

## THE SEA-FOG.

Upon the cliff's steep edge I stand;  
The moaning sea I hear;  
But gray mists hang o'er sea and land,  
The mists that sailors fear.

The lichened rocks, the mosses red,  
With silver drops are sown;  
Each crimson foxglove hangs its head  
Amid the old gray stone.

The fearful rock within the bay,  
Where gallant ships go down,  
Shews but a faint white line of spray,  
A glimmering mass of brown.

A broken boat, a spot of black,  
Is tossed on sullen waves,  
Their crests all dark with rifted wrack,  
The spoil of ocean caves.

Now sails my love on sea to-day;  
Heaven shield his boat from harm!  
Heaven keep him from the dangerous bay,  
Till wind and waves be calm!

Oh, would he sat beside our stove,  
Where mother turns her wheel;  
I know too soon, for you, my love,  
What wives of sailors feel.

Oh, that within the wood-fire's glow,  
He told us tales of yore,  
Of perils over long ago,  
And ventures come to shore.

His hand belike is on the helm;  
The fog has hid the foam;  
The surf that shall his boat o'erwhelm,  
He thinks the beach at home.

He sees a lamp amid the dark,  
He thinks our pane alight;  
And haply on some storm-bound bark,  
He founders in the night.

Now God be with you; He who gave  
Our constant love and troth;  
Where'er your oar may dip the wave,  
You bear the hearts of both.

Through storm and mist, God keep my love,  
That I may hear once more  
Your boat upon the shaggy cove,  
Your step upon the shore.

## NINETY-THREE.

BY VICTOR HUGO.

## PART THE THIRD.

IN VENDEE.

## BOOK THE FIRST.

## XI.—THE OUBLIETTE.

This crypt was the oubliette. Every keep had one. This crypt, like many penal prisons of that era, had two stories. The upper floor, which was entered by the gateway, was a vaulted chamber of considerable size, on a level with the ground-floor hall. On the walls could be seen two parallel and vertical furrows, extending from one side to the other, and passing along the vault of the roof, in which they had left deep ruts like old wheel-tracks. It was what they were in fact. These two furrows had been hollowed by two wheels. Formerly, in feudal days, victims were torn limb from limb in this chamber by a method less noisy than dragging them at the tails of horses. There had been two wheels so immense that they touched the walls and the arch. To each of these wheels an arm and a leg of the victim were attached, then the wheels were turned in the inverse direction, which crushed the man. It required great force, hence the furrows which the wheels had worn in the wall as they grazed it. A chamber of this kind may still be seen at Viandin.

Below this room there was another. That was the real dungeon. It was not entered by a door; one penetrated into it by a hole. The victim, stripped naked, was let down by means of a rope placed under his arm-pits into the dungeon, through an opening left in the centre of the flagging of the upper chamber. If he persisted in living, food was flung to him through this aperture. A hole of this sort may yet be seen at Bouillon.

The wind swept up through this opening. The lower room, dug out beneath the ground-floor hall, was a well rather than a chamber. It had water at the bottom, and an icy wind filled it. This wind, which killed the prisoner in the depths, preserved the life of the captive in the room above. It rendered his prison respirable. The captive above, groping about beneath his vault, only got air by this hole. For the rest, whatever entered or fell there, could not get out again. It was for the prisoner to be cautious in the darkness. A false step might make the prisoner in the upper room a prisoner in the dungeon below. This was his affair. If he clung to life, this hole was a peril; if he wished to be rid of it, this hole was his resource. The upper floor was the dungeon; the lower the tomb. A superposition which resembled Society at that period.

It was what our ancestors called a moat-dungeon.

The thing having disappeared, the name has no longer any significance in our ears. Thanks to the Revolution, we hear the words pronounced with indifference.

Outside the tower, above the breach, which was, forty years since, the only means of ingress, might be seen an opening larger than the other loopholes, from which hung an iron grating bent and loosened.

## XII.—THE BRIDGE-CASTLE.

On the opposite side from the breach a stone bridge was connected with the tower, having three arches still in almost

perfect preservation. This bridge had supported a building of which some fragments remained. It had evidently been destroyed by fire; there were only left portions of the framework, between whose blackened ribs the daylight peeped, as it rose beside the tower like a skeleton beside a phantom.

This ruin is to-day completely demolished—not a trace of it is left. It only needed one day and a single peasant to destroy that which it took many centuries and many kings to build. La Tourgue is a rustic abbreviation for La Tour-Gauvain (the Tower Gauvain), just as La Jupelle stands for La Jupellière, and Pinson-le-Tort, the nickname of a hunch-backed leader is put for Pinson le Tortu.

La Tourgue, which forty years since was a ruin, and which is to-day a shadow, was a fortress in 1793. It was the old bastille of the Gauvains; toward the west guarding the entrance to the forest of Fougères, a forest which is itself now hardly a grove.

This citadel had been built on one of the great blocks of slate which abound between Mayenne and Dinan, scattered everywhere among the thickets and heaths like missiles that had been flung in some conflict between Titans.

