west a light rain sweeps—  
A mist as fine as ladies' lace.

Aye! dear are summer dreams, and sweet  
The sensuous scent and song of June,  
And dear the brook's brawl through the heat—  
The perfect rest and hush of noon.

MILLIE W. CARPENTER.

## NINETY-THREE.

BY VICTOR HUGO.

## BOOK THE SECOND.

## THE CORVETTE CLAYMORE.

V.—VIS ET VIE.

The cannon came and went along the deck. One might have fancied it the living chariot of the Apocalypse. The marine lantern o'illating from the ceiling added a dawning whirl of lights and shadows to this vision. The shape of the cannon was undistinguishable from the rapidity of its course; now it looked black in the light, now it cast weird reflections through the gloom.

It kept on its work of destruction. It had already shattered four other pieces, and dug two crevices in the side, fortunately above the water-line, though they would leak in case a squall should come on. It dashed itself frantically against the framework; the solid tie-beams resisted, their curved form giving them great strength, but they creaked ominously under the assaults of this terrible club, which seemed endowed with a sort of appalling ubiquity, striking on every side at once. The strokes of a bullet shaken in a bottle would not be madder or more rapid. The four wheels passed and re-passed above the dead men, cut, carved, slashed them, till the five corpses were a score of stumps rolling about the deck; the heads seemed to cry out, and streams of blood twisted in and out the planks with every pitch of the vessel; the ceiling, damaged in several places, began to gape. The whole ship was filled with the awful tumult.

The captain promptly recovered his composure, and at his order the sailors threw down into the deck everything which could check the mad rush of the gun—mattresses, hammocks, spare sails, coils of rope, extra equipments, and the bales of false assignats of which the corvette carried a whole cargo; an infamous deception which the English considered a fair trick in war.

But what could these rags avail? No one dared descend to arrange them in any useful fashion, and in a few instants they were mere heaps of lint.

There was just sea enough to render the accident as complete as possible. A tempest would have been desirable, it might have thrown the gun upside down, and the four wheels once in the air the monster could have been mastered. But the devastation increased. There were gashes and even fractures in the masts, which, imbedded in the woodwork of the keel, pierce the decks of ships like great round pillars. The mainmast was cracked, and the mainmast itself was injured under the convulsive blows of the gun. The battery was being destroyed. Ten pieces out of the thirty were disabled, the breaches multiplied in the side, and the corvette began to take in water.

The old passenger, who had descended to the gun-deck, looked like a form of stone stationed at the foot of the stairs. He stood motionless, gazing sternly about upon the devastation. Indeed, it seemed impossible to take a single step forward.

Each bound of the liberated carronade menaced the destruction of the vessel. A few minutes more and shipwreck would be inevitable.

They must perish or put a summary end to the disaster—a decision must be made, but how?

What a combatant, this cannon! They must check this mad monster. They must seize this flash of lightning. They must overthrow this thunderbolt.

Boisberthelot said to La Vieuville, "Do you believe in God, chevalier?"

La Vieuville replied, "Yes—no—sometimes."

"In a tempest?"

"Yes, and in moments like this."

"Only God can aid us here," said Boisberthelot.

All were silent—the cannon kept up its horrible fracas.

The waves beat against the ship; their blows from without responded to the strokes of the cannon.

It was like two hammers alternating.

Suddenly, into the midst of this sort of inaccessible circus, where the escaped cannon leaped and bounded, there sprang a man with an iron bar in his hand. It was the author of this catastrophe, the gunner whose culpable negligence had caused the accident—the captain of the gun. Having been the means of bringing about the misfortune, he desired to repair it. He had caught up a handspike in one fist, a tiller-ropes with a slipping noose in the other, and jumped down into

the gun-deck. Then a strange combat began—a titanic strife—the struggle of the gun against the gunner—a battle between matter and intelligence—a duel between the inanimate and the human.

The man was posted in an angle, the bar and rope in his two fists; backed against one of the riders, settled firmly on his legs as on two pillars of steel; livid, calm, tragic, rooted, as it were, in the planks, he waited.

He waited for the cannon to pass near him.

The gunner knew his piece, and it seemed to him that she must recognise her master. He had lived a long while with her. How many times he had thrust his hand between her jaws! It was his tame monster. He began to address it as he might have done his dog.

"Come," said he. Perhaps he loved it.

He seemed to wish that it would turn towards him.

But to come towards him would be to spring upon him. Then he would be lost. How to avoid the crush—there was the question. All stared in terrified silence.

Not a breath breathed freely, except perchance that of the old man who alone stood in the deck with the two combatants, a stern second.

He might himself be crushed by the piece. He did not stir. Beneath them the blind sea directed the battle.

