

sea, maneuvering ostensibly with the four others, and depending upon the science of his galley slave as upon that of the first pilot of the port.

Chapter XXIII. In which the Author, very unwillingly, is forced to write a Little History.

While kings and men were thus occupied with England, which governed itself quite alone, and which, it must be said in its praise, had never been so badly governed, a man upon whom God had fixed his eye, and placed his finger, a man predestined to write his name in brilliant letters upon the page of history, was pursuing in the face of the world a work full of mystery and audacity. He went on, and no one knew whither he meant to go, although not only England, but France, and Europe, watched him marching with a firm step and head held high. All that was known of this man we are about to tell.

Monk had just declared himself in favor of the liberty of the Rump Parliament, a parliament which General Lambert, imitating Cromwell, whose lieutenant he had been, had just blocked up so closely, in order to bring it to his will, that no member, during all the blockade, was able to go out, and only one, Peter Wentworth, had been able to get in.

Lambert and Monk--everything was summed up in these two men; the first representing military despotism, the second pure republicanism. These men were the two sole political representatives of that revolution in which Charles I. had first lost his crown, and afterwards his head. As regarded Lambert, he did not dissemble his views; he sought to establish a military government, and to be himself the head of that government.

Monk, a rigid republican, some said, wished to maintain the Rump Parliament, that visible though degenerated representative of the republic. Monk, artful and ambitious, said others, wished simply to make of this parliament, which he affected to protect, a solid step by which to mount the throne which Cromwell had left empty, but upon which he had never dared to take his seat.

Thus Lambert by persecuting the parliament, and Monk by declaring for it, had mutually proclaimed themselves enemies of each other. Monk and Lambert, therefore, had at first thought of creating an army each for himself: Monk in Scotland, where were the Presbyterians and the royalists, that is to say, the malcontents; Lambert in London, where was found, as is always the case, the strongest opposition to the existing power which it had beneath its eyes.

Monk had pacified Scotland, he had there formed for himself an army, and found an asylum. The one watched the other. Monk knew that the day was not yet come, the day marked by the Lord for a great change; his sword,

therefore, appeared glued to the sheath. Inexpugnable in his wild and mountainous Scotland, an absolute general, king of an army of eleven thousand old soldiers, whom he had more than once led on to victory; as well informed, nay, even better, of the affairs of London, than Lambert, who held garrison in the city,--such was the position of Monk, when, at a hundred leagues from London, he declared himself for the parliament. Lambert, on the contrary, as we have said, lived in the capital. That was the center of all his operations, and he there collected all around him all his friends, and all the people of the lower class, eternally inclined to cherish the enemies of constituted power.

It was then in London that Lambert learnt the support that, from the frontiers of Scotland, Monk lent to the parliament. He judged there was no time to be lost, and that the Tweed was not so far distant from the Thames that an army could not march from one river to the other, particularly when it was well commanded. He knew, besides, that as fast as the soldiers of Monk penetrated into England, they would form on their route that ball of snow, the emblem of the globe of fortune, which is for the ambitious nothing but a step growing unceasingly higher to conduct him to his object. He got together, therefore, his army, formidable at the same time for its composition and its numbers, and hastened to meet Monk, who, on his part, like a prudent navigator sailing amidst rocks, advanced by very short marches, listening to the reports which came from London.

The two armies came in sight of each other near Newcastle; Lambert, arriving first, encamped in the city itself. Monk, always circumspect, stopped where he was, and placed his general quarters at Coldstream, on the Tweed. The sight of Lambert spread joy through Monk's army, whilst, on the contrary, the sight of Monk threw disorder into Lambert's army. It might have been thought that these intrepid warriors, who had made such a noise in the streets of London, had set out with the hopes of meeting no one, and that now seeing that they had met an army, and that that army hoisted before them not only a standard, but still further, a cause and a principle,--it might have been believed, we say, that these intrepid warriors had begun to reflect that they were less good republicans than the soldiers of Monk, since the latter supported the parliament; whilst Lambert supported nothing, not even himself.

As to Monk, if he had had to reflect, or if he did reflect, it must have been after a sad fashion, for history relates--and that modest dame, it is well known, never lies--history relates, that the day of his arrival at Coldstream search was made in vain throughout the place for a single sheep.