The tower made up the entire fortress; beneath the tower was the rock; at the foot of the rock one of those water-courses which the month of January turns into a torrent, and which the month of June dries up.

Thus protected, this fortress was in the middle ages almost impregnable. The bridge alone weakened it. The Gothic Gauvains had built without a bridge. They got into it by one of those swinging foot-bridges which a blow of an axe sufficed to break away. As long as the Gauvains remained viscounts, they contented themselves with this, but when they became marquises, and left the cavern for the court, they flung three arches across the torrent and made themselves accessible on the side of the plain just as they had made themselves accessible to the king. The marquis of the seventeenth century, and the marquises of the eighteenth, no longer wished to be impregnable. An imitation of Versailles replaced the traditions of their ancestors.

Facing the tower, on the western side, there was a high plateau which ended in two plains; this plateau almost touched the tower, only separated from it by a very deep ravine through which ran the watercourse which was a tributary of the Couesnon. The bridge which joined the fortress and the plateau, was built up high on piers, and on these piers was constructed, as at Chenonceaux, an edifice in the Mansard style, more habitable than the tower. But the customs were still very rude; the lords continued to occupy chambers in the keep which were like dungeons. The building on the bridge, which was a sort of small castle, was made into a long corridor that served as an entrance, and was called the hall of the guards; above this hall of guards, which was a kind of entresol, a library was built above the library, a granary. Long windows, with small panes in Bohemian glass; pilasters between the casements; medallions sculptured on the wall; three stories; below, partisans and muskets; in the middle, books; on high, sacks of oats; the whole, at once somewhat savage and very princely.

The tower rose gloomy and stern at the side. It overlooked this coquettish building with all its lugubrious height. From its platform one could destroy the bridge.

The two edifices, the one rude, the other elegant, clashed rather than contrasted. The two styles had nothing in keeping with one another. Although it should seem that two semicircles ought to be identical, nothing can be less alike than a full Roman arch and the classic archivolt.

That tower, in keeping with the forests, made a strange neighbour for that bridge worthy of Versailles. Imagine Alain Barbe-Torte giving his arm to Louis XIV. The juxtaposition was sinister. These two majesties thus mingled made up a whole which had something inexorably menacing in it.

From a military point of view, the bridge—we must insist upon this—was a traitor to the tower. It embellished, but disarmed; in gaining ornament the fortress lost strength. The bridge put it on a level with the plateau. Still impregnable on the side toward the forest, it became vulnerable toward the plain. Formerly it commanded the plateau; now it was commanded thereby. An enemy installed there would speedily become master of the bridge. The library and the granary would be for the assailant and against the citadel. A library and a granary resemble each other in the fact that both books and straw are combustible. For an assailant who serves himself by fire—to burn Homer or to burn a bundle of straw, provided it makes a flame—is all the same. The French proved this to the Germans by burning the library of Heidelberg, and the Germans proved it to the French by burning the library of Strasbourg. This bridge, built on to the Tourgue, was; therefore, strategically, an error; but in the seventeenth century, under Colbert and Louvois, the Gauvain princes no more considered themselves besiegeable than did the princes of Rohan or the princes of La Trémouille. Still the builders of the bridge had used certain precautions. In the first place they had foreseen the possibility of conflagration; below the three casements that looked down the stream they had fastened transversely to cramp-irons, which could still be seen half a century back, a strong ladder, whose length equalled the height of the two first stories of the bridge, a height which surpassed that of three ordinary stories. Secondly, they had guarded against assault. They had cut off the bridge by means of a low, heavy iron door; this door was arched: it was locked by a great key which was hidden in a place known to the master alone, and, once closed, this door could defy a battering ram and almost brave a cannon ball. It was necessary to cross the bridge in order to reach this door, and to pass through the door in order to enter the tower. There was no other entrance.

## XIII.—THE IRON DOOR.

The second story of the small castle of the bridge was raised by the arches, so that it corresponded with the second story of the tower. It was at this height, for greater security, that the iron door had been placed.

The iron door opened toward the library on the bridge-side, and toward a grand vaulted hall, with a pillar in the centre, on the side to the tower. This hall, as has already been said, was the second story of the keep. It was circular, like the tower; long loopholes, looking out on the fields, lighted it. The rude wall was naked, and nothing hid the stones, which were, however, symmetrically laid. This hall was reached by a winding staircase built in the wall, a very simple thing when walls are fifteen feet in thickness. In the middle ages a town had to be taken street by street, a street house by house,

a house room by room. A fortress was besieged story by story. In this respect La Tourgue was very skillfully disposed and was intractable and difficult. A spiral staircase, at first very steep, led from one floor to the other. The doors were sloping, and were not of the height of a man. To pass through it was necessary to bow the head; now a head bowed was a head cut off, and at each door the besieged awaited the besiegers.

Below the circular hall with the pillar were two similar chambers, which made the first and the ground floor, and above were three. Upon these six chambers, placed one upon another, the tower was closed by a lid of stone, which was the platform, and which could only be reached by a narrow watch tower. The fifteen-feet thickness of wall which it had been necessary to pierce in order to place the iron door, and in the middle of which it was set, imbedded it in a long arch, so that the door, when closed, was, both on the side toward the bridge, and the side toward the tower, under a porch six or seven feet deep; when it was open, these two porches joined and made the entrance-arch.

