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THE BATTLE OF THE STRONG

[A ROMANCE OF TWO KINGDOMS]

By Gilbert Parker

Volume 2.

CHAPTER X

As Ranulph had surmised, the ship was the *Narcissus*, and its first lieutenant was Philip d'Avranche. The night before, orders had reached the vessel from the Admiralty that soundings were to be taken at the Ecrehos. The captain had at once made inquiries for a pilot, and Jean Touzel was commended to him. A messenger sent to Jean found that he had already gone to the Ecrehos. The captain had then set sail, and now, under Jean's skilful pilotage, the *Narcissus* twisted and crept through the teeth of the rocks at the entrance, and slowly into the cove, reefs on either side gaping and girding at her, her keel all but scraping the serrated granite beneath. She anchored, and boats put off to take soundings and explore the shores. Philip was rowed in by Jean Touzel.

Stepping out upon the beach of *Mattre 'Ile*, Philip slowly made his way over the shingle to the ruined chapel, in no good humour with himself or with the world, for exploring these barren rocks seemed a useless whim of the Admiralty, and he could not conceive of any incident rising from the monotony of duty to lighten the darkness of this very brilliant day. His was not the nature to enjoy the stony detail of his profession. Excitement and adventure were as the breath of life to him, and since he had played his little part at the Jersey battle in a bandbox eleven years before, he had touched hands with accidents of flood and field in many countries.

He had been wrecked on the island of Trinidad in a tornado, losing his captain and his ship; had seen active service in America and in India; won distinction off the coast of Arabia in an engagement with Spanish cruisers; and was now waiting for his papers as commander of a ship of his own, and fretted because the road of fame and promotion was so toilsome. Rumours of war with France had set his blood dancing a little, but for him most things were robbed of half their pleasure because they did not come at once.

This was a moody day with him, for he had looked to spend it differently. As he walked up the shingle his thoughts were hanging about a cottage in the *Place du Vier Prison*. He had hoped to loiter in a doorway there, and to empty his sailor's heart in well-practised admiration before the altar of village beauty. The sight of Guida's face the day before had given a poignant pulse to his emotions, unlike the broken rhythm of past comedies of sentiment and melodramas of passion. According to all logic of custom, the acuteness of yesterday's impression should have been followed up by today's attack; yet here he was, like another *Robinson Crusoe*,

"kicking up the shingle of a cursed Patmos"--so he grumbled aloud. Patmos was not so wild a shot after all, for no sooner had he spoken the word than, looking up, he saw in the doorway of the ruined chapel the gracious figure of a girl: and a book of revelations was opened and begun.

At first he did not recognise Guida. There was only a picture before him which, by some fantastic transmission, merged into his reveries. What he saw was an ancient building--just such a humble pile of stone and rough mortar as one might see on some lone cliff of the AEGean or on abandoned isles of the equatorial sea. The gloom of a windowless vault was behind the girl, but the filtered sunshine of late September fell on her head. It brightened the white kerchief, and the bodice and skirt of a faint pink, throwing the face into a pleasing shadow where the hand curved over the forehead. She stood like some Diana of a ruined temple looking out into the staring day.

At once his pulses beat faster, for to him a woman was ever the fountain of adventure, and an unmanageable heart sent him headlong to the oasis where he might loiter at the spring of feminine vanity, or truth, or impenitent gaiety, as the case might be. In proportion as his spirits had sunk into sour reflection, they now shot up rocket-high at the sight of a girl's joyous pose of body and the colour and form of the picture she made. In him the shrewdness of a strong intelligence was mingled with wild impulse. In most, rashness would be the outcome of such a marriage of characteristics; but clear-sightedness, decision, and a little unscrupulousness had carried into success many daring actions of his life. This very quality of resolute daring saved him from disaster.

Impulse quickened his footsteps now. It quickened them to a run when the hand was dropped from the girl's forehead, and he saw again the face whose image and influence had banished sleep from his eyes the night before.

"Guida!" broke from his lips.

The man was transfigured. Brightness leaped into his look, and the greyness of his moody eye became as blue as the sea. The professional straightness of his figure relaxed into the elastic grace of an athlete. He was a pipe to be played on: an actor with the ambitious brain of a diplomatist; as weak as water, and as strong as steel; soft-hearted to foolishness or unyielding at will.

Now, if the devil had sent a wise imp to have watch and ward of this man and this maid, and report to him upon the meeting of their ways, the moment Philip took Guida's hand, and her eyes met his, monsieur the reporter of Hades might have clapped-to his book and gone back to his dark master with the message and the record: "The hour of Destiny is struck."

When the tide of life beats high in two mortals, and they meet in the moment of its apogee, when all the nature is sweeping on without command, guilelessly, yet thoughtlessly, the mere lilt of existence lulling to

sleep wisdom and tried experience--speculation points all one way. Many indeed have been caught away by such a conjunction of tides, and they mostly pay the price.

But paying is part of the game of life: it is the joy of buying that we crave. Go down into the dark markets of the town. See the long, narrow, sordid streets lined with the cheap commodities of the poor. Mark how there is a sort of spangled gaiety, a reckless swing, a grinning exultation in the grimy, sordid caravanserai. The cheap colours of the shoddy open-air clothing-house, the blank faded green of the coster's cart; the dark bluish-red of the butcher's stall--they all take on a value not their own in the garish lights flaring down the markets of the dusk. Pause to the shrill music of the street musician, hear the tuneless voice of the grimy troubadour of the alley-ways; and then hark to the one note that commands them all--the call which lightens up faces sodden with base vices, eyes bleared with long looking into the dark caverns of crime:

"Buy--buy--buy--buy--buy!"

That is the tune the piper pipes. We would buy, and behold, we must pay. Then the lights go out, the voices stop, and only the dark tumultuous streets surround us, and the grime of life is ours again. Whereupon we go heavily to hard beds of despair, having eaten the cake we bought, and now must pay for unto Penalty, the dark inordinate creditor. And anon the morning comes, and then, at last, the evening when the triste bazaars open again, and the strong of heart and nerve move not from their doorways, but sit still in the dusk to watch the grim world go by. But mostly they hurry out to the bazaars once more, answering to the fevered call:

"Buy--buy--buy--buy--buy!"

And again they pay the price: and so on to the last foreclosure and the immitigable end.

One of the two standing in the door of the ruined chapel on the Ecrehos had the nature of those who buy but once and pay the price but once; the other was of those who keep open accounts in the markets of life. The one was the woman and the other was the man.

There was nothing conventional in their greeting. "You remembered me!" he said eagerly, in English, thinking of yesterday.

"I shouldn't deserve to be here if I had forgotten," she answered meaningly. "Perhaps you forget the sword of the Turk?" she added.

He laughed a little, his cheek flushed with pleasure. "I shouldn't deserve to be here if I remembered--in the way you mean," he answered.

Her face was full of pleasure. "The worst of it is," she said, "I never can pay my debt. I have owed it for eleven years, and if I should live to be ninety I should still owe it."

His heart was beating hard and he became daring. "So, thou shalt save my life," he said, speaking in French. "We shall be quits then, thou and I."

The familiar French thou startled her. To hide the instant's confusion she turned her head away, using a hand to gather in her hair, which the wind was lifting lightly.

"That wouldn't quite make us quits," she rejoined; "your life is important, mine isn't. You"--she nodded towards the Narcissus--"you command men."

"So dost thou," he answered, persisting in the endearing pronoun.

He meant it to be endearing. As he had sailed up and down the world, a hundred ports had offered him a hundred adventures, all light in the scales of purpose, but not all bad. He had gossiped and idled and coquetted with beauty before; but this was different, because the nature of the girl was different from all others he had met. It had mostly been lightly come and lightly go with himself, as with the women it had been easily won and easily loosed. Conscience had not smitten him hard, because beauty, as he had known it, though often fair and of good report, had bloomed for others before he came. But here was a nature fresh and unspoiled from the hand of the potter Life.

As her head slightly turned from him again, he involuntarily noticed the pulse beating in her neck, the rise and fall of her bosom. Life--here was life unpoisoned by one drop of ill thought or light experience.

"Thou dost command men too," he repeated.

She stepped forward a little from the doorway and beyond him, answering back at him:

"Oh, no, I only knit, and keep a garden, and command a little home, that's all. . . . Won't you let me show you the island?" she added quickly, pointing to a hillock beyond, and moving towards it. He followed, speaking over her shoulder:

"That's what you seem to do," he answered, "not what you do." Then he added rhetorically: "I've seen a man polishing the buckle of his shoe, and he was planning to take a city or manoeuvre a fleet."

She noticed that he had dropped the thou, and, much as its use had embarrassed her, the gap left when the boldness was withdrawn became filled with regret, for, though no one had dared to say it to her before, somehow it seemed not rude on Philip's lips. Philip? Yes, Philip she had called him in her childhood, and the name had been carried on into her girlhood--he had always been Philip to her.

"No, girls don't think like that, and they don't do big things," she replied. "When I polish the pans"--she laughed--"and when I scour my buckles, I just think of pans and buckles." She tossed up her fingers

lightly, with a perfect charm of archness.

He was very close to her now. "But girls have dreams, they have memories."

"If women hadn't memory," she answered, "they wouldn't have much, would they? We can't take cities and manoeuvre fleets." She laughed a little ironically. "I wonder that we think at all or have anything to think about, except the kitchen and the garden, and baking and scouring and spinning"--she paused slightly, her voice lowered a little--"and the sea, and the work that men do round us. . . . Do you ever go into a market?" she added suddenly.

Somehow she could talk easily and naturally to him. There had been no leading up to confidence. She felt a sudden impulse to tell him all her thoughts. To know things, to understand, was a passion with her. It seemed to obliterate in her all that was conventional, it removed her far from sensitive egotism. Already she had begun "to take notice" in the world, and that is like being born again. As it grows, life ceases to be cliché; and when the taking notice is supreme we call it genius; and genius is simple and believing: it has no pride, it is naive, it is childlike.

Philip seemed to wear no mark of convention, and Guida spoke her thoughts freely to him. "To go into a market seems to me so wonderful," she continued. "There are the cattle, the fruits, the vegetables, the flowers, the fish, the wood; the linen from the loom, the clothes that women's fingers have knitted. But it isn't just those things that you see, it's all that's behind them--the houses, the fields, and the boats at sea, and the men and women working and working, and sleeping and eating, and breaking their hearts with misery, and wondering what is to be the end of it all; yet praying a little, it may be, and dreaming a little--perhaps a very little." She sighed, and continued: "That's as far as I get with thinking. What else can one do in this little island? Why, on the globe Maitre Damian has at St. Aubin's, Jersey is no bigger than the head of a pin. And what should one think of here?"

Her eyes were on the sea. Its mystery was in them, the distance, the ebb and flow, the light of wonder and of adventure too. "You--you've been everywhere," she went on. "Do you remember you sent me once from Malta a tiny silver cross? That was years ago, soon after the Battle of Jersey, when I was a little bit of a girl. Well, after I got big enough I used to find Malta and other places on Maitre Damian's globe. I've lived always there, on that spot"--she pointed towards Jersey--"on that spot one could walk round in a day. What do I know! You've been everywhere--everywhere. When you look back you've got a thousand pictures in your mind. You've seen great cities, temples, palaces, great armies, fleets; you've done things: you've fought and you've commanded, though you're so young, and you've learned about men and about many countries. Look at what you know, and then, if you only think, you'll laugh at what I know."