At the instant when, accepting this awful hand-to-hand contest, the gunner approached to challenge the cannon, some chance fluctuation of the waves kept it for a moment immovable as if suddenly stupified.

"Come on," said the man to it. It seemed to listen.

Suddenly it darted upon him. The gunner avoided the shock.

The struggle began—struggle unheard of. The fragile matching itself against the invulnerable. The thing of flesh attacking the brazen brute. On the one side blind force, on the other a soul.

The whole passed in a half-light. It was like the indistinct vision of a miracle.

A soul—strange thing; but you would have said that the cannon had one also, a soul filled with rage and hatred. This blindness appeared to have eyes. The monster had the air of watching the man. There was—one might have fancied so at least—cunning in this mass. It also chose its moment. It became some gigantic insect of metal, having, or seeming to have, the will of a demon. Sometimes this colossal grasshopper would strike the low ceiling of the gun-deck, then fall back on its four wheels like a tiger upon his four claws, and dart anew on the man. He, supple, agile, adroit, would glide away like a snake from the reach of these lightning-like movements. He avoided the encounters, but the blows which he escaped fell upon the vessel and continued the havoc.

An end of broken chain remained attached to the carronade. This chain had twisted itself, one could not tell how, about the screw of the breech-button. One extremity of the chain was fastened to the carriage. The other, hanging loose, whirled wildly about the gun, and added to the danger of its blows.

The screw held it like a clenched hand, and the chain, multiplying the strokes of the battering-ram by its strokes of a thong, made a fearful whirlwind about the cannon—a whip of iron in a fist of brass. This chain complicated the battle.

Nevertheless the man fought. Sometimes, even, it was the man who attacked the cannon. He crept along the side, bar and rope in hand, and the cannon had the air of understanding, and fled as if it perceived a snare. The man pursued it, formidable, fearless.

Such a duel could not last long. The gun seemed suddenly to say to itself, "Come, we must make an end!" and it paused. One felt the approach of the crisis. The cannon, as if in suspense, appeared to have, or had—because it seemed to all a sentient being—a furious premeditation. It sprang unexpectedly upon the gunner. He jumped aside, let it pass, and cried out with a laugh, "Try again." The gun, as if in a fury, broke a carronade to larboard, then, seized anew by the invisible sling which held it, was flung to starboard towards the man, who escaped.

Three carronades gave way under the blows of the gun, then, as if blind and no longer conscious of what it was doing, it turned its back on the man, rolled from the stern to the bow, bruising the stem and making a breach in the planking of the prow. The gunner had taken refuge at the foot of the stairs, a few steps from the old man, who was watching.

The gunner held his handspike in rest. The cannon seemed to perceive him, and, without taking the trouble to turn itself, backed upon him with the quickness of an axe-stroke. The gunner, if driven back against the side, was lost. The crew uttered a simultaneous cry.

But the old passenger, until now immovable, made a spring more rapid than all those wild whirls. He seized a bale of the false assignats, and at the risk of being crushed, succeeded in flinging it between the wheels of the carronade. The manoeuvre, decisive and dangerous, could not have been executed with more adroitness and precision by a man trained to all the exercises set down in Durosel's "Manual of Sea Gunnery."

The bale had the effect of a plug. A pebble may stop a log, a tree branch turn an avalanche. The carronade stumbled. The gunner, in his turn, seizing this terrible chance plunged his iron bar between the spokes of one of the hind wheels. The cannon was stopped—it was staggered. The man, using the bar as a lever, rocked it to and fro. The heavy mass turned over with a clang like a falling bell, and the gunner, dripping with sweat, rushed forward headlong and passed the slipping noose of the tiller-ropes about the bronze neck of the overthrown monster.

It was ended. The man had conquered. The ant had subdued the mastodon—the pigmy had taken the thunderbolt prisoner.

The marines and the sailors clapped their hands.

The whole crew hurried down with cables and chains, and in an instant the cannon was securely lashed.

The gunner saluted the passenger.

"Sir," he said to him, "you have saved my life."

The old man had resumed his impassable attitude, and did not reply.

## VI.—THE TWO ENDS OF THE SCALE.

The man had conquered, but one might say that the cannon had conquered also. Immediate shipwreck had been avoided, but the corvette was by no means saved. The delapidation of the vessel seemed irremediable. The sides had five breaches, one of which, very large, was in the bow. Out of the thirty carronades twenty lay useless in their frames.

The carronade, which had been captured and recharged, was itself disabled; the screw of the breech-button was forced, and the levelling of the piece impossible in consequence. The battery was reduced to nine pieces. The hold had sprung a leak. It was necessary at once to repair the damages and set the pumps to work.

The gun-deck, now that one had time to look about it, offered a terrible spectacle. The interior of a mad elephant's cage could not have been more completely dismantled.