If Monk had commanded an English army, that was enough to have brought about a general desertion. But it is not with the Scots as it is with the English, to whom that fluid flesh which is called blood is a paramount necessity; the Scots, a poor and sober race, live upon a

little barley crushed between two stones, diluted with the water of the fountain, and cooked upon another stone, heated.

The Scots, their distribution of barley being made, cared very little whether there was or was not any meat in Coldstream. Monk, little accustomed to barley-cakes, was hungry, and his staff, at least as hungry as himself, looked with anxiety right and left, to know what was being prepared for supper.

Monk ordered search to be made; his scouts had on arriving in the place found it deserted and the cupboards empty; upon butchers and bakers it was of no use depending in Coldstream. The smallest morsel of bread, then, could not be found for the general's table.

As accounts succeeded each other, all equally unsatisfactory, Monk, seeing terror and discouragement upon every face, declared that he was not hungry; besides, they should eat on the morrow, since Lambert was there probably with the intention of giving battle, and consequently would give up his provisions, if he were forced from Newcastle, or forever to relieve Monk's soldiers from hunger if he conquered.

This consolation was only efficacious upon a very small number; but of what importance was it to Monk? for Monk was very absolute, under the appearance of the most perfect mildness. Every one, therefore, was obliged to be satisfied, or at least to appear so. Monk, quite as hungry as his people, but affecting perfect indifference for the absent mutton, cut a fragment of tobacco, half an inch long, from the carotte of a sergeant who formed part of his suite, and began to masticate the said fragment, assuring his lieutenant that hunger was a chimera, and that, besides, people were never hungry when they had anything to chew.

This joke satisfied some of those who had resisted Monk's first deduction drawn from the neighborhood of Lambert's army; the number of the dissentients diminished greatly; the guard took their posts, the patrols began, and the general continued his frugal repast beneath his open tent.

Between his camp and that of the enemy stood an old abbey, of which, at the present day, there only remain some ruins, but which then was in existence, and was called Newcastle Abbey. It was built upon a vast site, independent at once of the plain and of the river, because it was almost a marsh fed by springs and kept up by rains. Nevertheless, in the midst of these pools of water, covered with long grass, rushes, and reeds, were seen solid spots of ground, formerly used as the kitchen-garden, the park, the pleasure-gardens, and other dependencies of the abbey, looking like one of those great sea-spiders, whose body is round, whilst the claws go diverging round from this circumference.

The kitchen-garden, one of the longest claws of the abbey, extended to

Monk's camp. Unfortunately it was, as we have said, early in June, and the kitchen-garden, being abandoned, offered no resources.

Monk had ordered this spot to be guarded, as most subject to surprises. The fires of the enemy's general were plainly to be perceived on the other side of the abbey. But between these fires and the abbey extended the Tweed, unfolding its luminous scales beneath the thick shade of tall green oaks. Monk was perfectly well acquainted with this position, Newcastle and its environs having already more than once been his headquarters. He knew that by this day his enemy might without doubt throw a few scouts into these ruins and promote a skirmish, but that by night he would take care to abstain from such a risk. He felt himself, therefore, in security.

Thus his soldiers saw him, after what he boastingly called his supper--that is to say, after the exercise of mastication reported by us at the commencement of this chapter--like Napoleon on the eve of Austerlitz, seated asleep in his rush chair, half beneath the light of his lamp, half beneath the reflection of the moon, commencing its ascent in the heavens, which denoted that it was nearly half past nine in the evening. All at once Monk was roused from his half sleep, fictitious perhaps, by a troop of soldiers, who came with joyous cries, and kicked the poles of his tent with a humming noise as if on purpose to wake him. There was no need of so much noise; the general opened his eyes quickly.

"Well, my children, what is going on now?" asked the general.

"General!" replied several voices at once, "General! you shall have some supper."

"I have had my supper, gentlemen," replied he quietly, "and was comfortably digesting it, as you see. But come in, and tell me what brings you hither."

"Good news, general."

"Bah! Has Lambert sent us word that he will fight to-morrow?"

"No; but we have just captured a fishing-boat conveying fish to Newcastle."

