

PACE IMPLORA.

(Joaquin Miller in *The Overland*.)

Better it were to sit still by the sea,
Loving somebody and satisfied—
Better it were to grow babes on the knee,
To anchor you down for all your days—
Than wander and wander in all these ways,
Land forgotten and love denied.

Better sit still where born, I say,
Wed one sweet woman and love her well,
Laugh with your neighbours, live in their way,
Be it never so simple. The humbler the home,
The nobler, indeed, to bear your part,
Love and be loved with all your heart.
Drink sweet waters and dream in a spell,
Share your delights and divide your tears;
Love and be loved in the old east way,
Ere men knew madness and came to roam
From the west to the east, and the whole world wide;
When they lived where their fathers lived and died—
Lived and so loved for a thousand years.

Better it were for the world, I say—
Better, indeed, for a man's own good—
That he should sit down where he was born,
Be it land of sands or of oil and corn,
Valley of poppies or bleak northland,
White sea border or great black wood,
Or bleak white Winter or bland sweet May,
Or city of smoke or plain of the sun—
Than wander the world as I have done,
Breaking the heart into bits of clay,
And leaving it scattered on every hand.

Venice, 1874.

NINETY-THREE.

BY VICTOR HUGO.

PART THE THIRD.

IN VENDEE.

BOOK THE FIFTH.

THE COMBAT AFTER THE VICTORY.

III.—THE COMMANDANTS HOOD.

Slowly, and like one who strove to retreat and yet was forced by some invisible power to advance, Gauvain approached the breach. As he came near, the sentinel recognised in the shadow the cloak and braided hood of the commandant, and presented arms. Gauvain entered the hall of the ground-floor, which had been made into a guard-room. A lantern hung from the roof. It cast just light enough so that one could cross the hall without treading upon the soldiers who lay, most of them asleep, upon the straw.

There they lay; that had been fighting a few hours before; the grape-shot, partially swept away, scattered its grains of iron and lead over the floor and troubled their repose somewhat, but they were weary, and so slept. This hall had been the battleground—the scene of frenzied attack; there men had groaned, howled, ground their teeth, struck out blindly in their death agony, and expired. Many of the sleeper's companions had fallen dead upon this floor, where they now lay down in their weariness; the straw which served them for a pillow had drunk the blood of their comrades. Now all was ended; the blood had ceased to flow; the sabres were dried; the dead were dead; these sleepers slumbered peacefully. Such is war. And then, perhaps to-morrow, the slumber of sleeping and dead will be the same.

At Gauvain's entrance a few of the men rose—among others, the officer in command. Gauvain pointed to the door of the dungeon.

"Open it," he said to the officer.

The bolts were drawn back; the door opened.

Gauvain entered the dungeon.

The door closed behind him.

BOOK THE SIXTH.

FEUDALISM AND REVOLUTION.

I.—THE ANCESTOR.

A lamp set on the flags of the crypt at the side of the air-hole. There could also be seen on the stones a jug of water, a loaf of army bread, and a truss of straw. The crypt being cut out in the rock, the prisoner who had conceived the idea of setting fire to the straw, would have done it to his own hurt; no risk of conflagration to the prison, certainly the suffocation of the prisoner.

At the instant the door turned on its hinges the marquis was walking to and fro in his dungeon; that mechanical pacing back and forth natural to wild animals in a cage.

At the noise of the opening and shutting of the door he raised his head, and the lamp, placed on the floor between Gauvain and the marquis, struck full upon the faces of both men.

They looked at one another, and something in the glance of either kept the two motionless.