For a moment he was puzzled what to answer. The revelation of the girl's nature had come so quickly upon him. He had looked for freshness,

sweetness, intelligence, and warmth of temperament, but it seemed to him that here were flashes of power. Yet she was only seventeen. She had been taught to see things with her own eyes and not another's, and she spoke of them as she saw them; that was all. Yet never but to her mother had Guida said so much to any human being as within these past few moments to Philip d'Avranche.

The conditions were almost maliciously favourable, and d'Avranche was simple and easy as a boy, with his sailor's bonhomie and his naturally facile spirit. A fateful adaptability was his greatest weapon in life, and his greatest danger. He saw that Guida herself was unconscious of the revelation she was making, and he showed no surprise, but he caught the note of her simplicity, and responded in kind. He flattered her deftly--not that she was pressed unduly, he was too wise for that. He took her seriously; and this was not all dissimulation, for her every word had glamour, and he now exalted her intellect unduly. He had never met girl or woman who talked just as she did; and straightway, with the wild eloquence of his nature, he thought he had discovered a new heaven and a new earth. A spell was upon him. He knew what he wanted when he saw it. He had always made up his mind suddenly, always acted on the intelligent impulse of the moment. He felt things, he did not study them--it was almost a woman's instinct. He came by a leap to the goal of purpose, not by the toilsome steps of reason. On the instant his headlong spirit declared his purpose: this was the one being for him in all the world: at this altar he would light a lamp of devotion, and keep it burning forever.

"This is my day," he said to himself. "I always knew that love would come down on me like a storm." Then, aloud, he said to her: "I wish I knew what you know; but I can't, because my mind is different, my life has been different. When you go into the world and see a great deal, and loosen a little the strings of your principles, and watch how sins and virtues contradict themselves, you see things after a while in a kind of mist. But you, Guida, you see them clearly because your heart is clear. You never make a mistake, you are always right because your mind is right."

She interrupted him, a little troubled and a good deal amazed: "Oh, you mustn't, mustn't speak like that. It's not so. How can one see and learn unless one sees and knows the world? Surely one can't think wisely if one doesn't see widely?"

He changed his tactics instantly. The world--that was the thing? Well, then, she should see the world, through him, with him.

"Yes, yes, you're right," he answered. "You can't know things unless you see widely. You must see the world. This island, what is it? I was born here, don't I know! It's a foothold in the world, but it's no more; it's not a field to walk in, why, it's not even a garden. No, it's the little patch of green we play in in front of a house, behind the railings, before we go out into the world and learn how to live."

They had now reached the highest point on the island, where a flagstaff

stood. Guida was looking far beyond Jersey to the horizon line. There was little haze, the sky was inviolably blue. Far off against the horizon lay the low black rocks of the Minquiers. They seemed to her, on the instant, like stepping-stones. Beyond would be other stepping-stones, and others and others still again, and they would all mark the way and lead to what Philip called the world. The world! She felt a sudden little twist of regret at her heart. Here she was like a cow grazing within the circle of its tether--like a lax caterpillar on its blade of grass. Yet it had all seemed so good to her in the past; broken only by little bursts of wonder and wish concerning that outside world.

"Do we ever learn how to live?" she asked. "Don't we just go on from one thing to another, picking our way, but never knowing quite what to do, because we don't know what's ahead? I believe we never do learn how to live," she added, half-smiling, yet a little pensive too; "but I am so very ignorant, and--"

She stopped, for suddenly it flashed upon her: here she was baring her childish heart--he would think it childish, she was sure he would--everything she thought, to a man she had never known till to-day. No, no, she was wrong; she had known him, but it was only as Philip, the boy who had saved her life. And the Philip of her memory was only a picture, not a being; something to think about, not something to speak with, to whom she might show her heart. She flushed hotly and turned her shoulder on him. Her eyes followed a lizard creeping up the stones. As long as she lived she remembered that lizard, its colour changing in the sun. She remembered the hot stones, and how warm the flag-staff was when she stretched out her hand to it mechanically. But the swift, noiseless lizard running in and out of the stones, it was ever afterwards like a coat-of-arms upon the shield of her life.

Philip came close to her. At first he spoke over her shoulder, then he faced her. His words forced her eyes up to his, and he held them.

"Yes, yes, we learn how to live," he said. "It's only when we travel alone that we don't see before us. I will teach you how to live--we will learn the way together! Guida! Guida!"--he reached out his hands towards her--"don't start so! Listen to me. I feel for you what I have felt for no other being in all my life. It came upon me yesterday when I saw you in the window at the Vier Prison. I didn't understand it. All night I walked the deck thinking of you. To-day as soon as I saw your face, as soon as I touched your hand, I knew what it was, and--"

He attempted to take her hand now. "Oh, no, no!" she exclaimed, and drew back as if terrified.

"You need not fear me," he burst out. "For now I know that I have but two things to live for: for my work"--he pointed to the Narcissus--"and for you. You are frightened of me? Why, I want to have the right to protect you, to drive away all fear from your life. You shall be the garden and I shall be the wall; you the nest and I the rock; you the breath of life and I the body that breathes it. Guida, my Guida, I love you!"

She drew back, leaning against the stones, her eyes riveted upon his, and she spoke scarcely above a whisper.

"It is not true--it is not true. You've known me only for one day--only for one hour. How can you say it!" There was a tumult in her breast; her eyes shone and glistened; wonder, embarrassed yet happy wonder, looked at him from her face, which was touched with an appealing, as of the heart that dares not believe and yet must believe or suffer.

"It is madness," she added. "It is not true--how can it be true!"

Yet it all had the look of reality--the voice had the right ring, the face had truth, the bearing was gallant; the force and power of the man overwhelmed her.

She reached out her hand tremblingly as though to push him back. "It cannot be true," she said. "To think--in one day!"

"It is true," he answered, "true as that I stand here. One day--it is not one day. I knew you years ago. The seed was sown then, the flower springs up to-day, that is all. You think I can't know that it is love I feel for you? It is admiration; it is faith; it is desire too; but it is love. When you see a flower in a garden, do you not know at once if you like it or no? Don't you know the moment you look on a landscape, on a splendid building, whether it is beautiful to you? If, then, with these things one knows--these that haven't any speech, no life like yours or mine--how much more when it is a girl with a face like yours, when it is a mind noble like yours, when it is a touch that thrills, and a voice that drowns the heart in music! Guida, believe that I speak the truth. I know, I swear, that you are the one passion, the one love of my life. All others would be as nothing, so long as you live, and I live to look upon you, to be beside you."

"Beside me!" she broke in, with an incredulous irony fain to be contradicted, "a girl in a village, poor, knowing nothing, seeing no farther"--she looked out towards Jersey--"seeing no farther than the little cottage in the little country where I was born."

"But you shall see more," he said, "you shall see all, feel all, if you will but listen to me. Don't deny me what is life and breathing and hope to me. I'll show you the world; I'll take you where you may see and know. We will learn it all together. I shall succeed in life. I shall go far. I've needed one thing to make me do my best for some one's sake beside my own; you will make me do it for your sake. Your ancestors were great people in France; and you know that mine, centuries ago, were great also--that the d'Avranches were a noble family in France. You and I will win our place as high as the best of them. In this war that's coming between England and France is my chance. Nelson said to me the other day--you have heard of him, of young Captain Nelson, the man they're pointing to in the fleet as the one man of them all?--he said to me: 'We shall have our chance now, d'Avranche.' And we shall. I have wanted it till to-day for my own selfish ambition--now I want it for you. When I

landed on this islet a half-hour ago, I hated it, I hated my ship, I hated my duty, I hated everything, because I wanted to go where you were, to be with you. It was Destiny that brought us both to this place at one moment. You can't escape Destiny. It was to be that I should love you, Guida."

He reached out to take her hands, but she put them behind her against the stones, and drew back. The lizard suddenly shot out from a hole and crossed over her fingers. She started, shivered at the cold touch, and caught the hand away. A sense of foreboding awaked in her, and her eyes followed the lizard's swift travel with a strange fascination. But she lifted them to Philip's, and the fear and premonition passed.

"Oh, my brain is in a whirl!" she said. "I do not understand. I know so little. No one has ever spoken to me as you have done. You would not dare"--she leaned forward a little, looking into his face with that unwavering gaze which was the best sign of her straight-forward mind--"you would not dare to deceive--you would not dare. I have--no mother," she added with simple pathos.

The moisture came into his eyes. He must have been stone not to be touched by the appealing, by the tender inquisition, of that look.

"Guida," he said impetuously, "if I deceive you, may every fruit of life turn to dust and ashes in my mouth! If ever I deceive you, may I die a black, dishonourable death, abandoned and alone! I should deserve that if I deceived you, Guida."

For the first time since he had spoken she smiled, yet her eyes filled with tears too.

"You will let me tell you that I love you, Guida--it is all I ask now: that you will listen to me?"

She sighed, but did not answer. She kept looking at him, looking as though she would read his inmost soul. Her face was very young, though the eyes were so wise in their simplicity.

"You will give me my chance--you will listen to me, Guida, and try to understand--and be glad?" he asked, leaning closer to her and holding out his hands.

She drew herself up slightly as with an air of relief and resolve. She put a hand in his.

"I will try to understand--and be glad," she answered.

"Won't you call me Philip?" he said.

The same slight, mischievous smile crossed her lips now as eleven years ago in the Rue d'Egypte, and recalling that moment, she replied:

"Yes, sir--Philip!"

At that instant the figure of a man appeared on the shingle beneath, looking up towards them. They did not see him. Guida's hand was still in Philip's.

The man looked at them for a moment, then started and turned away. It was Ranulph Delagarde.

They heard his feet upon the shingle now. They turned and looked; and Guida withdrew her hand.

CHAPTER XI

There are moments when a kind of curtain seems dropped over the brain, covering it, smothering it, while yet the body and its nerves are tingling with sensation. It is like the fire-curtain of a theatre let down between the stage and the audience, a merciful intervention between the mind and the disaster which would consume it.

As the years had gone on Maitre Ranulph's nature had grown more powerful, and his outdoor occupation had enlarged and steadied his physical forces. His trouble now was in proportion to the force of his character. The sight of Guida and Philip hand in hand, the tender attitude, the light in their faces, was overwhelming and unaccountable. Yesterday these two were strangers--to-day it was plain to be seen they were lovers, and lovers who had reached a point of confidence and revelation. Nothing in the situation tallied with Ranulph's ideas of Guida and his knowledge of life. He had, as one might say, been eye to eye with this girl for fifteen years: he had told his love for her in a thousand little ways, as the ant builds its heap to a pyramid that becomes a thousand times greater than itself. He had followed her footsteps, he had fetched and carried, he had served afar off, he had ministered within the gates. He had, unknown to her, watched like the keeper of the house over all who came and went, neither envious nor over-zealous, neither intrusive nor neglectful; leaving here a word and there an act to prove himself, above all, the friend whom she could trust, and, in all, the lover whom she might wake to know and reward. He had waited with patience, hoping stubbornly that she might come to put her hand in his one day.

Long ago he would have left the island to widen his knowledge, earn experience in his craft, or follow a career in the army--he had been an expert gunner when he served in the artillery four years ago--and hammer out fame upon the anvils of fortune in England or in France; but he had stayed here that he might be near her. His love had been simple, it had been direct, and wise in its consistent reserve. He had been self-obliterating. His love desired only to make her happy: most lovers desire that they themselves shall be made happy. Because of the crime his father committed years ago--because of the shame of that hidden crime--he had tried the more to make himself a good citizen, and had formed the modest ambition of making one human being happy. Always

keeping this near him in past years, a supreme cheerfulness of heart had welled up out of his early sufferings and his innate honesty. Hope had beckoned him on from year to year, until it seemed at last that the time had almost come when he might speak, might tell her all--his father's crime and the manner of his father's death; of his own devoted purpose in trying to expiate that crime by his own uprightness; and of his love for her.

