

IN THE CHAMBER OF PEERS. 1846.

Yesterday, February 22, I went to the Chamber of Peers. The weather was fine and very cold, in spite of the noonday sun. In the Rue de Tournon I met a man in the custody of two soldiers. The man was fair, pale, thin, haggard; about thirty years old; he wore coarse linen trousers; his bare and lacerated feet were visible in his sabots, and blood-stained bandages round his ankles took the place of stockings; his short blouse was soiled with mud in the back, which indicated that he habitually slept on the ground; his head was bare, his hair dishevelled. Under his arm was a loaf. The people who surrounded him said that he had stolen the loaf, and it was for this that he had been arrested.

When they reached the gendarmerie barracks one of the soldiers entered, and the man stayed at the door guarded by the other soldier.

A carriage was standing at the door of the barracks. It was decorated with a coat of arms; on the lanterns was a ducal coronet; two grey horses were harnessed to it; behind it were two lackeys. The windows were raised, but the interior, upholstered in yellow damask, was visible. The gaze of the man fixed upon this carriage, attracted mine. In the carriage was a woman in a pink bonnet and costume of black velvet, fresh, white, beautiful, dazzling, who was laughing and playing with a charming child of sixteen months, buried in ribbons, lace and

furs.

This woman did not see the terrible man who was gazing at her.

I became pensive.

This man was no longer a man for me; he was the spectre of misery, the brusque, deformed, lugubrious apparition in full daylight, in full sunlight, of a revolution that is still plunged in darkness, but which is approaching. In former times the poor jostled the rich, this spectre encountered the rich man in all his glory; but they did not look at each other, they passed on. This condition of things could thus last for some time. The moment this man perceives that this woman exists, while this woman does not see that this man is there, the catastrophe is inevitable.

## GENERAL FABVIER

Fabvier had fought valiantly in the wars of the Empire; he fell out with the Restoration over the obscure affair of Grenoble. He expatriated himself about 1816. It was the period of the departure of the eagles. Lallemand went to America, Allard and Vannova to India, Fabvier to Greece.

The revolution of 1820 broke out. He took an heroic part in it. He raised a corps of four thousand palikars, to whom he was not a chief, but a god. He gave them civilization and taught them barbarity. He was rough and brave above all of them, and almost ferocious, but with that grand, Homeric ferocity. One might have thought that he had come from a tent of the camp of Achilles rather than from the camp of Napoleon. He invited the English Ambassador to dinner at his bivouac; the Ambassador found him seated by a big fire at which a whole sheep was roasting; when the animal was cooked and unskewered, Fabvier placed the heel of his bare foot upon the neck of the smoking and bleeding sheep and tore off a quarter, which he offered to the Ambassador. In bad times nothing daunted him. He was indifferent alike to cold, heat, fatigue and hunger; he never spared himself. The palikars used to say: "When the soldier eats cooked grass Fabvier eats it green."

I knew his history, but I had not seen him when, in 1846, General

Fabvier was made a peer of France. One day he had a speech to make, and the Chancellor announced: "Baron Fabvier has the tribune." I expected to hear a lion, I thought an old woman was speaking.

Yet his face was a truly masculine one, heroic and formidable, that one might have fancied had been moulded by the hand of a giant and which seemed to have preserved a savage and terrible grimace. What was so strange was the gentle, slow, grave, contained, caressing voice that was allied to this magnificent ferocity. A child's voice issued from this tiger's mouth.

General Fabvier delivered from the tribune speeches learned by heart, graceful, flowery, full of allusions to the woods and country--veritable idylls. In the tribune this Ajax became a Némorin.

He spoke in low tones like a diplomat, he smiled like a courtier. He was not averse to making himself agreeable to princes. This is what the peerage had done for him. He was only a hero after all.

August 22, 1846.

