

COULEUR DE ROSE.

When dawn first opens her sleepy eyes,
And looks drowsily over the world below,
Where the Alps tower proudly towards the skies,
A beautiful blush rests with rosy glow
On their topmost summits; the ruddy snow
Gleams rich and warm, as the shadows fade
And soften in sunshine, smiling low
'Neath the dull cold glacier, whose icy shade
Not even the noon-light may dare to invade.

In an eastern sea, where the wavelets curl
Softly and lovingly over the strand,
'Neath the self-same billow which hides the pearl,
Lies a lovely shell, such as Northern land
Ne'er chanced to imagine, nor mortal hand
Could venture to paint; for the wondrous hue
Of that tender carmine, the fairy wand
Of our mother Nature, so old, so new,
Has tinted alone 'neath the salt sea-blue.

Where the bulrush bows lowly his turbaned head,
And the fern droops soft by the streamlet's side,
Where the shallow glides lazily over its bed,
'Tis there that the kingfisher loves to hide
Her rose-pink eggs; there the timid bride
With loving instinct prepares her nest;
While her mate, swift skimming above the tide,
Dips his azure winglets and russet breast,
As he, arrow-like, darts on his finny quest.

Oh! full and warm is the fairy glow
Which the shell's rich colour brings out of the sea;
And pure and soft is the roseate snow,
As it glimmers on high when the shadows flee;
And the kingfisher's egg, pink as pink can be,
Is fair to behold; but a lovelier sight
Have I seen this eve, when, beneath the tree,
She gave me a rosebud, and, blushing bright
With a rozier red, whispered: "Love! good-night!"

NINETY-THREE.

BY VICTOR HUGO.

BOOK THE SECOND.

THE CORVETTE CLAYMORE.

IX.—SOME ONE ESCAPES.

The passenger had not quitted the deck; he watched all the proceedings with the same impassible mien.

Boisberthelot approached. "Sir," he said to him, "the preparations are complete. We are now lashed fast to our tomb; we shall not let go our hold. We are the prisoners of either the squadron or the reef. To yield to the enemy, or founder among the rocks; we have no other choice. One resource remains to us—to die. It is better to fight than be wrecked. I would rather be shot than drowned; in the matter of death I prefer fire to water. But dying is the business of the rest of us; it is not yours. You are the man chosen by the princes; you are appointed to a great mission—the direction of the war in Vendée. Your loss is perhaps the monarchy lost, therefore you must live. Our honour bids us remain here; yours bids you go. General, you must quit the ship. I am going to give you a man and a boat. To reach the coast by a détour is not impossible. It is not yet day; the waves are high, the sea is dark; you will escape. There are cases when to fly is to conquer."

The old man bowed his stately head in sign of acquiescence. Count du Boisberthelot raised his voice: "Soldiers and sailors!" he cried.

Every movement ceased; from each point of the vessel all faces turned towards the captain.

He continued: "This man who is among us represents the king. He has been confided to us; we must save him. He is necessary to the throne of France; in default of a prince he will be—at least this is what we try for—the leader in the Vendée. He is a great general. He was to have landed in France with us; he must land without us. To save the head is to save all."

"Yes! yes! yes!" cried the voices of the whole crew.

The captain continued: "He is about to risk, he also, serious danger. It will not be easy to reach the coast. In order to face the angry sea the boat should be large, and should be small in order to escape the cruisers. What must be done is to make land at some safe point, and better towards Fougères than in the direction of Coutances. It needs an athletic sailor, a good oarsman and swimmer, who belongs to this coast, and knows the channel. There is night enough, so that the boat can leave the corvette without being perceived. And besides, we are going to have smoke which will serve to hide her. Her size will help her through the shallows. Where the panther is snared the weasel escapes. There is no outlet for us; there is for her. The boat will row rapidly off; the enemy's ships will not see it; and moreover, during that time we are going to amuse them ourselves. Is it decided?"

"Yes! yes! yes!" cried the crew.

"There is not an instant to lose," pursued the captain. "Is there any man willing?"

A sailor stepped out of the ranks in the darkness, and said, "I."

X.—DOES HE ESCAPE?

A few minutes later, one of those little boats called a "gig," which are specially appropriated to the captain's service pushed off from the vessel. There were two men in this boat; the old man in the stern, and the sailor who had volunteered in the bow. The night still lingered. The sailor, in obedience to the captain's orders, rowed vigorously in the direction of the Minquiers. For that matter, no other issue was possible.

Some provisions had been put into the boat; a bag of biscuits, a smoked ox-tongue, and a cask of water.

At the instant the gig was let down, La Vieuville, a scoffer even in the presence of destruction, leaned over the corvette's stern-post, and sneered this farewell to the boat: "She is a good one if one wants to escape, and excellent if one wishes to drown."

"Sir," said the pilot, "let us laugh no longer."