Now, all in a minute, his horizon was blackened. This adventurous gallant, this squire of dames, had done in a day what he had worked, step by step, to do through all these years. This skipping seafarer, with his powder and lace, his cocked hat and gold-handled sword, had whistled at the gates which he had guarded and by which he had prayed, and all in a minute every defence had been thrown down, and Guida--his own Guida--had welcomed the invader with shameless eagerness.

He crossed the islet slowly. It seemed to him--and for a moment it was the only thing of which he was conscious--that the heels of his boots shrieked in the shingle, and with every step he was raising an immense weight. He paused behind the chapel. After a little the smother lifted slowly from his brain.

"I'll believe in her still," he said aloud. "It's all his cursed tongue. As a boy he could make every other boy do what he wanted because his tongue knows how to twist words. She's been used to honest people; he's talked a new language to her--tricks caught in his travels. But she shall know the truth. She shall find out what sort of a man he is. I'll make her see under his pretty foolings."

He turned, and leaned against the wall of the chapel. "Guida, Guida," he said, speaking as if she were there before him, "you won't--you won't go to him, and spoil your life, and mine too. Guida, ma couzaine, you'll stay here, in the land of your birth. You'll make your home here--here with me, ma chere couzaine. Ah, but then you shall be my wife in spite of him, in spite of a thousand Philip d'Avranches!"

He drew himself up firmly, for a great resolve was made. His path was clear. It was a fair fight, he thought; the odds were not so much against him after all, for his birth was as good as Philip d'Avranche's, his energy was greater, and he was as capable and as clever in his own way.

He walked quickly down the shingle towards the wreck on the other side of the islet. As he passed the hut where the sick man lay, he heard a querulous voice. It was not that of the Reverend Lorenzo Dow.

Where had he heard that voice before? A shiver of fear ran through him. Every sense and emotion in him was arrested. His life seemed to reel backward. Curtain after curtain of the past unfolded.

He hurried to the door of the hut and looked in.

A man with long white hair and straggling grey beard turned to him a

haggard face, on which were written suffering, outlawry, and evil.

"Great God--my father!" Ranulph said.

He drew back slowly like a man who gazes upon some horrible fascinating thing, and then turned heavily towards the sea, his face set, his senses paralysed.

"My father not dead! My father--the traitor!" he groaned.

CHAPTER XII

Philip d'Avranche sauntered slowly through the Vier Marchi, nodding right and left to people who greeted him. It was Saturday and market day in Jersey. The square was crowded with people. All was a cheerful babel; there was movement, colour everywhere. Here were the high and the humble, hardi vlon and hardi biaou--the ugly and the beautiful, the dwarfed and the tall, the dandy and the dowdy, the miser and the spendthrift; young ladies gay in silks, laces, and scarfs from Spain, and gentlemen with powdered wigs from Paris; sailors with red tunics from the Mediterranean, and fishermen with blue and purple blouses from Brazil; man-o'-war's-men with Greek petticoats, Turkish fezzes, and Portuguese espadras. Jersey housewives, in bedgones and white caps, with molleton dresses rolled up to the knees, pushed their way through the crowd, jars of black butter, or jugs of cinnamon brandy on their heads. From La Pyramide--the hospitable base of the statue of King George II--fishwives called the merits of their conger-eels and ormers; and the clatter of a thousand sabots made the Vier Marchi sound like a ship-builder's yard.

In this square Philip had loitered and played as a child. Down there, leaning against a pillar of the Corn Market piazza was Elie Mattingley, the grizzly-haired seller of foreign silks and droll odds and ends, who had given him a silver flageolet when he was a little lad. There were the same swaggering manners, the big gold rings in his ears; there was the same red sash about the waist, the loose unbuttoned shirt, the truculent knifebelt; there were the same keen brown eyes looking you through and through, and the mouth with a middle tooth in both jaws gone. Elie Mattingley, pirate, smuggler, and sometime master of a privateer, had had dealings with people high and low in the island, and they had not always, nor often, been conducted in the open Vier Marchi.

Fifteen years ago he used to have his little daughter Carterette always beside him when he sold his wares. Philip wondered what had become of her. He glanced round. . . . Ah, there she was, not far from her father, over in front of the guard-house, selling, at a little counter with a canopy of yellow silk (brought by her father from that distant land called Piracy), mogues of hot soupe a la graisse, simnels, curds, coffee, and Jersey wonders, which last she made on the spot by dipping the little rings of dough in a bashin of lard on a charcoal fire at her side.

Carterette was short and spare, with soft yet snapping eyes as black as night--or her hair; with a warm, dusky skin, a tongue which clattered pleasantly, and very often wisely. She had a hand as small and plump as a baby's, and a pretty foot which, to the disgust of some mothers and maidens of greater degree, was encased in a red French slipper, instead of the wooden sabot stuffed with straw, while her ankles were nicely dressed in soft black stockings, in place of the woolen native hose, as became her station.

Philip watched Carterette now for a moment, a dozen laughing memories coming back to him; for he had teased her and played with her when she was a child, had even called her his little sweetheart. Looking at her he wondered what her fate would be: To marry one of these fishermen or carters? No, she would look beyond that. Perhaps it would be one of those adventurers in bearskin cap and buckskin vest, home from Gaspe, where they had toiled in the great fisheries, some as common fishermen, some as mates and maybe one or two as masters. No, she would look beyond that. Perhaps she would be carried off by one of those well-to-do, black-bearded young farmers in the red knitted queminzolle, blue breeches, and black cocked hat, with his kegs of cider and bunches of parsley.

That was more likely, for among the people there was every prejudice in her favour. She was Jersey born, her father was reputed to have laid by a goodly sum of money--not all got in this Vier Marchi; and that he was a smuggler and pirate roused a sentiment in their bosoms nearer to envy than aught else. Go away naked and come back clothed, empty and come back filled, simple and come back with a wink of knowledge, penniless and come back with the price of numerous vergees of land, and you might answer the island catechism without fear. Be lambs in Jersey, but herry the rest of the world with a lion's tooth, was the eleventh commandment in the Vier Marchi.

Yes, thought Philip idly now, as he left the square, the girl would probably marry a rich farmer, and when he came again he should find her stout of body, and maybe shrewish of face, crying up the virtues of her black butter and her knitted stockings, having made the yellow silk canopy above her there into a gorgeous quilt for the nuptial bed.

Yet the young farmers who hovered near her now, buying a glass of cider or a mug of soup, received but scant notice. She laughed with them, treated them lightly, and went about her business again with a toss of the head. Not once did she show a moment's real interest, not until a fine upstanding fellow came round the corner from the Rue des Vignes, and passed her booth.

She was dipping a doughnut into the boiling lard, but she paused with it suspended. The little dark face took on a warm glow, the eyes glistened.

"Maitre Ranulph!" called the girl softly. Then as the tall fellow turned to her and lifted his cap she added briskly: "Where away so fast with face hard as hatchet?"

"Garçon Cart'rette!" he said abstractedly--he had always called her that.

He was about to move on. She frowned in vexation, yet she saw that he was pale and heavy-eyed, and she beckoned him to come to her.

"What's gone wrong, big wood-worm?" she said, eyeing him closely, and striving anxiously to read his face. He looked at her sharply, but the softness in her black eyes somehow reassured him, and he said quite kindly:

"Nannin, 'tite garçon, nothing's matter."

"I thought you'd be blithe as a sparrow with your father back from the grave!" Then as Ranulph's face seemed to darken, she added: "He's not worse--he's not worse?"

"No, no, he's well enough now," he said, forcing a smile.

She was not satisfied, but she went on talking, intent to find the cause of his abstraction. "Only to think," she said--"only to think that he wasn't killed at all at the Battle of Jersey, and was a prisoner in France, and comes back here--and we all thought him dead, didn't we?"

"I left him for dead that morning on the Grouville road," he answered. Then, as if with a great effort, and after the manner of one who has learned a part, he went on: "As the French ran away mad, paw of one on tail of other, they found him trying to drag himself along. They nabbed him, and carried him aboard their boats to pilot them out from the Rocque Platte, and over to France. Then because they hadn't gobbled us up here, what did the French Gover'ment do? They clapped a lot of 'em in irons and sent 'em away to South America, and my father with 'em. That's why we heard neither click nor clack of him all this time. He broke free a year ago. Then he fell sick. When he got well he set sail for Jersey, was wrecked off the Ecrehos, and everybody knows the rest. Diantre, he's had a hard time!"

The girl had listened intently. She had heard all these things in flying rumours, and she had believed the rumours; but now that Maitre Ranulph told her--Ranulph, whose word she would have taken quicker than the oath of a Jurat--she doubted. With the doubt her face flushed as though she herself had been caught in a lie, had done a mean thing. Somehow her heart was aching for him, she knew not why.

All this time she had held the doughnut poised; she seemed to have forgotten her work. Suddenly the wooden fork holding the cake was taken from her fingers by the daft Dormy Jamais who had crept near.

"Des monz a fou," said he, "to spoil good eating so! What says fishing-man: When sails flap, owner may whistle for cargo. Tut, tut, goose Carterette!"

Carterette took no note, but said to Ranulph:

"Of course he had to pilot the Frenchmen back, or they'd have killed him, and it'd done no good to refuse. He was the first man that fought the French on the day of the battle, wasn't he? I've always heard that."

Unconsciously she was building up a defence for Olivier Delagarde. She was, as it were, anticipating insinuation from other quarters. She was playing Ranulph's game, because she instinctively felt that behind this story there was gloom in his mind and mystery in the tale itself. She noticed too that he shrank from her words. She was not very quick of intellect, so she had to feel her way fumblingly. She must have time to think, but she said tentatively:

"I suppose it's no secret? I can tell any one at all what happened to your father?" she asked.

"Oh so--sure so!" he said rather eagerly. "Tell every one about it. He doesn't mind."

Maitre Ranulph deceived but badly. Bold and convincing in all honest things, he was, as yet, unconvincing in this grave deception. All these years he had kept silence, enduring what he thought a buried shame; but that shame had risen from the dead, a living agony. His father had betrayed the island to the French: if the truth were known to-day they would hang him for a traitor on the Mont es Pendus. No mercy and scant shrift would be shown him.

Whatever came, he must drink this bitter cup to the dregs. He could never betray his own father. He must consume with inward disgust while Olivier Delagarde shamelessly babbled his monstrous lies to all who would listen. And he must tell these lies too, conceal, deceive, and live in hourly fear of discovery. He must sit opposite his father day by day at table, talk with him, care for him, shrinking inwardly at every knock at the door lest it should be an officer come to carry the pitiful traitor off to prison.

And, more than all, he must give up for ever the thought of Guida. Here was the acid that ate home, the black hopelessness, the machine of fate clamping his heart. Never again could he rise in the morning with a song on his lips; never again his happy meditations go lilting with the clanging blows of the adze and the singing of the saws.

All these things had vanished when he looked into a tent-door on the Ecrehos. Now, in spite of himself, whenever he thought upon Guida's face, this other fateful figure, this Medusan head of a traitor, shot in between.

Since his return his father had not been strong enough to go abroad; but to-day he meant to walk to the Vier Marchi. At first Ranulph had decided to go as usual to his ship-yard at St. Aubin's, but at last in anxious fear he too had come to the Vier Marchi. There was a horrible fascination in being where his father was, in listening to his falsehoods, in watching the turns and twists of his gross hypocrisies.