The Marquis de Boissy has assurance, coolness, self-possession, a voice that is peculiar to himself, facility of speech, wit occasionally, the quality of imperturbability, all the accessories of a great orator. The

only thing he lacks is talent. He wearsies the Chamber, wherefore the Ministers do not consider themselves bound to answer him. He talks as long as everybody keeps quiet. He fences with the Chancellor as with his particular enemy.

Yesterday, after the session which Boissy had entirely occupied with a very poor speech, M. Guizot said to me:

"It is an affliction. The Chamber of Deputies would not stand him for ten minutes after the first two times. The Chamber of Peers extends its high politeness to him, and it does wrong. Boissy will not be suppressed until the day the whole Chamber rises and walks out when he asks permission to speak."

"You cannot think of such a thing," said I. "Only he and the Chancellor would be left. It would be a duel without seconds."

It is the custom of the Chamber of Peers never to repeat in its reply to the speech from the throne the titles that the King gives to his children. It is also the custom never to give the princes the title of Royal Highness when speaking of them to the King. There is no Highness in presence of his Majesty.

To-day, January 18, the address in reply to the speech from the throne was debated. Occasionally there are flashes of keen and happy wit in

M. de Boissy's nonsense. He remarked to-day: "I am not of those who are grateful to the government for the blessings of providence."

As usual he quarrelled with the Chancellor. He was making some more than usually roving excursion from the straight path. The Chamber murmured and cried: "Confine yourself to the question." The Chancellor rose:

"Monsieur the Marquis de Boissy," he said, "the Chamber requests that you will confine yourself to the question under discussion. It has saved me the trouble of asking you to do so." ("Our colleague might as well have said 'spared me!'" I whispered to Lebrun.)

"I am delighted on your account, Monsieur the Chancellor," replied M. de Boissy, and the Chamber laughed.

A few minutes later, however, the Chancellor took his revenge. M. de Boissy had floundered into some quibble about the rules. It was late. The Chamber was becoming impatient.

"Had you not raised an unnecessary incident," observed the Chancellor, "you would have finished your speech a long time ago, to your own satisfaction and that of everybody else."

Whereat everybody laughed.

"Don't laugh!" exclaimed the Duke de Mortemart. "Laughter diminishes the prestige of a constituted body."

M. de Pontécoulant said: "M. de Boissy teases Monsieur the Chancellor, Monsieur the Chancellor torments M. de Boissy. There is a lack of dignity on both sides!"

During the session the Duke de Mortemart came to my bench and we spoke about the Emperor. M. de Mortemart went through all the great wars. He speaks nobly of him. He was one of the Emperor's orderlies in the Campaign of 1812.

"It was during that campaign that I learned to know the Emperor," he said. "I was near him night and day. I saw him shave himself in the morning, sponge his chin, pull on his boots, pinch his valet's ear, chat with the grenadier mounting guard over his tent, laugh, gossip, make trivial remarks, and amid all this issue orders, trace plans, interrogate prisoners, decree, determine, decide, in a sovereign manner, simply, unerringly, in a few minutes, without missing anything, without losing a useful detail or a second of necessary time. In this intimate and familiar life of the bivouac flashes of his intellect were seen every moment. You can believe me when I say that he belied the proverb: 'No man is great in the eyes of his valet.'"

"Monsieur the Duke," said I, "that proverb is wrong. Every great man is a great man in the eyes of his valet."

At this session the Duke d'Aumale, having attained his twenty-fifth birthday, took his seat for the first time. The Duke de Nemours and the

Prince de Joinville were seated near him in their usual places behind the ministerial bench. They were not among those who laughed the least.

The Duke de Nemours, being the youngest member of his committee, fulfilled the functions of secretary, as is customary. M. de Montalembert wanted to spare him the trouble. "No," said the prince, "it is my duty." He took the urn and, as secretary, went the round of the table to collect the votes.