"And you have done very wrong, my friends. These gentlemen from London are delicate, must have their first course; you will put them sadly out of humor this evening, and to-morrow they will be pitiless. It would really be in good taste to send back to Lambert both his fish and his fishermen, unless--" and the general reflected an instant.

"Tell me," continued he, "what are these fishermen, if you please?"

"Some Picard seamen who were fishing on the coasts of France or Holland, and who have been thrown upon ours by a gale of wind."

"Do any among them speak our language?"

"The leader spoke some few words of English."

The mistrust of the general was awakened in proportion as fresh information reached him. "That is well," said he. "I wish to see these men; bring them to me."

An officer immediately went to fetch them.

"How many are there of them?" continued Monk; "and what is their vessel?"

"There are ten or twelve of them, general, and they were aboard of a kind of chasse-maree, as it is called--Dutch-built, apparently."

"And you say they were carrying fish to Lambert's camp?"

"Yes, general, and they seem to have had good luck in their fishing."

"Humph! We shall see that," said Monk.

At this moment the officer returned, bringing the leader of the fishermen with him. He was a man from fifty to fifty-five years old, but good-looking for his age. He was of middle height, and wore a justaucorps of coarse wool, a cap pulled down over his eyes, a cutlass hung from his belt, and he walked with the hesitation peculiar to sailors, who, never knowing, thanks to the movement of the vessel, whether their foot will be placed upon the plank or upon nothing, give to every one of their steps a fall as firm as if they were driving a pile. Monk, with an acute and penetrating look, examined the fisherman for some time, while the latter smiled, with that smile, half cunning, half silly, peculiar to French peasants.

"Do you speak English?" asked Monk, in excellent French.

"Ah! but badly, my lord," replied the fisherman.

This reply was made much more with the lively and sharp accentuation of the people beyond the Loire, than with the slightly-drawling accent of the countries of the west and north of France.

"But you do speak it?" persisted Monk, in order to examine his accent once more.

"Eh! we men of the sea," replied the fisherman, "speak a little of all

languages."

"Then you are a sea fisherman?"

"I am at present, my lord--a fisherman, and a famous fisherman, too. I have taken a barbel that weighs at least thirty pounds, and more than fifty mullets; I have also some little whittings that will fry beautifully."

"You appear to me to have fished more frequently in the Gulf of Gascony than in the Channel," said Monk, smiling.

"Well, I am from the south; but does that prevent me from being a good fisherman, my lord?"

"Oh! not at all; I shall buy your fish. And now speak frankly; for whom did you destine them?"

"My lord, I will conceal nothing from you. I was going to Newcastle, following the coast, when a party of horsemen who were passing along in an opposite direction made a sign to my bark to turn back to your honor's camp, under penalty of a discharge of musketry. As I was not armed for fighting," added the fisherman, smiling, "I was forced to submit."

"And why did you go to Lambert's camp in preference to mine?"

"My lord, I will be frank; will your lordship permit me?"

"Yes, and even if need be shall command you to be so."

"Well, my lord, I was going to M. Lambert's camp because those gentlemen from the city pay well--whilst your Scotchmen, Puritans, Presbyterians, Covenanters, or whatever you chose to call them, eat but little, and pay for nothing."

Monk shrugged his shoulders, without, however, being able to refrain from smiling at the same time. "How is it that, being from the south, you come to fish on our coasts?"

"Because I have been fool enough to marry in Picardy."

"Yes; but even Picardy is not England."

"My lord, man shoves his boat into the sea, but God and the wind do the rest, and drive the boat where they please."

"You had, then, no intention of landing on our coasts?"

"Never."

"And what route were you steering?"

"We were returning from Ostend, where some mackerel had already been seen, when a sharp wind from the south drove us from our course; then, seeing that it was useless to struggle against it, we let it drive us. It then became necessary, not to lose our fish, which were good, to go and sell them at the nearest English port, and that was Newcastle. We were told the opportunity was good, as there was an increase of population in the camp, an increase of population in the city; both, we were told, were full of gentlemen, very rich and very hungry. So we steered our course towards Newcastle."

"And your companions, where are they?"