At length the marquis burst out laughing, and exclaimed, "Good evening, sir. It is a long time since I have had the pleasure of meeting you. You do me the favour of paying me a visit. I thank you. I ask nothing better than to talk a little. I was beginning to bore myself. Your friends lose a great deal of time—proofs of identity—court-martials—all those ceremonies take a long while. I could do much quicker at need. Here I am in my own house. Pray come in. Well, what do you say of all that is happening? Original, is it not? Once on a time there was a king and a queen; the king was the king; the queen was—France. They cut the king's head off and married the queen to Robespierre; this gentle man and that lady have a daughter named Guillotine, with whom it appears that I am to make acquaintance to-morrow morning. I shall be delighted—as I am to see you. Did you come about that? Have you risen in rank? Shall you be the headsman? If it

a simple visit of friendship, I am touched. Perhaps, viscount, you no longer know what nobleman is. Well, you see one—it is I. Look at the specimen. 'Tis a curiosity; it believes in God, it believes in tradition, it believes in family, it believes in its ancestors, it believes in the example of its father, in fidelity, loyalty, duty towards its prince, respect to ancient laws, virtue, justice—and it would shoot you with pleasure. Have the goodness to sit down, I pray you. On the stones, it must be, it is true, for I have no arm-chair in my drawing-room; but he who lives in the mud can sit on the ground. I do not say that to offend you, for what we call the mud, you call the nation; I fancy that you do not insist I shall shout Liberty, Equality, Fraternity? This is an ancient chamber of my house; formerly the lords imprisoned clowns here; now rustics imprison the lords. These fooleries are called a revolution. It appears that my head is to be cut off in thirty-six hours. I see nothing inconvenient in that. Still, if my captors had been polite, they would have sent me my snuff-box; it is up in the chamber of the mirrors, where you used to play when you were a child—where I used to dance you on my knees. Sir, let me tell you one thing! You call yourself Gauvain, and strange to say, you have noble blood in your veins; yes, by Heaven, the same that runs in mine; yet the blood that made me a man of honour made you a rascal. Such are personal idiosyncrasies. You will tell me it is not your fault that you are a rascal. Nor is it mine that I am a gentleman. Zounds! one is a malefactor without knowing it. It comes from the air one breathes; in times like these of ours one is not responsible for what one does; the Revolution is guilty for the whole world, and all your great criminals are great innocents. What blockheads! To begin with yourself. Permit me to admire you. Yes, I admire you, who, a man of quality, well placed in the State, having noble blood to shed in a noble cause, viscount of this Tower, Gauvain, prince of Brittany, able to be duke by right and peer of France by heritage, which is about all a man of good sense could desire here below, amuses himself, being what he is, to be what you are; playing his part so well that he seems to his enemies a villain and to his friends an idiot. By the way, give my compliments to the Abbé Cimourdain."

The marquis spoke perfectly at his ease, quietly, emphasising nothing, in his high-society voice, his eyes clear and tranquil, his hand in his waistcoat pocket. He broke off, drew a long breath, and resumed:

"I do not conceal from you that I have done what I could to kill you. Such as you see me, I have myself, in person, three times aimed a cannon at you. A discourteous proceeding—I admit it, but it would be giving rise to a bad example to suppose that in war your enemy tries to make himself agreeable to you. For we are in war, monsieur my nephew. Everything is put to fire and sword. It is true that they have killed the king into the bargain. A pretty century!"

He checked himself again, and again resumed:

"When one thinks that none of these things would have happened if Voltaire had been hanged and Rousseau sent to the galleys! Ah, those men of mind—what scoundrels! But there, what is it you reproach that monarch with? It is true that the Abbé Pucelle was sent to his abbey of Portigny with as much time as he pleased for the journey, and as for your Monsieur Titon, who had been, begging your pardon, a terrible debauchee, and had gone the rounds of the loose women before hunting after the miracles of the Deacon Paris, he was transferred from the castle of Vincennes to the castle of Ham in Picardy, which is, I confess, a sufficiently ugly place. There are wrongs for you! I recollect—I cried out also in my day. I was as stupid as you."