However great the necessity that the corvette should escape observation, a still more imperious necessity presented itself—immediate safety. It had been necessary to light up the deck by lanterns placed here and there along the sides.

But during the whole time this tragic diversion had lasted, the crew were so absorbed by the one question of life or death that they noticed little what was passing outside the scene of the duel. The fog had thickened; the weather had changed; the wind had driven the vessel at will; it had got out of its route, in plain sight of Jersey and Guernsey, farther to the south than it ought to have gone, and was surrounded by a troubled sea. The great waves kissed the gaping wounds of the corvette—kisses full of peril. The sea rocked her menacingly. The breeze became a gale. A squall, a tempest perhaps, threatened. It was impossible to see before one four oars' length.

While the crew were repairing summarily and in haste the ravages of the gun-deck, stopping the leaks and putting back into position the guns which had escaped the disaster, the old passenger had gone on deck.

He stood with his back against the mainmast.

He had paid no attention to a proceeding which had taken place on the vessel. The Chevalier La Vieuville had drawn up the marines in line on either side of the mainmast, and at the whistle of the boatswain the sailors busy in the rigging stood upright on the yards.

Count du Boisberthelot advanced toward the passenger. Behind the captain marched a man haggard, breathless, his dress in disorder, yet wearing a satisfied look under it all. It was the gunner who had just now so opportunely shown himself a tamer of monsters, and who had got the better of the cannon.

The Count made a military salute to the unknown in peasant garb, and said to him—"General, here is the man."

The gunner held himself erect, his eyes downcast, standing in a soldierly attitude.

Count du Boisberthelot continued—"General, taking into consideration what this man has done, do you not think there is something for his commanders to do?"

"I think there is," said the old man.

"Be good enough to give the orders," returned Boisberthelot.

"It is for you to give them. You are the captain."

"But you are the general," answered Boisberthelot.

The old man looked at the gunner. "Approach," said he.

The gunner moved forward a step. The old man turned towards Count du Boisberthelot, detached the cross of Saint Louis from the captain's uniform and fastened it on the jacket of the gunner.

"Hurrah!" cried the sailors.

The marines presented arms. The old passenger, pointing with his finger towards the bewildered gunner, added—"Now let that man be shot."

Stupor succeeded the applause.

Then, in the midst of a silence like that of the tomb, the old man raised his voice. He said:

"A negligence has endangered this ship. At this moment she is perhaps lost. To be at sea is to face the enemy. A vessel at open sea is an army which gives battle. The tempest conceals, but does not absent itself. The whole sea is an ambushade. Death is the penalty of any fault committed in the face of the enemy. No fault is reparable. Courage ought to be rewarded and negligence punished."

These words fell one after the other slowly, solemnly, with a sort of inexorable measure, like the blows of an axe upon an oak.

And the old man, turning to the soldiers, added—"Do your duty."

The man upon whose breast shone the cross of Saint Louis bowed his head.

At a sign from Count du Boisberthelot, two sailors descended between decks, then returned, bringing the hammock winding-sheet. The ship's chaplain, who since the time of sailing had been at prayer in the officers' quarters, accompanied the two sailors; a sergeant detached from the line twelve marines, whom he arranged in two ranks, six by six; the gunner, without uttering a word, placed himself between the two files. The chaplain, crucifix in hand, advanced and stood near him.

"March!" said the sergeant.

The platoon moved with slow steps towards the bow. The two sailors who carried the shroud followed.

A gloomy silence fell upon the corvette. A hurricane moaned in the distance.

A few instants later there was a flash; a report followed, echoing among the shadows; then all was silent; then came the thud of a body falling into the sea.

The old passenger still leaned back against the mainmast with folded arms, thinking silently.

Boisberthelot pointed towards him with the forefinger of his left hand, and said in a low voice to La Vieuville:

"The Vendée has found a head!"

## VII.—HE WHO SETS SAIL PUTS INTO A LOTTERY.

But what was to become of the corvette?

The clouds, which the whole night through had touched the waves, now lowered so thickly that the horizon was no longer visible; the sea seemed covered with a pall. Nothing to be seen but fog—a situation always perilous, even for a vessel in good condition.

Added to the mist came the surging swell.

The time had been used to good purpose; the corvette had been lightened by throwing overboard everything which could be cleared from the havoc made by the carronade—the dismantled guns, the broken carriages, frames twisted or un-nailed, the fragments of splintered wood and iron: the port-holes had been opened, and the corpses and part of bodies, enveloped in tarpaulin, were slid down planks into the waves.

The sea was no longer manageable. Not that the tempest was imminent; it seemed on the contrary that the hurricane rustling behind the horizon decreased, and the squall was moving northward; but the waves were very high still, which indicated disturbance in the depths; the corvette could offer