The start was quickly made, and there was soon a considerable distance between the boat and the corvette. The wind and the waves were in the oarsman's favour; the little barque fled swiftly, undulating through the twilight, and hidden by the height of the waves.

The sea seemed to wear a look of sombre, indescribable expectation.

Suddenly, amid the vast and tumultuous silence of the ocean, rose a voice, which, increased by the speaking-trumpet as if by the brazen mask of antique tragedy, sounded almost superhuman.

It was the voice of Captain Boisberthelot giving his commands: "Royal marines," cried he, "nail the white flag to the mainmast. We are about to see our last sun rise."

And the corvette fired its first shot.

"Long live the King!" shouted the crew.

Then from the horizon's verge echoed an answering shout, immense, distant, confused, yet distinct nevertheless: "Long live the Republic!"

And a din like the peal of three hundred thunderbolts burst over the depths of the sea.

The battle began.

The sea was covered with smoke and fire. Streams of foam, made by the falling bullets, whitened the waves on every side.

The *Claymore* began to spit flame on the eight vessels. At the same time the whole squadron, ranged in a half-moon about the corvette, opened fire from all its batteries. The horizon was in a blaze. A volcano seemed to have burst suddenly out of the sea. The wind twisted to and fro the vast crimson banner of battle, amid which the ships appeared and disappeared like phantoms.

In front the black skeleton of the corvette showed against the red background.

The white banner, with its *fleurs-de-lys*, could be seen floating on the main.

The two men seated in the little boat kept silence. The triangular shallows of the Minquiers, a sort of submarine Tri-nacrium, is larger than the entire island of Jersey; the sea covers it; it has for culminating point a platform, which even the highest tides do not reach, from whence six mighty rocks detach themselves toward the north-east, ranged in a straight line, and producing the effect of a great wall, which has crumbled here and there. The strait between the plateau and the six reefs is only practicable to boats drawing very little water. Beyond this strait is the open sea.

The sailor who had undertaken the command of the boat made for this strait. By that means he put the Minquiers between the battle and the little barque. He manœuvred the narrow channel skillfully, avoiding the reefs to larboard and starboard. The rocks now masked the conflict. The lurid light of the horizon, and the awful uproar of the cannonading, began to lessen as the distance increased; but the continuance of the reports proved that the corvette held firm, and meant to exhaust to the very last her hundred and seventy-one broadsides. Presently the boat reached safe water, beyond the reef, beyond the battle, out of reach of the bullets.

Little by little the face of the sea became less dark; the rays, against which the darkness struggled, widened; the foam burst into jets of light, and the tops of the waves gave back white reflections.

Day appeared.

The boat was out of danger so far as the enemy was concerned, but the most difficult part of the task remained. She was saved from the grape-shot, but not from shipwreck. She was a mere egg-shell, in a high sea, without deck, without sail, without mast, without compass, having no resource but her oars, in the presence of the ocean and the hurricane: an atom at the mercy of giants.

"Then, amid this immensity, this solitude, lifting his face, whitened by the morning, the man in the bow of the boat looked fixedly at the one in the stern, and said: "I am the brother of him you ordered to be shot."

BOOK THE THIRD.

HALMALO.

I.—SPEECH IS THE "WORD."

The old man slowly raised his head.

He who had spoken was a man of about thirty. His forehead was brown with sea-tan; his eyes were peculiar; they had the keen glance of a sailor in the open pupils of a peasant. He held the oars vigorously in his two hands. His air was mild.

In his belt were a dirk, two pistols, and a rosary.

"Who are you?" asked the old man.

"I have just told you."

"What do you want with me?"

The sailor shipped the oars, folded his arms, and replied: "To kill you."

"As you please," said the old man.

The other raised his voice. "Get ready!"

"For what?"

"To die."

"Why?" asked the old man.

There was a silence. The sailor seemed for an instant confused by the question. He repeated, "I say that I mean to kill you."

"And I ask you, what for?"

The sailor's eyes flashed lightning. "Because you killed my brother."

The old man replied with perfect calmness, "I began by saving his life."

"That is true you saved him first, then you killed him."

"It was not I who killed him."

"Who then?"

"His own fault."

The sailor stared open-mouthed at the old man; then his eyebrows met again in their murderous frown.

"What is your name?" asked the old man.

"Halmalo; but you do not need to know my name in order to be killed by me."

At this moment the sun rose. A ray struck full upon the sailor's face, and vividly lighted up that savage countenance. The old man studied it attentively.

The cannonading, though it still continued, was broken and

"La Parole c'est le Verbe." Anyone familiar with the New Testament will see the Author's meaning.—T.

irregular. A vast cloud of smoke weighed down the horizon. The boat no longer directed by the oarsman, drifted to leeward.

The sailor seized in his right hand one of the pistols at his belt, and the rosary in his left.

The old man raised himself to his full height. "You believe in God?" said he.

"Our Father who art in Heaven," replied the sailor. And he made the sign of the cross.

"Have you a mother?"

"Yes."