In the thickness of the wall of the porch toward the bridge opened a low gate with a Saint Gilles' boot, which led into the corridor of the first story beneath the library. This offered another difficulty to besiegers. The small castle of the bridge showed, on the side toward the plateau, only a perpendicular wall; and the bridge was cut. A drawbridge put it in communication with the plateau; and this drawbridge (on account of the height of the plateau never lowered except at an inclined plane) allowed access to the long corridor, called the guard-room. Once masters of this corridor, besiegers, in order to reach the iron door, would have been obliged to carry by main force the winding staircase which led to the second story.

## XIV.—THE LIBRARY.

As for the library, it was an oblong room, the width and length of the bridge, and a single door—the iron one. A false leaf-door, hung with green cloth, which it was only necessary to push, masked in the interior the entrance-arch of the tower. The library wall from floor to ceiling was filled with glazed book-cases, in the beautiful style of the seventeenth-century cabinet-work. Six great windows, three on either side, one above each arch, lighted this library. Through these windows the interior could be seen from the height of the plateau. In the spaces between these windows stood six marble busts on pedestals of sculptured oak; Hermolaus of Byzantium, Athenæus the ancient grammarian, Suidas, Casaubon, Clovis, King of France, and his chancellor, Arachalus, who, for that matter was no more chancellor than Clovis was king.

There were books of various sorts in this library. One has remained famous. It was an old folio with prints, having for title, 'Saint Bartholomew, in great letters; and for the second title, Gospel according to Saint Bartholomew, preceded by a dissertation by Pantenus, Christian philosopher as to whether this gospel ought to be considered apocryphal, and whether Saint Bartholomew was the same as Nathanael. This book, considered a unique copy, was placed on a reading-desk in the middle of the library. In the last century, people came to see it as a curiosity.

## XV.—THE GRANARY.

As for the granary, which took, like the library, the oblong form of the bridge, it was simply that space beneath the wood-work of the roof. It was a great room filled with straw and hay, and lighted by six mansard windows. There was no ornament, except a figure of Saint Bartholomew carved on the door, with this line beneath—

—Barnabæ sanctus faciem jubet ire per herbam.

A lofty, wide tower, of six stories, pierced here and there with loopholes, having for entrance an egress a single door of iron, leading to a bridge-castle, closed by a draw-bridge. Behind the tower a forest; in front a plateau of heath, higher than the bridge, lower than the tower. Beneath the bridge, a deep, narrow ravine full of brushwood; a torrent in winter, a brook in spring-time, a stony moat in summer. This was the Tower Gauvain, called La Tourgue.

## XVI.—THE HOSTAGES.

July floated past, August came. A blast, fierce and heroic, swept over France. Spectres had just passed beyond the horizon; Marat with a dagger in his heart, Charlotte Corday headless. Affairs everywhere were waxing formidable. As to the Vendée, beaten in grand strategic schemes, she took refuge in little ones—more redoubtable, we have already said. This war was now an immense fight, scattered about among the woods. The disasters of the large army, called the Catholic and royal, had commenced. The army from Mayenne had been ordered into the Vendée. Eight thousand Vendéans had fallen at Ancenis; they had been repulsed from Nantes, dislodged from Montaigu, expelled from Thouars, chased from Noirmoutier, flung headlong out of Cholet, Mortagne, and Saumur; they had evacuated Parthenay; they had abandoned Clisson; fallen back from Châtillon; lost a flag at Saint-Hilaire; had been beaten at Pornic, at the Sables, at Fontenay, Doué, at the Château d'Eau, at the Ponts-de-Cé; they were kept in check at Luçon, were retreating from the Chataigneraie, and routed at the Roche-sur-Yon. But on the one hand they were menacing Rochelle, and on the other an English fleet in the Guernsey waters, commanded by General Craig and bearing several English regiments, and some of the best officers of the French navy, only waited a signal from the Marquis de Lantenac to land. This landing might make the royalists victorious. Pitt was in truth a state malefactor. Policy has treasons sure as an assassin's dagger. Pitt stabbed our country and betrayed his own. To dishonour his country was to betray it; under him and through him England waged a Punic war. She spied, she cheated, she hid. Poacher and forger, she stopped at nothing; she descended to the very minutiae of hatred. She monopolised railow, which cost five francs a pound. An Englishman was taken at Lille on whom was found a letter from Prigent, Pitt's agent in Vendée, which contained these lines: "I beg you to spare no money. We hope that the assassinations will be committed with prudence; disguised priests and women are the persons most fit for this duty." Send sixty thousand francs to Rouen and fifty thousand to Caen." This letter was read in the Convention on the 1st of August by Barère. The cruelties of Parrein, and later, the atrocities of Carrier, replied to these perfidies. The republicans of Metz and the re-

\* One need hardly say that this letter is apocryphal; at least, that it never emanated from Pitt.—*Trans.*