"Oh, my companions have remained on board; they are sailors without the least instruction."

"Whilst you--" said Monk.

"Who, I?" said the patron, laughing; "I have sailed about with my father; and I know what is called a sou, a crown, a pistole, a louis, and a double louis, in all the languages of Europe; my crew, therefore, listen to me as they would to an oracle, and obey me as if I were an admiral."

"Then it was you who preferred M. Lambert as the best customer?"

"Yes, certainly. And, to be frank, my lord, was I wrong?"

"You will see that by and by."

"At all events, my lord, if there is a fault, the fault is mine; and my comrades should not be dealt hardly with on that account."

"This is decidedly an intelligent, sharp fellow," thought Monk. Then, after a few minutes' silence employed in scrutinizing the fisherman,--"You come from Ostend, did you not say?" asked the general.

"Yes, my lord, in a straight line."

"You have then heard of the affairs of the day; for I have no doubt that both in France and Holland they excite interest. What is he doing who calls himself king of England?"

"Oh, my lord!" cried the fisherman, with loud and expansive frankness, "that is a lucky question, and you could not put it to anybody better than to me, for in truth I can make you a famous reply. Imagine, my

lord, that when putting into Ostend to sell the few mackerel we had caught, I saw the ex-king walking on the downs waiting for his horses, which were to take him to the Hague. He is a rather tall, pale man, with black hair, and somewhat hard-featured. He looks ill, and I don't think the air of Holland agrees with him."

Monk followed with the greatest attention the rapid, heightened, and diffuse conversation of the fisherman, in a language which was not his own, but which, as we have said, he spoke with great facility. The fisherman, on his part, employed sometimes a French word, sometimes an English word, and sometimes a word which appeared not to belong to any language, but was, in truth, pure Gascon. Fortunately his eyes spoke for him, and that so eloquently, that it was possible to lose a word from his mouth, but not a single intention from his eyes. The general appeared more and more satisfied with his examination. "You must have heard that this ex-king, as you call him, was going to the Hague for some purpose?"

"Oh, yes," said the fisherman, "I heard that."

"And what was his purpose?"

"Always the same," said the fisherman. "Must he not always entertain the fixed idea of returning to England?"

"That is true," said Monk, pensively.

"Without reckoning," added the fisherman, "that the stadtholder--you know, my lord, William II.?--"

"Well?"

"He will assist him with all his power."

"Ah! did you hear that said?"

"No, but I think so."

"You are quite a politician, apparently," said Monk.

"Why, we sailors, my lord, who are accustomed to study the water and the air--that is to say, the two most changeable things in the world--are seldom deceived as to the rest."

"Now, then," said Monk, changing the conversation, "I am told you are going to provision us."

"I shall do my best, my lord."



"How much do you ask for your fish in the first place?"

"Not such a fool as to name a price, my lord."

"Why not?"

"Because my fish is yours."

"By what right?"

"By that of the strongest."

"But my intention is to pay you for it."

"That is very generous of you, my lord."

"And the worth of it--"

"My lord, I fix no price."

"What do you ask, then?"

"I only ask to be permitted to go away."

"Where?--to General Lambert's camp?"

"I!" cried the fisherman; "what should I go to Newcastle for, now I have no longer any fish?"

"At all events, listen to me."

"I do, my lord."

"I shall give you some advice."

"How, my lord!--pay me and give me good advice likewise! You overwhelm me, my lord."

Monk looked more earnestly than ever at the fisherman, about whom he still appeared to entertain some suspicion. "Yes, I shall pay you, and give you a piece of advice; for the two things are connected. If you return, then, to General Lambert--"

The fisherman made a movement of his head and shoulders, which signified, "If he persists in it, I won't contradict him."

"Do not cross the marsh," continued Monk: "you will have money in your pocket, and there are in the marsh some Scottish ambuscaders I have placed there. Those people are very intractable; they understand but

very little of the language which you speak, although it appears to me to be composed of three languages. They might take from you what I have given you, and, on your return to your country, you would not fail to say that General Monk has two hands, the one Scottish, and the other English; and that he takes back with the Scottish hand what he has given with the English hand."