He made a second sign of the cross. Then he resumed: "It is all said. I give you a minute, my lord." And he cocked the pistol.

"Why do you call me 'my lord'?"

"Because you are a lord. That is plain enough to be seen."

"Have you a lord, you?"

"Yes, and a grand one. Does one live without a lord?"

"Where is he?"

"I don't know. He has left this country. He is called the Marquis de Lantenac, Viscount de Fontenay, Prince in Brittany; he is the lord of the *Sept-Forêts* (Seven Forests). I never saw him, but that does not prevent his being my master."

"And if you were to see him, would you obey him?"

"Indeed, yes. Why, I should be a heathen if I did not obey him. I owe obedience to God, then to the king, who is like God, and then to the lord, who is like the king. But we have nothing to do with all that: you killed my brother—I must kill you."

The old man replied. "Agreed; I killed your brother. I did well."

The sailor clenched the pistol more tightly. "Come," said he.

"So be it," said the old man.

Still perfectly composed, he added, "Where is the priest?"

The sailor stared at him. "The priest?"

"Yes; the priest. I gave your brother a priest; you owe me one."

"I have none," said the sailor.

And he continued: "Are priests to be found out at sea?"

The convulsive thunderings of battle sounded more and more distant.

"Those who are dying yonder have theirs," said the old man.

"That is true," murmured the sailor; "they have the chaplain."

The old man continued: "You will lose me my soul—that is a serious matter."

The sailor bent his head in thought.

"And in losing me my soul," pursued the old man, "you lose your own. Listen. I have pity on you. Do what you choose. As for me, I did my duty a little while ago, first in saving your brother's life, and afterwards in taking it from him; and I am doing my duty now in trying to save your soul. Reflect. It is your affair. Do you hear the cannon-shots at this instant? There are men perishing yonder, there are desperate creatures dying, there are husbands who will never again see their wives, fathers who will never again see their children, brothers who, like you, will never again see their brothers. And by whose fault? Your brother's—yours. You believe in God, do you not? Well, you know that God suffers in this moment; He suffers in the person of His Most Christian Son the King of France, who is a child as Jesus was, and who is a prisoner in the fortress of the Temple. God suffers in His Church of Brittany; He suffers in His insulted cathedrals, His desecrated Gospels; in His violated houses of prayer; in His murdered priests. What did we intend to do, we, with that vessel which is perishing at this instant? We were going to succour God's children. If your brother had been a good servant, if he had faithfully done his duty like a wise and prudent man, the accident of the cannonade would not have occurred, the corvette would not have been disabled, she would not have got out of her course, she would not have fallen in with this fleet of perdition, and at this hour we should be landing in France, all like valiant soldiers and seamen as we were, sabre in hand, the white flag unfurled—numerous, glad, joyful; and we should have gone to help the brave Vendean peasants to save France, to save the king—we should have been doing God's work, this was what we meant to do; this was what we should have done. It is what I—the only one who remains—set out to do. But you oppose yourself thereto. In this contest of the impious against the priests, in this strife of the regicides against the king, in this struggle of Satan against God, you are on the Devil's side. Your brother was the demon's first auxiliary; you are the second. He commenced; you finish. You are with the regicides against the throne; you are with the impious against the Church. You take away from God His last resource. Because I shall not be there—I, who represent the king—the hamlets will continue to burn, families to weep, priests to bleed, Brittany to suffer, the king to remain in prison, and Jesus Christ to be in distress. And who will have caused this? You. Go on; it is your affair. I depended on you to help bring about just the contrary of all this. I deceived myself. Ah, yes—it is true—you are right—I killed your brother. Your brother was courageous; I recompensed that. He was culpable; I punished that. He had failed in his duty; I did not fail in mine. What I did, I would do again. And I swear by the great Saint Anne of Auray, who sees us, that, in a similar case, I would shoot my son just as I shot your brother. Now you are master. Yes, I pity you. You have lied to your captain. You? Christian, are without faith; you, Breton, are without honour; I was confided to your loyalty and accepted by your treason; you offer my death to those to whom you had promised my life. Do you know who it is you are destroying here? It is yourself. You take my life from the king, and you give your eternity to the Devil. Go on; commit your crime; it is well. You sell cheaply your share in Paradise. Thanks to you, the Devil will conquer; thanks to you, the churches will fall; thanks to you, the heathen will continue to melt the bells and make cannon of them; they will shoot men with that which used to warn souls! At this moment in which I speak to you, perhaps the bell that rang for your baptism is killing your mother. Go on; aid the Devil. Do not hesitate. Yes; I condemned your brother, but know this—I am an instrument of God. Ah, you pretend to judge the means God uses! Will you take it on yourself to judge Heaven's thunderbolt? Wretched man, you will be judged by it! Take care what you do. Do you even know whether I am in a state of grace? No. Go on all the same. Do what you like. You are free to cast me into hell, and to cast yourself there with me. Our two damnations are in your