But yet at times he was moved by a strange pity, for Olivier Delagarde was, in truth, far older than his years: a thin, shuffling, pallid invalid, with a face of mingled sanctity and viciousness. If the old man lied, and had not been in prison all these years, he must have had misery far worse, for neither vice nor poverty alone could so shatter a human being. The son's pity seemed to look down from a great height upon the contemptible figure with the beautiful white hair and the abominable mouth. This compassion kept him from becoming hard, but it would also preserve him to hourly sacrifice--Prometheus chained to his rock. In the short fortnight that had gone since the day upon the Ecrehos, he had changed as much as do most people in ten years. Since then he had seen neither Philip nor Guida.

To Carterette he seemed not the man she had known. With her woman's instinct she knew that he loved Guida, but she also knew that nothing which might have happened between them could have brought this look of shame and shrinking into his face. As these thoughts flashed through her mind her heart grew warmer. Suppose Ranulph was in some trouble--well, now might be her great chance. She might show him that he could not live without her friendship, and then perhaps, by-and-bye, that he could not live without her love.

Ranulph was about to move on. She stopped him. "When you need me, Maitre Ranulph, you know where to find me," she said scarce above a whisper. He looked at her sharply, almost fiercely, but again the tenderness of her eyes, the directness of her gaze, convinced him. She might be, as she was, variable with other people; with himself she was invincibly straightforward.

"P'raps you don't trust me?" she added, for she read his changing expression.

"I'd trust you quick enough," he said.

"Then do it now--you're having some bad trouble," she rejoined.

He leaned over her stall and said to her steadily and with a little moroseness:

"See you, ma garche, if I was in trouble I'd bear it by myself. I'd ask no one to help me. I'm a man, and I can stand alone. Don't go telling folks I look as if I was in trouble. I'm going to launch to-morrow the biggest ship ever sent from a Jersey building yard--that doesn't look like trouble, does it? Turn about is fair play, garcon Cart'rette: so when you're in trouble come to me. You're not a man, and it's a man's place to help a woman, all the more when she's a fine and good little stand-by like you."

He forced a smile, turned upon his heel, and threaded his way through the square, keeping a look-out for his father. This he could do easily, for he was the tallest man in the Vier Marchi by at least three inches.

Carterette, oblivious of all else, stood gazing after him. She was only recalled to herself by Dormy Jamaïs. He was diligently cooking her Jersey wonders, now and then turning his eyes up at her--eyes which were like spots of greyish, yellowish light in a face of putty and flour; without eyelashes, without eyebrows, a little like a fish's, something like a monkey's. They were never still. They were set in the face like little round glow worms in a mould of clay. They burned on night and day--no man had ever seen Dormy Jamaïs asleep.

Carterette did not resent his officiousness. He had a kind of kennel in her father's boat-house, and he was devoted to her. More than all else, Dormy Jamaïs was clean. His clothes were mostly rags, but they were comely, compact rags. When he washed them no one seemed to know, but no languid young gentleman lounging where the sun was warmest in the Vier Marchi was better laundered.

As Carterette turned round to him he was twirling a cake on the wooden fork, and troling:

"Caderoussel he has a coat,
All lined with paper brown;
And only when it freezes hard
He wears it in the town.
What do you think of Caderoussel?
Ah, then, but list to me:
Caderoussel is a bon e'fant--"

"Come, come, dirty-fingers," she said. "Leave my work alone, and stop your chatter."

The daft one held up his fingers, but to do so had to thrust a cake into his mouth.

"They're as clean as a ha'pendy," he said, mumbling through the cake. Then he emptied his mouth of it, and was about to place it with the others.

"Black beganne," she cried; "how dare you! V'la--into your pocket with it!"

He did as he was bid, humming to himself again:

"M'sieu' de la Palisse is dead,
Dead of a maladie;
Quart' of an hour before his death
He could breathe like you and mel
Ah bah, the poor M'sieu'
De la Palisse is dead!"

"Shut up! Man doux d'la vie, you chatter like a monkey!"

"That poor Maitre Ranulph," said Dormy, "once he was lively as a basket of mice; but now--"

"Well, now, achocre?" she said irritably, stamping her foot.

"Now the cat's out of the bag--oui-gia!"

"You're as cunning as a Norman--you've got things in your noddee!" she cried with angry impatience.

He nodded, grinning. "As thick as haws," he answered.

She heard behind her a laugh of foolish good-nature, which made her angry too, for it seemed to be making fun of her. She wheeled to see M. Savary dit Detricand leaning with both elbows on the little counter, his chin in his hand, grinning provokingly,

"Oh, it's you!" she said snappishly; "I hope you're pleased."

"Don't be cross," he answered, his head swinging unsteadily. "I wasn't laughing at you, heaven-born Jersienne. I wasn't, 'pon honour! I was laughing at a thing I saw five minutes ago." He nodded in gurgling enjoyment now. "You mustn't mind me, seraphine," he added, "I'd a hot night, and I'm warm as a thrush now. But I saw a thing five minutes ago!"--he rolled on the stall. "'Sh!" he added in a loud mock whisper, "here he comes now. Milles diables, but here's a tongue for you, and here's a royal gentleman speaking truth like a travelling dentist!"

Carterette followed his gesture and saw coming out of the Route es Couochons, where the brave Peirson issued to his death eleven years before, Maitre Ranulph's father.

He walked with the air of a man courting observation. He imagined himself a hero; he had told his lie so many times now that he almost believed it himself.

He was soon surrounded. Disliked when he lived in Jersey before the invasion years ago, that seemed forgotten now; for word had gone abroad that he was a patriot raised from the dead, an honour to his country. Many pressed forward to shake hands with him.

"Help of heaven, is that you, m'sieu'?" asked one. "You owed me five chelins, but I wiped it out, O my good!" cried another generously.

"Shaken," cried a tall tarter holding out his hand. He had lived in England, and now easily made English verbs into French.

One after another called on him to tell his story; some tried to hurry him to La Pyramide, but others placed a cider-keg near, and almost lifted him on to it.

"Go on, go on, tell us the story," they cried. To the devil with the Frenchies!"

"Here--here's a dish of Adam's ale," cried an old woman, handing him a

bowl of water.

They cheered him lustily. The pallor of his face changed to a warmth. He had the fatuousness of those who deceive with impunity. With confidence he unreeled the dark line out to the end. When he had told his story, still hungry for applause, he repeated the account of how the tatterdemalion brigade of Frenchmen came down upon him out of the night, and how he should have killed Rullecour himself had it not been for an officer who struck him down from behind.

During the recital Ranulph had drawn near. He watched the enthusiasm with which the crowd received every little detail of the egregious history. Everybody believed the old man, who was safe, no matter what happened to himself, Ranulph Delagarde, ex-artilleryman, ship-builder--and son of a criminal. At any rate the worst was over now, the first public statement of the lifelong lie. He drew a sigh of relief and misery in one. At that instant he caught sight of the flushed face of Detricand, who broke into a laugh of tipsy mirth when Olivier Delagarde told how the French officer had stricken him down as he was about finishing off Rullecour.

All at once the whole thing rushed upon Ranulph. What a fool he had been! He had met this officer of Rullecour's these ten years past, and never once had the Frenchman, by so much as a hint, suggested that he knew the truth about his father. Here and now the contemptuous mirth upon the Frenchman's face told the whole story. The danger and horror of the situation descended on him. Instantly he started towards Detricand.

At that moment his father caught sight of Detricand also, saw the laugh, the sneer, and recognised him. Halting short in his speech he turned pale and trembled, staring as at a ghost. He had never counted on this. His breath almost stopped as he saw Ranulph approach Detricand.

Now the end was come. His fabric of lies would be torn down; he would be tried and hanged on the Mont es Pendus, or even be torn to pieces by this crowd. Yet he could not have moved a foot from where he was if he had been given a million pounds.

The sight of Ranulph's face revealed to Detricand the true meaning of this farce and how easily it might become a tragedy. He read the story of the son's torture, of his sacrifice; and his decision was instantly made: he would befriend him. Looking straight into his eyes, his own said he had resolved to know nothing whatever about this criminal on the cider-cask. The two men telegraphed to each other a perfect understanding, and then Detricand turned on his heel, and walked away into the crowd.

The sudden change in the old man's appearance had not been lost on the spectators, but they set it down to weakness or a sudden sickness. One ran for a glass of brandy, another for cider, and an old woman handed up to him a mogue of cinnamon drops.

The old man tremblingly drank the brandy. When he looked again Detricand

had disappeared. A dark, sinister expression crossed his face, an evil thought pulled down the corners of his mouth as he stepped from the cask. His son went to him and taking his arm, said: "Come, you've done enough for to-day."

The old man made no reply, but submissively walked away into the Coin & Anes. Once however he turned and looked the way Detricand had gone, muttering.

The peasants cheered him as he passed. Presently, free of the crowd and entering the Rue d'Egypte, he said to Ranulph:

"I'm going alone; I don't need you."

"Where are you going?" asked Ranulph.

"Home," answered the old man gloomily.

Ranulph stopped. "All right; better not come out again to-day."

"You're not going to let that Frenchman hurt me?" suddenly asked Delagarde with morose anxiety. "You're going to stop that? They'd put me in prison."

Ranulph stooped over his father, his eyes alive with anger, his face blurred with disgust.

"Go home," said he, "and never mention this again while you live, or I'll take you to prison myself." Ranulph watched his father disappear down the Rue d'Egypte, then he retraced his steps to the Vier Marchi. With a new-formed determination he quickened his walk, ruling his face to a sort of forced gaiety, lest any one should think his moodiness strange. One person after another accosted him. He listened eagerly, to see if anything were said which might show suspicion of his father. But the gossip was all in old Delagarde's favour. From group to group he went, answering greetings cheerily and steeling himself to the whole disgusting business.

Presently he saw the Chevalier du Champsavoys with the Sieur de Mauprat. This was the first public appearance of the chevalier since the sad business at the Vier Prison a fortnight before. The simple folk had forgotten their insane treatment of him then, and they saluted him now with a chirping: "Es-tu biau, chevalier?" and "Es-tu gentiment, m'sieu'?" to which he responded with amiable forgiveness. To his idea they were only naughty children, their minds reasoning no more clearly than they saw the streets through the tiny little squares of bottle-glass in the windows of their homes.

All at once they came face to face with Detricand. The chevalier stopped short with pleased yet wistful surprise. His brow knitted when he saw that his compatriot had been drinking again, and his eyes had a pained look as he said eagerly:

"Have you heard from the Comte de Tournay, monsieur? I have not seen you these days past. You said you would not disappoint me."

Detricand drew from his pocket a letter and handed it over, saying: "This comes from the comte."

The old gentleman took the letter, nervously opened it, and read it slowly, saying each sentence over twice as though to get the full meaning.

"Ah," he exclaimed, "he is going back to France to fight for the King!"

Then he looked at Detricand sadly, benevolently. "Mon cher," said he, "if I could but persuade you to abjure the wine-cup and follow his example!"

Detricand drew himself up with a jerk. "You can persuade me, chevalier," said he. "This is my last bout. I had sworn to have it with--with a soldier I knew, and I've kept my word. But it's the last, the very last in my life, on the honour of--the Detricands. And I am going with the Comte de Tournay to fight for the King."

The little chevalier's lips trembled, and taking the young man by the collar of his coat, he stood tiptoed, and kissed him on both cheeks.

"Will you accept something from me?" asked M. de Mauprat, joining in his friend's enthusiasm. He took from his pocket a timepiece he had worn for fifty years. "It is a little gift to my France, which I shall see no more," he added. "May no time be ill spent that it records for you, monsieur."

