

IV.—TORMENTUM BELLI.

"Before Condé?"

"At the camp of Pamars—by a gun-shot." Boisberthelot sighed. "The Count de Dampierre. Yet another of ours who went over to them!"

"A good journey to him," said La Vieuville.

"And the princesses; where are they?"

"At Trieste."

"Still?"

"Still. Ah, this republic!" cried Vieuville. "What havoc from such slight consequences! When one thinks that this revolution was caused by the deficit of a few millions!"

"Distrust small outbreaks," said Boisberthelot.

"Everything is going badly," resumed La Vieuville.

"Yes; La Rouerie is dead; Du Fresnoy is an idiot. What pitiful leaders all those bishops are—that Concy, Bishop of Rochelle; that Beaupri Saint-Aulaire, Bishop of Poitiers; that Merey, Bishop of Luçon and lover of Madame de l'Eschasserie."

"Whose name is Servanteau, you know, commander; L'Eschasserie is the name of an estate."

"And that false Bishop of Agra—who is curé of I know not what."

"Of Dol. He is called Guillot de Folleville. At least he is brave, and he fights."

"Priests when soldiers are needed! Bishops who are not bishops! Generals who are no generals!"

La Vieuville interrupted Boisberthelot.

"Commander, have you the *Moniteur* in your cabin?"

"Yes."

"What are they playing in Paris just now?"

"*Addle and Poulin*, and *The Cavern*."

"I should like to see that."

"You will be able to. We shall be at Paris in a month."

Boisberthelot reflected a moment, and added: "At the latest. Mr. Windham said so to Lord Hood."

"But then, captain, everything is not going so ill."

"Zounds! everything would go well, on condition that the war in Brittany could be properly conducted."

La Vieuville shook his head.

"Commander," he asked, "do we land the marines?"

"Yes; if the coast is for us—not if it is hostile. Sometimes war must break down doors, sometimes slip in quietly. Civil war ought always to have a false key in its pocket. We shall do all in our power. The most important is the chief." Then Boisberthelot added thoughtfully:

"La Vieuville, what do you think of the Chevalier de Dieugie?"

"The younger?"

"Yes."

"For a leader?"

"Yes."

"That he is another officer for open country and pitched battles. Only the peasant understands the thickets."

"Then resign yourself to General Stoffet and to General Cathelineau."

La Vieuville mused awhile and then said, "It needs a prince: a prince of France; a prince of the blood—a true prince."

"Why? Whoever says prince?"

"Says poltroon. I know it, captain. But one is needed for the effect on the big stupid eyes of the country lads."

"My dear chevalier, the princes will not come."

"We will get on without them."

Boisberthelot pressed his hand upon his forehead with the mechanical movement of a man endeavouring to bring out some idea. He exclaimed—

"Well, let us try the general we have here."

"He is a great nobleman."

"Do you believe he will answer?"

"Provided he is strong."

"That is to say, ferocious," said Boisberthelot.

The count and the chevalier looked fixedly at one another.

"Monsieur du Boisberthelot, you have said the word—ferocious. Yes; that is what we need. This is a war without pity. The hour is to the bloodthirsty. The regicides have cut off Louis XVI's head—we will tear off the four limbs of the regicides. Yes, the general necessary is Gen Inexorable. In Anjou and Upper Poitou the chiefs do the magnanimous; they dabble in generosity—nothing moves on. In the Marais and the country of Retz the chiefs are ferocious—everything goes forward. It is because Charette is savage that he holds his own against Parrein—it is hyena against hyena."

Boisberthelot had no time to reply; La Vieuville's words were suddenly cut short by a desperate cry, and at the same instant they heard a noise as unaccountable as it was awful. The cry and this noise came from the interior of the vessel.

The captain and lieutenant made a rush for the gun-deck, but could not get down. All the gunners were hurrying frantically up.

A frightful thing had just happened!

One of the carronades of the battery, a twenty-four-pounder, had got loose.

This is perhaps the most formidable of ocean accidents. Nothing more terrible can happen to a vessel in open sea and under full sail.