At the close of the session of January 21, 1847, at which the Chamber of Peers discussed Cracow and kept silent concerning the frontier of the Rhine, I descended the grand staircase of the Chamber in company with M. de Chastellux. M. Decazes stopped me and asked:

"Well, what have you been doing during the session?"

"I have been writing to Mme. Dorval." (I held the letter in my hand.)

"What a fine disdain! Why did you not speak?"

"On account of the old proverb: 'He whose opinion is not shared by anybody else should think, and say nothing.'

"Did your opinion, then, differ from that of the others?"



"Yes, from that of the whole Chamber."

"What did you want then?"

"The Rhine."

"Whew! the devil!"

"I should have protested and spoken without finding any echo to my words; I preferred to say nothing."

"Ah! the Rhine! To have the Rhine! Yes, that is a fine idea. Poetry! poetry!"

"Poetry that our fathers made with cannon and that we shall make again with ideas!"

"My dear colleague," went on M. Decazes, "we must wait. I, too, want the Rhine. Thirty years ago I said to Louis XVIII.: 'Sire, I should be inconsolable if I thought I should die without seeing France mistress of the left bank of the Rhine. But before we can talk about that, before we can think of it even, we must beget children.'"

"Well," I replied, "that was thirty years ago. We have begotten the children."

April 23, 1847.

The Chamber of Peers is discussing a pretty bad bill on substitutions for army service. To-day the principal article of the measure was before the House.

M. de Nemours was present. There are eighty lieutenant-generals in the Chamber. The majority considered the article to be a bad one. Under the eye of the Duke de Nemours, who seemed to be counting them, all rose to vote in favour of it.

The magistrates, the members of the Institute and the ambassadors voted against it.

I remarked to President Franck-Carré, who was seated next to me: "It is a struggle between civil courage and military poltroonery."

The article was adopted.

June 22, 1847.

The Girardin\* affair was before the Chamber of Peers to-day. Acquittal.

The vote was taken by means of balls, white ones for condemnation, black ones for acquittal. There were 199 votes cast, 65 white, 134 black. In placing my black ball in the urn I remarked: "In blackening him we whiten him."

\* Emile de Girardin had been prosecuted for publishing an article in a newspaper violently attacking the government.

I said to Mme. D--: "Why do not the Minister and Girardin provoke a trial in the Assize Court?"

She replied: "Because Girardin does not feel himself strong enough, and the Minister does not feel himself pure enough."

MM. de Montalivet and Mole and the peers of the Château voted, queerly enough, for Girardin against the Government. M. Guizot learned the result in the Chamber of Deputies and looked exceedingly wrath.

June 28, 1847.

On arriving at the Chamber I found Franck-Carre greatly scandalised.

In his hand was a prospectus for champagne signed by the Count de Mareuil, and stamped with a peer's mantle and a count's coronet with the

de Mareuil arms. He had shown it to the Chancellor, who had replied: "I can do nothing!"

"I could do something, though, if a mere councillor were to do a thing like that in my court," said Franck-Carré to me. "I would call the Chambers together and have him admonished in a disciplinary manner."

1848.

Discussion by the committees of the Chamber of Peers of the address in reply to the speech from the throne.

I was a member of the fourth committee. Among other changes I demanded this. There was: "Our princes, your well-beloved children, are doing in Africa the duties of servants of the State." I proposed: "The princes, your well-beloved children, are doing," etc., "their duty as servants of the State." This fooling produced the effect of a fierce opposition.

January 14, 1848.

The Chamber of Peers prevented Alton-Shée from pronouncing in the

tribune even the name of the Convention. There was a terrific knocking upon desks with paper-knives and shouts of "Order! Order!" and he was compelled almost by force to descend from the tribune.

I was on the point of shouting to them: "You are imitating a session of the Convention, but only with wooden knives!"

I was restrained by the thought that this mot, uttered during their anger, would never be forgiven. For myself I care little, but it might affect the calm truths which I may have to tell them and get them to accept later on.