Detricand laughed in his careless way, but the face, seamed with dissipation, took on a new and better look, as with a hand-grasp of gratitude he put the timepiece in his pocket.

"I'll do my best," he said simply. "I'll be with de la Rochejaquelein and the army of the Vendee to-morrow night."

Then he shook hands with both little gentlemen and moved away towards the Rue des Tres Pigeons. Presently some one touched his arm. He looked round. It was Ranulph.

"I stood near," said Ranulph; "I chanced to hear what you said to them. You've been a friend to me today--and these eleven years past. You knew about my father, all the time."

Before replying Detricand glanced round to see that no one was listening.

"Look you, monsieur, a man must keep some decencies in his life, or cut his own throat. What a ruffian I'd be to do you or your father harm! I'm silent, of course. Let your mind rest about me. But there's the baker Carcaud--"

"The baker?" asked Ranulph dumfounded. "I thought he was tied to a rock and left to drown, by Rullecour's orders."

"I had him set free after Rullecour had gone on to the town. He got away to France."

Ranulph's anxiety deepened. "He might come back, and then if anything happened to him--"

"He'd try and make things happen to others, eh? But there's little danger of his coming back. They know he's a traitor, and he knows he'd be hung. If he's alive he'll stay where he is. Cheer up! Take my word, Olivier Delagarde has only himself to fear." He put out his hand. "Good-bye. If ever I can do anything for you, if you ever want to find me, come or send to--no, I'll write it," he suddenly added, and scribbling something on a piece of paper he handed it over.

They parted with another handshake, Detricand making his way into the Rue d'Egypte, and towards the Place du Vier Prison.

Ranulph stood looking dazedly at the crowd before him, misery, revolt, and bitterness in his heart. This French adventurer, Detricand, after years of riotous living, could pick up the threads of life again with a laugh and no shame, while he felt himself going down, down, down, with no hope of ever rising again.

As he stood buried in his reflections the town crier entered the Vier Marchi, and, going to La Pyramide, took his place upon the steps, and in a loud voice began reading a proclamation.

It was to the effect that the great Fishing Company trading to Gaspe needed twenty Jersiais to go out and replace a number of the company's officers and men who had been drowned in a gale off the rock called Perch. To these twenty, if they went at once, good pay would be given. But they must be men of intelligence and vigour, of well-known character.

The critical moment in Maitre Ranulph's life came now. Here he was penned up in a little island, chained to a criminal having the fame of a martyr. It was not to be borne. Why not leave it all behind? Why not let his father shift for himself, abide his own fate? Why not leave him the home, what money he had laid by, and go-go-go where he could forget, go where he could breathe. Surely self-preservation, that was the first law; surely no known code of human practice called upon him to share the daily crimes of any living soul--it was a daily repetition of his crime for this traitor to carry on the atrocious lie of patriotism.

He would go. It was his right.

Taking a few steps towards the officer of the company standing by the crier, he was about to speak. Some one touched him.

He turned and saw Carterette. She had divined his intention, and though she was in the dark as to the motive, she saw that he meant to go to

Gaspe. Her heart seemed to contract till the pain of it hurt her; then, as a new thought flashed into her mind, it was freed again and began pounding hard against her breast. She must prevent him from leaving Jersey, from leaving her. What she might feel personally would have no effect upon him; she would appeal to him from a different stand-point.

"You must not go," she said. "You must not leave your father alone, Maitre Ranulph."

For a minute he did not reply. Through his dark wretchedness one thought pierced its way: this girl was his good friend.

"Then I'll take him with me," he said.

"He would die in the awful cold," she answered. "Nannin-gia, you must stay."

"Eh ben, I will think!" he said presently, with an air of heavy resignation, and, turning, walked away. Her eyes followed him. As she went back to her booth she smiled: he had come one step her way. He would not go.

CHAPTER XIII

When Detricand left the Vier Marchi he made his way along the Rue d'Egypte to the house of M. de Mauprat. The front door was open, and a nice savour of boiling fruit came from within. He knocked, and instantly Guida appeared, her sleeves rolled back to her elbows, her fingers stained with the rich red of the blackberries on the fire.

A curious shade of disappointment came into her face when she saw who it was. It was clear to Detricand that she expected some one else; it was also clear that his coming gave no especial pleasure to her, though she looked at him with interest. She had thought of him more than once since that day when the famous letter from France to the chevalier was read. She had instinctively compared him, this roystering, notorious fellow, with Philip d'Avranche, Philip the brave, the ambitious, the conquering. She was sure that Philip had never over-drunk himself in his life; and now, looking into the face of Detricand, she could tell that he had been drinking again. One thing was apparent, however: he was better dressed than she ever remembered seeing him, better pulled together, and bearing himself with an air of purpose.

"I've fetched back your handkerchief--you tied up my head with it, you know," he said, taking it from his pocket. "I'm going away, and I wanted to thank you."

"Will you not come in, monsieur?" she said.

He readily entered the kitchen, still holding the handkerchief in his

hand, but he did not give it to her. "Where will you sit?" she said, looking round. "I'm very busy. You mustn't mind my working," she added, going to the brass baskin at the fire. "This preserve will spoil if I don't watch it."

He seated himself on the veille, and nodded his head. "I like this," he said. "I'm fond of kitchens. I always was. When I was fifteen I was sent away from home because I liked the stables and the kitchen too well. Also I fell in love with the cook."

Guida flushed, frowned, her lips tightened, then presently a look of amusement broke over her face, and she burst out laughing.

"Why do you tell me these things?" she said. "Excuse me, monsieur, but why do you always tell unpleasant things about yourself? People think ill of you, and otherwise they might think--better."

"I don't want them to think better till I am better," he answered. "The only way I can prevent myself becoming a sneak is by blabbing my faults. Now, I was drunk last night--very, very drunk."

A look of disgust came into her face.

"Why do you relate this sort of thing to me, monsieur? Do--do I remind you of the cook at home, or of an oyster-girl in Jersey?"

She was flushing, but her voice was clear and vibrant, the look of the eyes direct and fearless. How dared he hold her handkerchief like that!

"I tell you them," he answered slowly, looking at the handkerchief in his hand, then raising his eyes to hers with whimsical gravity, "because I want you to ask me never to drink again."

She looked at him scarce comprehending, yet feeling a deep compliment somewhere, for this man was a gentleman by birth, and his manner was respectful, and had always been respectful to her.

"Why do you want me to ask you that?" she said. "Because I'm going to France to join the war of the Vendee, and--"

"With the Comte de Tournay?" she interrupted. He nodded his head. "And if I thought I was keeping a promise to--to you, I'd not break it. Will you ask me to promise?" he persisted, watching her intently.

"Why, of course," she answered kindly, almost gently; the compliment was so real, he could not be all bad.

"Then say my name, and ask me," he said.

"Monsieur--"

"Leave out the monsieur," he interrupted.

"Yves Savary dit Detricand, will you promise me, Guida Landresse--"

"De Landresse," he interposed courteously.

"--Guida Landresse de Landresse, that you will never again drink wine to excess, and that you will never do anything that"--she paused confused.

"That you would not wish me to do," he said in a low voice.

"That I should not wish you to do," she repeated in a half-embarrassed way.

"On my honour I promise," he said slowly.

A strange feeling came over her. She had suddenly, in some indirect, allusive way, become interested in a man's life. Yet she had done nothing, and in truth she cared nothing. They stood looking at each other, she slightly embarrassed, he hopeful and eager, when suddenly a step sounded without, a voice called "Guida!" and as Guida coloured and Detricand turned towards the door, Philip d'Avranche entered impetuously.

He stopped short on seeing Detricand. They knew each other slightly, and they bowed. Philip frowned. He saw that something had occurred between the two. Detricand on his part realised the significance of that familiar "Guida!" called from outside. He took up his cap.

"It is greeting and good-bye, I am just off for France," he said.

Philip eyed him coldly, and not a little maliciously, for he knew Detricand's reputation well, the signs of a hard life were thick on him, and he did not like to think of Guida being alone with him.

"France should offer a wide field for your talents just now," he answered drily; "they seem wasted here." Detricand's eye flashed, but he answered coolly: "It wasn't talent that brought me here, but a boy's folly; it's not talent that's kept me from starving here, I'm afraid, but the ingenuity of the desperate."

"Why stay here? The world was wide, and France but a step away. You would not have needed talents there. You would no doubt have been rewarded by the Court which sent you and Rullecour to ravage Jersey--"

"The proper order is Rullecour and me, monsieur." Detricand seemed suddenly to have got back a manner to which he had been long a stranger. His temper became imperturbable, and this was not lost on Philip; his manner had a balanced serenity, while Philip himself had no such perfect control; which made him the more impatient. Presently Detricand added in a composed and nonchalant tone:

"I've no doubt there were those at Court who'd have clothed me in purple and fine linen, and given me wine and milk, but it was my whim to work in the galleys here, as it were."

"Then I trust you've enjoyed your Botany Bay," answered Philip mockingly.

"You've been your own jailer, you could lay the strokes on heavy or light." He moved to the veille, and sat down. Guida busied herself at the fireplace, but listened intently.

"I've certainly been my own enemy, whether the strokes were heavy or light," replied Detricand, lifting a shoulder ironically.

"And a friend to Jersey at the same time, eh?" was the sneering reply.

Detricand was in the humour to tell the truth even to this man who hated him. He was giving himself the luxury of auricular confession. But Philip did not see that when once such a man has stood in his own pillory, sat in his own stocks, voluntarily paid the piper, he will take no after insult.

Detricand still would not be tempted out of his composure. "No," he answered, "I've been an enemy to Jersey too, both by act and example; but people here have been kind enough to forget the act, and the example I set is not unique."

"You've never thought that you've overstayed your welcome, eh?"

"As to that, every country is free to whoever wills, if one cares to pay the entrance fee and can endure the entertainment. One hasn't to apologise for living in a country. You probably get no better treatment than you deserve, and no worse. One thing balances another."

The man's cool impeachment and defence of himself irritated Philip, the more so because Guida was present, and this gentlemanly vagrant had him at advantage.

"You paid no entrance fee here; you stole in through a hole in the wall. You should have been hanged."

"Monsieur d'Avranche!" said Guida reproachfully, turning round from the fire.

Detricand's answer came biting and dry. "You are an officer of your King, as was I. You should know that hanging the invaders of Jersey would have been butchery. We were soldiers of France; we had the distinction of being prisoners of war, monsieur."

This shot went home. Philip had been touched in that nerve called military honour. He got to his feet. "You are right," he answered with reluctant frankness. "Our grudge is not individual, it is against France, and we'll pay it soon with good interest, monsieur."

"The individual grudge will not be lost sight of in the general, I hope?" rejoined Detricand with cool suggestion, his clear, persistent grey eye looking straight into Philip's.

"I shall do you that honour," said Philip with mistaken disdain.

Detricand bowed low. "You will always find me in the suite of the Prince of Vaufontaine, monsieur, and ready to be so distinguished by you." Turning to Guida, he added: "Mademoiselle will perhaps do me the honour to notice me again one day?" then, with a mocking nod to Philip, he left the house.

Guida and Philip stood looking after him in silence for a minute. Suddenly Guida said to herself: "My handkerchief--why did he take my handkerchief? He put it in his pocket again."

Philip turned on her impatiently.

"What was that adventurer saying to you, Guida? In the suite of the Prince of Vaufontaine, my faith! What did he come here for?"

Guida looked at him in surprise. She scarcely grasped the significance of the question. Before she had time to consider, he pressed it again, and without hesitation she told him all that had happened--it was so very little, of course--between Detricand and herself. She omitted nothing save that Detricand had carried off the handkerchief, and she could not have told, if she had been asked, why she did not speak of it.