The marquis felt his pocket as if seeking his snuff-box, then continued:

"But not so wicked. We talked just for talk's sake. There was also the mutiny of demands and petitions, and then up came those gentlemen the philosophers, and their writings were burned instead of the authors; the court catals mixed themselves up in the matter; there were all those stupid fellows, Turgot, Quesnay, Malesherbes, the physiocrats, and so forth, and the quarrel began. The whole came from the scribbles and the rhyms. The Encyclopedia! Diderot! D'Alembert! Ah, the wicked scoundrels! To think of a well-born man like the King of Prussia joining them. I would have suppressed all those paper scratchers. Ah, we were justiciaries, our family! You may see there on the wall the marks of the quarrel-wheel. We did not jest. No, no; no scribbles! While there are Arueta, there will be Marats. As long as there are fellows who scribble, there will be scoundrels who assassinate; as long as there is ink, there will be black stains; as long as men's claws hold a goose's feather, frivolous fooleries will engender atrocious ones. Books cause crimes. The word chimera has two meanings; it signifies dream, and it signifies monster. How dearly one pays for idle trash! What is that you sing to us about your rights? The Rights of Man! Rights of the people! Is that empty enough, stupid enough, visionary enough, sufficiently void of sense! When I say: Havoise, the sister of Conan II., brought the county of Brittany to Hoel, Count of Nantes and Cornwall, who left the throne to Alain Fergant, the uncle of Bertha, who espoused Alain-le-Noir, Lord of Roche-sur-Yon, and bore him Conan the Little, grandfather of Guy or Gauvain de Thouars, our ancestor, I state a thing that is clear, and there is a right. But your scoundrels, your rascals, your wretches—what do they call their rights? Deicide and regicide. Is it not hideous? Oh what clowns! I am sorry for you, sir, but you belong to this proud Brittany blood, you and I had Gauvain de Thouars for our grandfather; we had for another grandfather that great Duke of Montbazoff who was peer of France and honoured with the Grand Collar, who attacked the suburb of Tours and was wounded at the battle of Arzuës, and died master of the bounds of France, in his house of Couzières in Touraine, aged eighty-six. I could tell you still further of the Duke de Landunois, son of the Lady of Garnache, of Claude de Lorraine, Duke de Chevreuse, and of Henri de Lenoncourt and of François de Laval-Boisdauphin. But to what purpose? Monsieur has the honour of being an idiot, and tries to make himself on a level with my groom. Learn this; I was an old man while you were still a brat; I remain as much your superior as I was then. As you grew up, you found means to degrade yourself. Since we ceased to see one another, each has gone his own way—I followed honestly, you went in the opposite direction. Ah, I do not know how all that will finish—those gentlemen, your friends, are full-blown wretches! Verily, it is fine I grant you—a marvellous step gained in the cause of progress! To have suppressed in the army the punishment of the pint of water inflicted on the drunken soldier for three consecutive days! To have the Maximum—the Convention—the Bishop

Gobel and Monsieur Hebert—to have exterminated the Past in one mass, from the Bastille to the peerage. They replace the saints by vegetables! So be it, citizens; you are masters; reign; take your ease; do what you like; stop at nothing. All this does not hinder the fact that religion is religion, that royalty fills fifteen hundred years of our history, and that the old French nobility are loftier than you, even with their heads off. As for your cavilling over the historic rights of royal races, we shrug our shoulders at that. Chilpéric, in reality, was only a monk named Daniel; it was Rainfroy who invented Chilpéric in order to annoy Charles Martel; we know those things just as well as you do. The question does not lie there. The question is this: to be a great kingdom, to be the ancient France, to be a country in perfect order, wherein were considered first the sacred person of its monarchs, absolute, lords of the state; then the princes; then the officers of the crown for the armies on land and sea, for the artillery, for the direction and superintendence of the finances. After that came the officers of justice, great and small; those for the management of taxes and general receipts; and, lastly, the police of the kingdom in its three orders. All this was fine and nobly regulated; you have destroyed it. You have destroyed the provinces, like the lamentably ignorant creatures you are, without even suspecting what the provinces really were. The genius of France is made up of the genius of the entire continent; each province of France represented a virtue of Europe. The freedom of Germany was in Picardy; the generosity of Sweden in Champagne; the industry of Holland in Burgundy; the activity of Poland in Languedoc; the gravity of Spain in Gascony; the wisdom of Italy in Provence; the subtlety of Greece in Normandy; the fidelity of Switzerland in Dauphiny. You knew nothing of all that; you have broken, shattered, ruined, demolished; you have shown yourselves simply idiotic brutes. Ah, you will no longer have nobles? Well, you shall have none. Make up your mourning. You shall have no more paladins, no more heroes. Say good night to the ancient grandseigneurs. Find me a d'Assas at present! You are all of you afraid for your skins. You will have no more Chevaliers de Fontenoy, who saluted before opening the battle; you will have no more combatants like those in silk stockings at the siege of Lérida; you will have no more plumes floating past like meteors; you are a people finished, come to an end; you will suffer the outrage of invasion. If Alaric II. could return, he would no longer find himself confronted by Clovis; if Abderame could come back, he would not longer find himself face to face with Charles Martel; if the Saxons, they would no longer find Pepin before them. You will have no more Agnadel, Rocroy, Lens, Staffarde, Nerwinde, Steinkerque, La Marsaille, Bancoux, Lawfeld, Mahon; you will have no Bouvines with Philip Augustus taking prisoner with one hand Renaud, Count of Boulogne, and, with the other, Ferrand, Count of Flanders. You will have Agincourt, but you will not have the Sieur de Bacqueville, grand bearer of the oriflamme, enveloping himself in his banner to die. Go on—go on—do your work! Be the new men! Grow little!"