A gun that breaks its moorings becomes suddenly some indescribable supernatural beast. It is a machine which transforms itself into a monster. This mass turns upon its wheels, has the rapid movements of a billiard ball; rolls with the rolling, pitches with the pitching; goes, comes, pauses, seems to meditate; resumes its course, rushes along the ship from end to end like an arrow, circles about, springs aside, evades, rears, breaks, kills, exterminates. It is a battering-ram which assaults a wall at its own caprice. Moreover: the battering-ram is of metal, the wall wood. It is the entrance of matter into space. One might say that this eternal slave avenges itself. It seems as if the power of evil hidden in what we call inanimate objects finds a vent and bursts suddenly out. It has an air of having lost patience, of seeking some fierce, obscure retribution; nothing more inexorable than this rage of the inanimate. The mad mass has the bounds of a panther, the weight of the elephant, the agility of the mouse the obstinacy of the axe, the unexpectedness of the surge, the rapidity of lightning, the deafness of the tomb. It weighs ten thousand pounds, and it rebounds like a child's ball. Its flight is a wild whirl abruptly out at right angles. What is to be done? How to end this? A tempest ceases, a cyclone passes, a wind falls, a broken mast is replaced, a leak is stopped, a fire dies out; but how to control this enormous brute of bronze? In what way can one attack it?

You can make a mastiff hear reason, astound a bull, fascinate a boar, frighten a tiger, soften a lion; but there is no resource with that monster, a cannon let loose. You cannot kill it—it is dead; at the same time it lives. It lives with a sinister life bestowed on it by Infinity.

The planks beneath it give it play. It is moved by the ship, which is moved by the sea, which is moved by the wind. This destroyer is a plaything. The ship, the waves, the blasts, all aid it; hence its frightful vitality. How to assail this fury of complication? How to fetter this monstrous mechanism for wrecking a ship? How foresee its comings and goings, its returns, its stops, its shocks? Any one of these blows upon the sides may stave out the vessel. How divine its awful gyrations? One has to deal with a projectile which thinks, seems to possess ideas, and which changes its direction at each instant. How stop the course of something which must be avoided? The horrible cannon flings itself about, advances, recoils, strikes to the right, strikes to the left, flees, passes, disconcerts ambushes, breaks down obstacles, crushes men like flies. The great danger of the situation is in the mobility of its base. How combat an incline plane which has caprices? The ship, so to speak, has lightning imprisoned in its womb which seeks to escape; it is like thunder rolling above an earthquake.

In an instant the whole crew were on foot. The fault was the chief gunner's; he had neglected to fix home the screw-nut of the mooring-chain, and had so badly shackled the four wheels of the carronade that the play given to the sole and frame had separated the platform, and ended by breaking the breeching. The cordage had broken, so that the gun was no longer secure on the carriage. The stationary breeching which prevents recoil was not in use at that period. As a heavy wave struck the port, the carronade, weakly attached, recoiled, burst its chain, and began to rush wildly about. Concave, in order to have an idea of this strange sliding, a drop of water running down a pane of glass.

At the moment when the lashings gave way the gunners were in the battery, some in groups, others standing alone, occupied with such duties as sailors perform in expectation of the command to clear for action. The carronade, hurled forward by the pitching, dashed into this knot of men and crashed four at the first blow; then, flung back and shot out anew by the rolling, it cut in two a fifth poor fellow, glanced off to the larboard side and struck a piece of the battery with such force as to unship it. Then rose the cry of distress which had been heard. The men rushed towards the ladder—the gun-deck emptied in the twinkling of an eye. The enormous cannon was left alone. She was given up to herself. She was her own mistress, and mistress of the vessel. She could do what she willed with both. This whole crew, accustomed to laugh in battle, trembled now. To describe the universal terror, would be impossible.

Captain Boisberthelot and Lieutenant La Vieuville, although both intrepid men, stopped at the head of the stairs, and remained mute, pale, hesitating, looking down on the deck. Some one pushed them aside with his elbow and descended.

It was their passenger—the peasant—the man of whom they had been speaking a moment before.

When he reached the foot of the ladder, he stood still.

(To be continued.)

AT HOME AND ABROAD.