Philip raged inwardly. He saw the meaning of the whole situation from Detricand's stand-point, but he was wise enough from his own stand-point to keep it to himself; and so both of them reserved something, she from no motive that she knew, he from an ulterior one. He was angry too: angry at Detricand, angry at Guida for her very innocence, and because she had caught and held even the slight line of association Detricand had thrown.

In any case, Detricand was going to-morrow, and to-day-to-day should decide all between Guida and himself. Used to bold moves, in this affair of love he was living up to his custom; and the encounter with Detricand here added the last touch to his resolution, nerved him to follow his strong impulse to set all upon one hazard. A month ago he had told Guida that he loved her; to-day there should be a still more daring venture. A thing not captured by a forlorn hope seemed not worth having. The girl had seized his emotions from the first moment, and had held them. To him she was the most original creature he had ever met, the most natural, the most humorous of temper, the most sincere. She had no duplicity, no guile, no arts.

He said to himself that he knew his own mind always. He believed in inspirations, and he would back his knowledge, his inspiration, by an irretrievable move. Yesterday had come an important message from his commander. That had decided him. To-day Guida should hear a message beyond all others in importance.

"Won't you come into the garden?" he said presently.

"A moment--a moment," she answered him lightly, for the frown had passed from his face, and he was his old buoyant self again. "I'm to make an end to this bashin of berries first," she added. So saying, she waved

him away with a little air of tyranny; and he perched himself boyishly on the big chair in the corner, and with idle impatience began playing with the flax on the spinning-wheel near by. Then he took to humming a ditty the Jersey housewife used to sing as she spun, while Guida disposed of the sweet-smelling fruit. Suddenly she stopped and stamped her foot.

"No, no, that's not right, stupid sailor-man," she said, and she sang a verse at him over the last details of her work:

"Spin, spin, belle Mergaton!
The moon wheels full, and the tide flows high,
And your wedding-gown you must put it on
Ere the night hath no moon in the sky--
Gigoton Mergaton, spin!"

She paused. He was entranced. He had never heard her sing, and the full, beautiful notes of her contralto voice thrilled him like organ music. His look devoured her, her song captured him.

"Please go on," he said, "I never heard it that way." She was embarrassed yet delighted by his praise, and she threw into the next verse a deep weirdness:

"Spin, spin, belle Mergaton!
Your gown shall be stitched ere the old moon fade:
The age of a moon shall your hands spin on,
Or a wife in her shroud shall be laid--
Gigoton Mergaton, spin!"

"Yes, yes, that's it!" he exclaimed with gay ardour. "That's it. Sing on. There are two more verses."

"I'll only sing one," she answered, with a little air of wilfulness.

"Spin, spin, belle Mergaton!
The Little Good Folk the spell they have cast;
By your work well done while the moon hath shone,
Ye shall cleave unto joy at last--
Gigoton Mergaton, spin!"

As she sang the last verse she seemed in a dream, and her rich voice, rising with the spirit of the concluding lines, poured out the notes like a bird drunk with the air of spring.

"Guida," he cried, springing to his feet, "when you sing like that it seems to me I live in a world that has nothing to do with the sordid business of life, with my dull trade--with getting the weather-gauge or sailing in triple line. You're a planet all by yourself, Mistress Guida! Are you ready to come into the garden?"

"Yes, yes, in a minute," she answered. "You go out to the big apple-tree, and I'll come in a minute." The apple-tree was in the farthest corner of the large garden. Near it was the summer-house where Guida

and her mother used to sit and read, Guida on the three-legged stool, her mother on the low, wide seat covered with ferns. This spot Guida used to "flourish" with flowers. The vines, too, crept through the rough latticework, and all together made the place a bower, secluded and serene. The water of the little stream outside the hedge made music too.

Philip placed himself on the bench beneath the appletree. What a change was all this, he thought to himself, from the staring hot stones of Malta, the squalor of Constantinople, the frigid cliffs of Spitzbergen, the noisome tropical forests of the Indies! This was Arcady. It was peace, it was content. His life was sure to be varied and perhaps stormy--here would be the true change, the spirit of all this. Of course he would have two sides to his life like most men: that lived before the world, and that of the home. He would have the fight for fame. He would have to use, not duplicity, but diplomacy, to play a kind of game; but this other side to his life, the side of love and home, should be simple, direct--all genuine and strong and true. In this way he would have a wonderful career.

He heard Guida's footstep now, and standing up he parted the apple boughs for her entrance. She was dressed all in white, without a touch of colour save in the wild rose at her throat and the pretty red shoes with the broad buckles which the Chevalier had given her. Her face, too, had colour--the soft, warm tint of the peach-blossom--and her auburn hair was like an aureole.

Philip's eyes gleamed. He stretched out both his hands in greeting and tenderness. "Guida--sweetheart!" he said.

She laughed up at him mischievously, and put her hands behind her back.

"Ma fe, you are so very forward," she said, seating herself on the bench. "And you must not call me Guida, and you've no right to call me sweetheart."

"I know I've no right to call you anything, but to myself I always call you Guida, and sweetheart too, and I've liked to think that you would care to know my thoughts," he answered.

"Yes, I wish I knew your thoughts," she responded, looking up at him intently; "I should like to know every thought in your mind. . . . Do you know--you don't mind my saying just what I think?--I find myself feeling that there's something in you that I never touch; I mean, that a friend ought to touch, if it's a real friendship. You appear to be so frank, and I know you are frank and good and true, and yet I seem always to be hunting for something in your mind, and it slips away from me always--always. I suppose it's because we're two different beings, and no two beings can ever know each other in this world, not altogether. We're what the Chevalier calls 'separate entities.' I seem to understand his odd, wise talk better lately. He said the other day: 'Lonely we come into the world, and lonely we go out of it.' That's what I mean. It makes me shudder sometimes, that part of us which lives alone for ever. We go running on as happy as can be, like Biribi there in the garden, and

all at once we stop short at a hedge, just as he does there--a hedge just too tall to look over and with no foothold for climbing. That's what I want so much; I want to look over the Hedge."

When she spoke like this to Philip, as she sometimes did, she seemed quite unconscious that he was a listener, it was rather as if he were part of her and thinking the same thoughts. To Philip she seemed wonderful. He had never bothered his head in that way about abstract things when he was her age, and he could not understand it in her. What was more, he could not have thought as she did if he had tried. She had that sort of mind which accepts no stereotyped reflection or idea; she worked things out for herself. Her words were her own, and not another's. She was not imitative, nor yet was she bizarre; she was individual, simple, inquiring.

"That's the thing that hurts most in life," she added presently; "that trying to find and not being able to--voilà, what a child I am to babble so!" she broke off with a little laugh, which had, however, a plaintive note. There was a touch of undeveloped pathos in her character, for she had been left alone too young, been given responsibility too soon.

He felt he must say something, and in a sympathetic tone he replied:

"Yes, Guida, but after a while we stop trying to follow and see and find, and we walk in the old paths and take things as they are."

"Have you stopped?" she said to him wistfully. "Oh, no, not altogether," he replied, dropping his tones to tenderness, "for I've been trying to peep over a hedge this afternoon, and I haven't done it yet." "Have you?" she rejoined, then paused, for the look in his eyes embarrassed her. . . . "Why do you look at me like that?" she added tremulously.

"Guida," he said earnestly, leaning towards her, "a month ago I asked you if you would listen to me when I told you of my love, and you said you would. Well, sometimes when we have met since, I have told you the same story, and you've kept your promise and listened. Guida, I want to go on telling you the same story for a long time--even till you or I die."

"Do you--ah, then, do you?" she asked simply. "Do you really wish that?"

"It is the greatest wish of my life, and always will be," he added, taking her unresisting hands.

"I like to hear you say it," she answered simply, "and it cannot be wrong, can it? Is there any wrong in my listening to you? Yet why do I feel that it is not quite right?--sometimes I do feel that."

"One thing will make all right," he said eagerly; "one thing. I love you, Guida, love you devotedly. Do you--tell me if you love me? Do not fear to tell me, dearest, for then will come the thing that makes all right."

"I do not know," she responded, her heart beating fast, her eyes drooping before him; "but when you go from me, I am not happy till I see you again. When you are gone, I want to be alone that I may remember all you have said, and say it over to myself again. When I hear you speak I want to shut my eyes, I am so happy; and every word of mine seems clumsy when you talk to me; and I feel of how little account I am beside you. Is that love, Philip--Philip, do you think that is love?"

They were standing now. The fruit that hung above Guida's head was not fairer and sweeter than she. Philip drew her to him, and her eyes lifted to his.

"Is that love, Philip?" she repeated. "Tell me, for I do not know--it has all come so soon. You are wiser; do not deceive me; you understand, and I do not. Philip, do not let me deceive myself."

"As the Judgment of Life is before us, I believe you love me, Guida--though I don't deserve it," he answered with tender seriousness.

"And it is right that you should love me; that we should love each other, Philip?"

"It will be right soon," he said, "right for ever. Guida mine, I want you to marry me."

His arm tightened round her waist, as though he half feared she would fly from him. He was right; she made a motion backward, but he held her firmly, tenderly. "Marry--marry you, Philip!" she exclaimed in trembling dismay.

"Marry--yes, marry me, Guida. That will make all right; that will bind us together for ever. Have you never thought of that?"

"Oh, never, never!" she answered. It was true, she had never thought of that; there had not been time. Too much had come all at once. "Why should I? I cannot--cannot. Oh, it could not be--not at least for a long, long time, not for years and years, Philip."

"Guida," he answered gravely and persistently, "I want you to marry me--to-morrow."

She was overwhelmed. She could scarcely speak. "To-morrow--to-morrow, Philip? You are laughing at me. I could not--how could I marry you to-morrow?"

"Guida, dearest,"--he took her hands more tightly now--"you must indeed. The day after to-morrow my ship is going to Portsmouth for two months. Then we return again here, but I will not go now unless I go as your husband!"

"Oh, no, I could not--it is impossible, Philip! It is madness--it is wrong. My grandfather--"

"Your grandfather need not know, sweetheart."

"How can you say such wicked things, Philip?"

"My dearest, it is not necessary for him to know. I don't want any one to know until I come back from Portsmouth. Then I shall have a ship of my own--commander of the *Araminta* I shall be then. I have word from the Admiralty to that effect. But I dare not let them know that I am married until I get commissioned to my ship. The Admiralty has set its face against lieutenants marrying."

"Then do not marry, Philip. You ought not, you see."

Her pleading was like the beating of helpless wings against the bars of a golden cage.

"But I must marry you, Guida. A sailor's life is uncertain, and what I want I want now. When I come back from Portsmouth every one shall know, but if you love me--and I know you do--you must marry me to-morrow. Until I come back no one shall know about it except the clergyman, Mr. Dow of St. Michael's--I have seen him--and Shoreham, a brother officer of mine. Ah, you must, Guida, you must! Whatever is worth doing is better worth doing in the time one's own heart says. I want it more, a thousand times more, than I ever wanted anything in my life."

She looked at him in a troubled sort of way. Somehow she felt wiser than he at that moment, wiser and stronger, though she scarcely defined the feeling to herself, though she knew that in the end her brain would yield to her heart in this.

"Would it make you so much happier, Philip?" she said more kindly than joyfully, more in grave acquiescence than delighted belief.

"Yes, on my honour--supremely happy."

"You are afraid that otherwise, by some chance, you might lose me?" she said it tenderly, yet with a little pain.