"Oh! general, I shall go where you like, be sure of that," said the fisherman, with a fear too expressive not to be exaggerated. "I only wish to remain here, if you will allow me to remain."

"I readily believe you," said Monk, with an imperceptible smile, "but I cannot, nevertheless, keep you in my tent."

"I have no such wish, my lord, and desire only that your lordship should point out where you will have me posted. Do not trouble yourself about us--with us a night soon passes away."

"You shall be conducted to your bark."

"As your lordship pleases. Only, if your lordship would allow me to be taken back by a carpenter, I should be extremely grateful."

"Why so?"

"Because the gentlemen of your army, in dragging my boat up the river with a cable pulled by their horses, have battered it a little upon the rocks of the shore, so that I have at least two feet of water in my hold, my lord."

"The greater reason why you should watch your boat, I think."

"My lord, I am quite at your orders," said the fisherman; "I shall empty my baskets where you wish; then you will pay me, if you please to do so; and you will send me away, if it appears right to you. You see I am very easily managed and pleased, my lord."

"Come, come, you are a very good sort of fellow," said Monk, whose scrutinizing glance had not been able to find a single shade in the clear eye of the fisherman. "Holloa, Digby!" An aid-de-camp appeared. "You will conduct this good fellow and his companions to the little tents of the canteens, in front of the marshes, so that they will be near their bark, and yet will not sleep on board to-night. What is the matter, Spithead?"

Spithead was the sergeant from whom Monk had borrowed a piece of tobacco for his supper. Spithead having entered the general's tent without being sent for, had drawn this question from Monk.

"My lord," said he, "a French gentleman has just presented himself at the outposts and wishes to speak to your honor."

All this was said, be it understood, in English; but, notwithstanding, it produced a slight emotion in the fisherman, which Monk, occupied with his serjeant, did not remark.

"Who is the gentleman?" asked Monk.

"My lord," replied Spithead, "he told it me; but those devils of French names are so difficult to pronounce for a Scottish throat, that I could not retain it. I believe, however, from what the guards say, that it is the same gentleman who presented himself yesterday at the halt, and whom your honor would not receive."

"That is true; I was holding a council of officers."

"Will your honor give any orders respecting this gentleman?"

"Yes, let him be brought here."

"Must we take any precautions?"

"Such as what?"

"Blinding his eyes, for instance?"

"To what purpose? He can only see what I desire should be seen; that is to say, that I have around me eleven thousand brave men, who ask no better than to have their throats cut in honor of the parliament of Scotland and England."

"And this man, my lord?" said Spithead, pointing to the fisherman, who, during this conversation, had remained standing and motionless, like a man who sees but does not understand.

"Ah, that is true," said Monk. Then turning towards the fisherman,--"I shall see you again, my brave fellow," said he; "I have selected a lodging for you. Digby, take him to it. Fear nothing; your money shall be sent to you presently."

"Thank you, my lord," said the fisherman, and after having bowed, he left the tent, accompanied by Digby. Before he had gone a hundred paces he found his companions, who were whispering with a volubility which did not appear exempt from uneasiness, but he made them a sign which seemed to reassure them. "Hola, you fellows!" said the patron, "come this way. His lordship, General Monk, has the generosity to pay us for our fish, and the goodness to give us hospitality for to-night."

The fishermen gathered round their leader, and, conducted by Digby, the little troop proceeded towards the canteens, the post, as may be remembered, which had been assigned them. As they went along in the dark, the fishermen passed close to the guards who were conducting the French gentleman to General Monk. This gentleman was on horseback and enveloped in a large cloak, which prevented the patron from seeing him, however great his curiosity might be. As to the gentleman, ignorant that he was elbowing compatriots, he did not pay any attention to the little troop.

The aid-de-camp settled his guests in a tolerably comfortable tent, from which was dislodged an Irish canteen woman, who went, with her six children, to sleep where she could. A large fire was burning in front of this tent, and threw its purple light over the grassy pools of the marsh, rippled by a fresh breeze. The arrangements made, the aid-de-camp wished the fishermen good-night, calling to their notice that they might see from the door of the tent the masts of their bark, which was tossing gently on the Tweed, a proof that it had not yet sunk. The sight of this appeared to delight the leader of the fishermen infinitely.