THE DOMINION.—The Canadian Commissioner at Washington has sent a partial draft of the proposed Reciprocity Treaty to Ottawa, and the Government approves of the general features thereof. Senator Brown will shortly return to Canada, but is endeavouring to secure several modifications. The steamer "Forest Queen" was burned last Sunday morning, six miles above Pembroke. The cook Mary Kavanagh, was burnt to death. The pilot and the crew, five men, and D. A. Martin, a passenger, were saved. The pilot, Thomas Dunbar, was slightly scorched. The steamer was towing logs, and is a total loss.

THE UNITED STATES.—Henri Rochefort arrived on Sunday last at New York, accompanied by Messrs. Oliver Sain and George Benedic, fellow refugees. They declined all formal receptions from representatives of the French Societies assembled to meet them, and went in a carriage to the hotel, where they remained quietly during the evening, denying themselves to numerous visitors who called. The class races at Harvard University, Saturday last, were very largely attended. The scull race was won by P. Dana; time, 18 minutes. The second race, between two crews of Juniors and Sophomores, was won by the former in 15 minutes, 41 seconds. Both the above races were two miles. The last race, three miles, between the University Sophomores, Scientifics and Freshmen, six-oared crews, was won by the former in 20 minutes, 13½ seconds. Weather fine, water smooth.

THE UNITED KINGDOM.—The celebration of Queen Victoria's birthday, which, as is customary here, occurs on the Saturday following the 24th May, took place on the 30th. All the Government departments were closed, and the streets were thronged with people. The Guards were reviewed in St. James' Park by the Prince of Wales, the Duke of Edinburgh and the Duke of Cambridge. Flags were flying from all points, and bells were ringing. At night the city was illuminated. A serious riot occurred in Limerick on Sunday. A mob of 1,000 persons attacked a party of militia. The police defended the latter, and were stoned by the rioters. Reinforcements arrived from the stations, and the riot was finally suppressed, after a considerable number had been injured.

FRANCE.—At a meeting of the Left, it was resolved that the motion for the dissolution of the Assembly should be pressed, and that overtures should be made to other sections of the chamber to secure their co-operation in the movement. The sale and circulation of the *Siècle* newspaper has been prohibited in several departments. Prince Napoleon has been nominated for the Assembly in the Department of Charente Inférieure and Seine.

GERMANY.—Rumours that Germany seeks to disturb the Luxembourg Treaty and to revive the candidature of a German Prince for the Spanish throne, which have been for some days in circulation throughout Europe, are considered here to be wholly without foundation. Bismarck is slowly recovering health on his estates at Varzin.

SPAIN.—Caleb Cushing, the American Minister, was received officially by Marshal Serrano. The Carlists have completely invested the town of Hernani.

ODDITIES.

Composition by a little boy—subject: "The Horse." "The horse is a very useful animal; it has four legs—one on each corner."

A YANKEE NOTION.—A father in Wisconsin offered his boy five dollars to take a dose of castor-oil, and then got a counter-felt bill off on the boy.

Dean Swift says: It is with narrow-souled people as it is with narrow-necked bottles; the less they have in them the more noise they make in pouring it out.

Longfellow, on being asked by a county schoolmarm recently to write his name in her album, "with a sentiment," replied: "I will write my name, but I haven't any sentiments."

It may interest Mr. Disraeli and friends to hear the late Earl of Carlisle's definition of deputations—"Deputation" is a noun of multitude that signifies many, but does not signify much."

A darkey gave the following reason why the coloured race is superior to the white: "All men are made of clay, and like the meerschaum pipe, they are more valuable when highly coloured."

A London advertisement runs thus: "A country priest will say mass once a week for any one who will regularly send him the *Times* newspaper, second hand, on the day of its publication."

To see how eagerly a human being will catch at a straw, it is not necessary to witness a drowning. The phenomenon is now manifest chiefly within saloons, where one end of the straw is immersed in a tumbler.

It is now announced on the authority of that "eminent physician" that it is not healthy to rise before eight o'clock in the morning. This applies only to men. Wives can rise at seven and start the fires as heretofore.

A little boy in Springfield, after his customary evening prayer a night or two ago, continued, "and bless mamma, and Jenny, and Uncle Benny," adding after a moment's pause the explanatory remark, "his name is Hopkins."

A Utica boy who attempted to amputate a cat's tail found that the absence of the old woman who owns the cat is necessary to the perfect success of such an experiment. His face looks as though Buffalo Bill had settled an old grudge against him.

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