"Yes, yes, that is it, Guida dearest," he replied. "I suppose women are different altogether from men," she answered. "I could have waited ever so long, believing that you would come again, and that I should never lose you. But men are different; I see, yes, I see that, Philip."

"We are more impetuous. We know, we sailors, that now-to-day-is our time; that to-morrow may be Fate's, and Fate is a fickle jade: she beckons you up with one hand to-day, and waves you down with the other to-morrow."

"Philip," she said, scarcely above a whisper, and putting her hands on his arms, as her head sank towards him, "I must be honest with you-- I must be that or nothing at all. I do not feel as you do about it; I can't. I would much--much--rather everybody knew. And I feel it almost

wrong that they do not." She paused a minute, her brow clouded slightly, then cleared again, and she went on bravely: "Philip, if--if I should, you must promise me that you will leave me as soon as ever we are married, and that you will not try to see me until you come again from Portsmouth. I am sure that is right, for the deception will not be so great. I should be better able then to tell the poor grandpeth. Will you promise me, Philip-dear? It--it is so hard for me. Ah, can't you understand?"

This hopeless everlasting cry of a woman's soul!

He clasped her close. "Yes, Guida, my beloved, I understand, and I promise you--I do promise you." Her head dropped on his breast, her arms ran round his neck. He raised her face; her eyes were closed; they were dropping tears. He tenderly kissed the tears away.

CHAPTER XIV

"Oh, give to me my gui-l'annee,
I pray you, Monseigneur;
The king's princess doth ride to-day,
And I ride forth with her.
Oh! I will ride the maid beside
Till we come to the sea,
Till my good ship receive my bride,
And she sail far with me.
Oh, donnez-moi ma gui-l'annee,
Monseigneur, je vous prie!"

The singer was perched on a huge broad stone, which, lying athwart other tall perpendicular stones, made a kind of hut, approached by a pathway of upright narrow pillars, irregular and crude. Vast must have been the labour of man's hands to lift the massive table of rock upon the supporting shafts--relics of an age when they were the only architecture, the only national monuments; when savage ancestors in lion skins, with stone weapons, led by white-robed Druid priests, came solemnly here and left the mistletoe wreath upon these Houses of Death for their adored warriors.

Even the words sung by Shoreham on the rock carried on the ancient story, the sacred legend that he who wore in his breast this mistletoe got from the Druids' altar, bearing his bride forth by sea or land, should suffer no mischance; and for the bride herself, the morgen-gifn should fail not, but should attest richly the perfect bliss of the nuptial hours.

The light was almost gone from the day, though the last crimson petals had scarce dropped from the rose of sunset. Upon the sea beneath there was not a ripple; it was a lake of molten silver, shading into a leaden silence far away. The tide was high, and the ragged rocks of the Banc des Violets in the south and the Corbiore in the west were all but

hidden.

Below the mound where the tuneful youth loitered was a path, leading down through the fields and into the highway. In this path walked lingeringly a man and a maid. Despite the peaceful, almost dormant life about them, the great event of their lives had just occurred, that which is at once a vast adventure and a simple testament of nature: they had been joined in marriage privately in the parish church of St. Michael's near by. As Shoreham's voice came down the cotil, the two looked up, then passed on out of view.

But still the voice followed them, and the man looked down at the maid, repeating the refrain of the song:

"Oh, give to me my gui-l'annee,
Monseigneur, je vous prie!"

The maid looked up at the man tenderly, almost devoutly.

"I have no Druid's mistletoe from the Chapel of St. George, but I will give you--stoop down, Philip," she added softly, "I will give you the first kiss I have ever given to any man."

He stooped. She kissed him on the forehead, then upon the lips.

"Guida, my wife," Philip said, and drew her to his breast.

"My Philip," she answered softly. "Won't you say, 'Philip, my husband'?"

She shyly did as he asked in a voice no louder than a bee's. She was only seventeen.

Presently she looked up at him with a look a little abashed, a little anxious, yet tender withal.

"Philip," she said, "I wonder what we will think of this day a year from now--no, don't frown, Philip," she added. "You look at things so differently from me. To-day is everything to you; to-morrow is very much to me. It isn't that I am afraid, it is that thoughts of possibilities will come whether or no. If I couldn't tell you everything I feel I should be most unhappy. You see, I want to be able to do that, to tell you everything."

"Of course, of course," he said, not quite comprehending her, for his thoughts were always more material. He was revelling in the beauty of the girl before him, in her perfect outward self, in her unique personality. The more subtle, the deeper part of her, the searching soul never to be content with superficial reasons and the obvious cause, these he did not know--was he ever to know? It was the law of her nature that she was never to deceive herself, to pretend anything, nor to forgive pretence. To see things, to look beyond the Hedge, that was to be a passion with her; already it was nearly that.

"Of course," Philip continued, "you must tell me everything, and I'll understand. And as for what we'll think of this in another year, why, doesn't it hold to reason that we'll think it the best day of our lives--as it is, Guida?" He smiled at her, and touched her shining hair. "Evil can't come out of good, can it? And this is good, as good as anything in the world can be. . . . There, look into my eyes that way--just that way."

"Are you happy--very, very happy, Philip?" she asked, lingering on the words.

"Perfectly happy, Guida," he answered; and in truth he seemed so, his eyes were so bright, his face so eloquent, his bearing so buoyant.

"And you think we have done quite right, Philip?" she urged.

"Of course, of course we have. We are honourably disposing of our own fates. We love each other, we are married as surely as others are married. Where is the wrong? We have told no one, simply because for a couple of months it is best not to do so. The parson wouldn't have married us if there'd been anything wrong."

"Oh, it isn't what the clergyman might think that I mean; it's what we ourselves think down, down deep in our hearts. If you, Philip--if you say it is all right, I will believe that it is right, for you would never want your wife to have one single wrong thing like a dark spot on her life with you--would you? If it is all right to you, it must be all right for me, don't you see?"

He did see that, and it made him grave for an instant, it made him not quite so sure.

"If your mother were alive," he answered, "of course she should have known; but it isn't necessary for your grandfather to know. He talks; he couldn't keep it to himself even for a month. But we have been regularly married, we have a witness--Shoreham over there "he pointed towards the Druid's cromlech where the young man was perched--" and it only concerns us now--only you and me."

"Yet if anything happened to you during the next two months, Philip, and you did not come back!"

"My dearest, dearest Guida," he answered, taking her hands in his, and laughing boyishly, "in that case you will announce the marriage. Shoreham and the clergyman are witnesses; besides, there's the certificate which Mr. Dow will give you to-morrow; and, above all, there's the formal record on the parish register. There, sweetest interrogation mark in the world, there is the law and the gospel! Come, come, let us be gay, let this be the happiest hour we've yet had in all our lives."

"How can I be altogether gay, Philip, when we part now, and I shall not see you for two whole long months?"

"Mayn't I come to you for just a minute to-morrow morning, before I go?"

"No, no, no, you must not, indeed you must not. Remember your promise, remember that you are not to see me again until you come back from Portsmouth. Even this is not quite what we agreed, for you are still with me, and we've been married nearly half an hour!"

"Perhaps we were married a thousand years ago--I don't know," he answered, drawing her to him. "It's all a magnificent dream so far."

"You must go, you must keep your word. Don't break the first promise you ever made me, Philip."

She did not say it very reproachfully, for his look was ardent and worshipful, and she could not be even a little austere in her new joy.

"I am going," he answered. "We will go back to the town, I by the road, you by the shore, so no one will see us, and--"

"Philip," said Guida suddenly, "is it quite the same being married without banns?"

His laugh had again a youthful ring of delight. "Of course, just the same, my doubting fay," said he. "Don't be frightened about anything. Now promise me that--will you promise me?"

She looked at him a moment steadily, her eyes lingering on his face with great tenderness, and then she said:

"Yes, Philip, I will not trouble or question any longer. I will only believe that everything is all right. Say good-bye to me, Philip. I am happy now, but if--if you stay any longer--ah, please, please go, Philip!"

A moment afterwards Philip and Shoreham were entering the high road, waving their handkerchiefs to her as they went.

She had gone back to the Druid's cromlech where Philip's friend had sat, and with smiling lips and swimming eyes she watched the young men until they were lost to view.

Her eyes wandered over the sea. How immense it was, how mysterious, how it begot in one feelings both of love and of awe! At this moment she was not in sympathy with its wonderful calm. There had been times when she seemed of it, part of it, absorbed by it, till it flowed over her soul and wrapped her in a deep content. Now all was different. Mystery and the million happenings of life lay hidden in that far silver haze. On the brink of such a sea her mind seemed to be hovering now. Nothing was defined, nothing was clear. She was too agitated to think; life, being, was one wide, vague sensation, partly delight, partly trepidation. Everything had a bright tremulousness. This mystery was no dark cloud, it was a shaking, glittering mist, and yet there rose from it an air

which made her pulse beat hard, her breath come with joyous lightness. She was growing to a new consciousness; a new glass, through which to see life, was quickly being adjusted to her inner sight.

Many a time, with her mother, she had sat upon the shore at St. Aubin's Bay, and looked out where white sails fluttered like the wings of restless doves. Nearer, maybe just beneath her, there had risen the keen singing of the saw, and she could see the white flash of the adze as it shaped the beams; the skeleton of a noble ship being covered with its flesh of wood, and veined with iron; the tall masts quivering to their places as the workmen hauled at the pulleys, singing snatches of patois rhymes. She had seen more than one ship launched, and a strange shiver of pleasure and of pain had gone through her; for as the water caught the graceful figure of the vessel, and the wind bellied out the sails, it seemed to her as if some ship of her own hopes were going out between the reefs to the open sea. What would her ship bring back again to her? Or would anything ever come back?

The books of adventure, poetry, history, and mythology she had read with her mother had quickened her mind, sharpened her intuition, had made her temperament still more sensitive--and her heart less peaceful. In her was almost every note of human feeling: home and duty, song and gaiety, daring and neighbourly kindness, love of sky and sea and air and orchards, of the good-smelling earth and wholesome animal life, and all the incidents, tragic, comic, or commonplace, of human existence.

How wonderful love was, she thought! How wonderful that so many millions who had loved had come and gone, and yet of all they felt they had spoken no word that laid bare the exact feeling to her or to any other. The barbarians who raised these very stones she sat on, they had loved and hated, and everything they had dared or suffered was recorded--but where? And who could know exactly what they felt?

She realised the almost keenest pain of life, that universal agony, the trying to speak, to reveal; and the proof, the hourly proof even the wisest and most gifted have, that what they feel they can never quite express, by sound, or by colour, or by the graven stone, or by the spoken word. . . . But life was good, ah yes! and all that might be revealed to her she would pray for; and Philip--her Philip--would help her to the revelation.

Her Philip! Her heart gave a great throb, for the knowledge that she was a wife came home to her with a pleasant shock. Her name was no longer Guida Landresse de Landresse, but Guida d'Avranche. She had gone from one tribe to another, she had been adopted, changed. A new life was begun.

She rose, slowly made her way down to the sea, and proceeded along the sands and shore-paths to the town. Presently a large vessel, with new sails, beautiful white hull, and gracious form, came slowly round a point. She shaded her eyes to look at it.

"Why, it's the boat Maitre Ranulph was to launch to-day," she said. Then

she stopped suddenly. "Poor Ranulph--poor Ro!" she added gently. She knew that he cared for her--loved her. Where had he been these weeks past? She had not seen him once since that great day when they had visited the Ecrehos.