The marquis was silent for an instant, then began again.

"But leave us great. Kill the kings; kill the nobles; kill the priests. Tear down; ruin; massacre; trample all under foot; crush ancient laws beneath your heels; overthrow the throne; stamp upon the altar of God—dash it in pieces—dance above it! On with you to the end. You are traitors and cowards—incapable of devotion or sacrifice. I have spoken. Now have me guillotined, monsieur viscount. I have the honour to be your very humble servant."

Then he added:

"Ah, I do not hesitate to set the truth plainly before you. What difference can it make to me? I am dead."

"You are free," said Gauvain.

He unfastened his commandant's cloak, advanced toward the marquis, threw it about his shoulders, and drew the hood close down over his eyes. The two men were of the same height.

"Well, what are you doing?" the marquis asked.

Gauvain raised his voice, and cried:

"Lieutenant, open to me."

The door opened.

Gauvain exclaimed, "Close the door carefully behind me!"

And he pushed the stupefied marquis across the threshold. The hall, turned into a guard-room, was lighted, it will be remembered, by a horn-lantern, whose faint rays only broke the shadows here and there. Such of the soldiers as were not asleep saw dimly a man of lofty stature, wrapped in the mantle and hood of the commander-in-chief, pass through their midst and move towards the entrance. They made a military salute, and the man passed on.

The marquis slowly traversed the guard-room, then the breach—not without hitting his head more than once—and went out. The sentinel, believing that he saw Gauvain, presented arms. When he was outside, having the grass of the fields under his feet, within two hundred paces of the forest, and before him space, night, liberty, life, he paused, and stood motionless for an instant like a man who has allowed himself to be pushed on, who has yielded to surprise, and who, having taken advantage of an open door, asks himself if he has done well or ill; hesitates to go farther, and gives audience to a last reflection. After a few seconds' deep reverie he raised his right hand, snapped his thumb and middle finger, and said, "My faith!" And he hurried on.

The door of the dungeon had closed again. Gauvain was within.

II.—THE COURT-MARTIAL.

At that period all courts-martial were very nearly discretionary. Dumas had sketched out in the Assembly a rough plan of military legislation, improved later by Talot in the Council of the Five Hundred, but the definitive code of war-councils was only drawn up under the Empire. Let us add in parenthesis that from the Empire dates the law imposed on military tribunals to commence receiving the votes by the lowest grade. Under the Revolution this law did not exist.

In 1793 the president of a military tribunal was almost the tribunal in himself. He chose the members, classed the order of grades, regulated the manner of voting; was at once master and judge.

Cimourdain had selected for the hall of the court-martial that very room on the ground-floor where the retrade had been erected, and where the guard was now established. He wished to shorten everything; the road from the prison to the tribunal, and the passage from the tribunal to the scaffold.

In conformity with his orders the court began its sitting at midday with no other show of state than this—three straw-