CHAPTER XV

The house of Elie Mattingley the smuggler stood in the Rue d'Egypte, not far east of the Vier Prison. It had belonged to a jurat of repute, who parted with it to Mattingley not long before he died. There was no doubt as to the validity of the transfer, for the deed was duly registered au greffe, and it said: "In consideration of one livre tournois," etc. Possibly it was a libel against the departed jurat that he and Mattingley had had dealings unrecognised by customs law, crystallising at last into this legacy to the famous pirate-smuggler.

Unlike any other in the street, this house had a high stone wall in front, enclosing a small square paved with flat stones. In one corner was an ivy-covered well, with an antique iron gate, and the bucket, hanging on a hook inside the fern-grown hood, was an old wine-keg--appropriate emblem for a smuggler's house. In one corner, girdled by about five square feet of green earth, grew a pear tree, bearing large juicy pears, reserved for the use of a distinguished lodger, the Chevalier du Champsavoys de Beaumanoir.

In the summer the Chevalier always had his breakfast under this tree. Occasionally one other person breakfasted with him, even Savary dit Detricand, whom however he met less frequently than many people of the town, though they lived in the same house. Detricand was but a fitful lodger, absent at times for a month or so, and running up bills for food and wine, of which payment was never summarily demanded by Mattingley, for some day or other he always paid. When he did, he never questioned the bill, and, what was most important, whether he was sober or "warm as a thrush," he always treated Carterette with respect, though she was not unsparing with her tongue under slight temptation.

Despite their differences and the girl's tempers, when the day came for Detricand to leave for France, Carterette was unhappy. Several things had come at once: his going,--on whom should she lavish her good advice and biting candour now?--yesterday's business in the Vier Marchi with Olivier Delagarde, and the bitter change in Ranulph. Sorrowful reflections and as sorrowful curiosity devoured her.

All day she tortured herself. The late afternoon came, and she could bear it no longer--she would visit Guida. She was about to start, when the door in the garden wall opened and Olivier Delagarde entered. As he doffed his hat to her she thought she had never seen anything more beautiful than the smooth forehead, white hair, and long beard of the returned patriot. That was the first impression; but a closer scrutiny detected the furtive, watery eye, the unwholesome, drooping mouth, the

vicious teeth, blackened and irregular. There was, too, something sinister in the yellow stockings, luridly contrasting with the black knickerbockers and rusty blue coat.

At first Carterette was inclined to run towards the prophet-like figure --it was Ranulph's father; next she drew back with dislike--his smile was leering malice under the guise of amiable mirth. But he was old, and he looked feeble, so her mind instantly changed again, and she offered him a seat on a bench beside the arched doorway with the superscription:

"Nor Poverty nor Riches, but Daily Bread
Under Mine Own Fig Tree."

After the custom of the country, Carterette at once offered him refreshment, and brought him brandy--good old brandy was always to be got at the house of Elie Mattingley! As he drank she noticed a peculiar, uncanny twitching of the fingers and eyelids. The old man's eyes were continually shifting from place to place. He asked Carterette many questions. He had known the house years before--did the deep stream still run beneath it? Was the round hole still in the floor of the back room, from which water used to be drawn in old days? Carterette replied that it was M. Detricand's bedroom now, and you could plainly hear the stream running beneath the house. Did not the noise of the water worry poor M. Detricand then? And so it still went straight on to the sea--and, of course, much swifter after such a heavy rain as they had had the day before.

Carterette took him into every room in the house save her own and the Chevalier's. In the kitchen and in Detricand's bedroom Olivier Delagarde's eyes were very busy. He saw that the kitchen opened on the garden, which had a gate in the rear wall. He also saw that the lozenge-paned windows swung like doors, and were not securely fastened; and he tried the trap-door in Detricand's bedroom to see the water flowing beneath, just as it did when he was young--Yes, there it was running swiftly away to the sea! Then he babbled all the way to the door that led into the street; for now he would stay no longer.

When he had gone, Carterette sat wondering why it was that Ranulph's father should inspire her with such dislike. She knew that at this moment no man in Jersey was so popular as Olivier Delagarde. The longer she thought the more puzzled she became. No sooner had she got one theory than another forced her to move on. In the language of her people, she did not know on which foot to dance.

As she sat and thought, Detricand entered, loaded with parcels and bundles. These were mostly gifts for her father and herself; and for du Champsavoys there was a fine delft shaving-dish, shaped like a quartermoon to fit the neck. They were distributed, and by the time supper was over, it was quite dark. Then Detricand said his farewells, for it was ten o'clock, and he must be away at three, when his boat was to steal across to Brittany, and land him near to the outposts of the Royalist army under de la Rochejaquelein. There were letters to write and packing yet to do. He set to work gaily.

At last everything was done, and he was stooping over a bag to fasten it. The candle was in the window. Suddenly a hand--a long, skinny hand--reached softly out from behind a large press, and swallowed and crushed out the flame. Detricand raised his head quickly, astonished. There was no wind blowing--the candle had not even flickered when burning. But then, again, he had not heard a sound; perhaps that was because his foot was scraping the floor at the moment the light went out. He looked out of the window, but there was only starlight, and he could not see distinctly. Turning round he went to the door of the outer hall-way, opened it, and stepped into the garden. As he did so, a figure slipped from behind the press in the bedroom, swiftly raised the trap-door in the flooring, then, shadowed by the door leading into the hall-way, waited for him.

Presently his footstep was heard. He entered the hall, stood in the doorway of the bedroom for a moment, while he searched in his pockets for a light, then stepped inside.

Suddenly his attention was arrested. There was the sound of flowing water beneath his feet. This could always be heard in his room, but now how loud it was! Realising that the trap-door must be open, he listened for a second and was instantly conscious of some one in the room. He made a step towards the door, but it suddenly closed softly. He moved swiftly to the window, for the presence was near the door.

What did it mean? Who was it? Was there one, or more? Was murder intended? The silence, the weirdness, stopped his tongue--besides, what was the good of crying out? Whatever was to happen would happen at once. He struck a light, and held it up. As he did so some one or something rushed at him. What a fool he had been--the light had revealed his position! But at the same moment came the instinct to throw himself to one side; which he did as the rush came. In that one flash he had seen --a man's white beard.

Next instant there was a sharp sting in his right shoulder. The knife had missed his breast--the sudden swerving had saved him. Even as it struck, he threw himself on his assailant. Then came a struggle. The long fingers of the man with the white beard clove to the knife like a dead soldier's to the handle of a sword. Twice Detricand's hand was gashed slightly, and then he pinioned the wrist of his enemy, and tripped him up. The miscreant fell half across the opening in the floor. One foot, hanging down, almost touched the running water.

Detricand had his foe at his mercy. There was the first inclination to drop him into the stream, but that was put away as quickly as it came. He gave the wretch a sudden twist, pulling him clear of the hole, and wrenched the knife from his fingers at the same moment.

"Now, monsieur," said he, feeling for a light, "now we'll have a look at you."

The figure lay quiet beneath him. The nervous strength was gone, the

body was limp, the breathing was laboured. The light flared. Detricand held it down, and there was revealed the haggard, malicious face of Olivier Delagarde.

"So, monsieur the traitor," said Detricand--" so you'd be a murderer too --eh?"

The old man mumbled an oath.

"Hand of the devil," continued Detricand, "was there ever a greater beast than you! I held my tongue about you these eleven years past, I held it yesterday and saved your paltry life, and you'd repay me by stabbing me in the dark--in a fine old-fashioned way too, with your trap-doors, and blown-out candle, and Italian tricks--"

He held the candle down near the white beard as though he would singe it.

"Come, sit up against the wall there and let me look at you."

Cringing, the old man drew himself over to the wall. Detricand, seating himself in a chair, held the candle up before him.

After a moment he said: "What I want to know is, how could a low-flying cormorant like you beget a gull of the cliffs like Maitre Ranulph?"

The old man did not answer, but sat blinking with malignant yet fearful eyes at Detricand, who continued: "What did you come back for? Why didn't you stay dead? Ranulph had a name as clean as a piece of paper from the mill, and he can't write it now without turning sick, because it's the same name as yours. You're the choice blackamoor of creation, aren't you? Now what have you got to say?"

"Let me go," whined the old man with the white beard. "Let me go, monsieur. Don't send me to prison."

Detricand stirred him with his foot, as one might a pile of dirt.

"Listen," said he. "In the Vier Marchi they're cutting off the ear of a man and nailing it to a post, because he ill-used a cow. What do you suppose they'd do to you, if I took you down there and told them it was through you Rullecour landed, and that you'd have seen them all murdered --eh, maitre cormorant?"

The old man crawled towards Detricand on his knees. "Let me go, let me go," he whined. "I was mad; I didn't know what I was doing; I've not been right in the head since I was in the Guiana prison."

At that moment it struck Detricand that the old man must have had some awful experience in prison, for now his eyes had the most painful terror, the most abject fear. He had never seen so craven a sight.

"What were you in prison for in Guiana, and what did they do to you there?" asked Detricand sternly. Again the old man shivered horribly,

and tears streamed down his cheeks, as he whined piteously: "Oh no, no, no--for the mercy of Christ, no!" He threw up his hands as if to ward off a blow.

Detricand saw that this was not acting, that it was a supreme terror, an awful momentary aberration; for the traitor's eyes were wildly staring, the mouth was drawn in agony, the hands were now rigidly clutching an imaginary something, the body stiffened where it crouched.

Detricand understood now. The old man had been tied to a triangle and whipped--how horribly who might know? His mood towards the miserable creature changed: he spoke to him in a firm, quiet tone.

"There, there, you're not going to be hurt. Be quiet now, and you shall not be touched."

Then he stooped over, and quickly undoing the old man's waistcoat, he pulled down the coat and shirt and looked at his back. As far as he could see it was scarred as though by a red-hot iron, and the healed welts were like whipcords on the shrivelled skin. The old man whimpered yet, but he was growing quieter. Detricand lifted him up, and buttoning the shirt and straightening the coat again, he said:

"Now, you're to go home and sleep the sleep of the unjust, and you're to keep the sixth commandment, and you're to tell no more lies. You've made a shameful mess of your son's life, and you're to die now as soon as you can without attracting notice. You're to pray for an accident to take you out of the world: a wind to blow you over a cliff, a roof to fall on you, a boat to go down with you, a hole in the ground to swallow you up, a fever or a plague to end you in a day."

He opened the door to let him go; but suddenly catching his arms held him in a close grip. "Hark!" he said in a mysterious whisper.

There was only the weird sound of the running water through the open trap-door of the floor. He knew how superstitious was every Jerseyman, from highest to lowest, and he would work upon that weakness now.

"You hear that water running to the sea?" he said solemnly. "You tried to kill and drown me to-night. You've heard how when one man has drowned another an invisible stream follows the murderer wherever he goes, and he hears it, hour after hour, month after month, year after year, until suddenly one day it comes on him in a huge flood, and he is found, whether in the road, or in his bed, or at the table, or in the field, drowned, and dead?"

The old man shivered violently.

"You know Manon Moignard the witch? Well, if you don't do what I say--and I shall find out, mind you--she shall bewitch the flood on you. Be still . . . listen! That's the sound you'll hear every day of your life, if you break the promise you've got to make to me now."

He spoke the promise with ghostly deliberation, and the old man, all the desperado gone out of him, repeated it in a husky voice. Whereupon Detricand led him into the garden, saw him safe out on the road and watched him disappear. Then rubbing his fingers, as though to rid them of pollution, with an exclamation of disgust he went back to the house.

By another evening--that is, at the hour when Guida arrived home after her secret marriage with Philip d'Avranche--he saw the lights of the army of de la Rochejaquelein in the valley of the Vendee.

ETEXT EDITOR'S BOOKMARKS:

Adaptability was his greatest weapon in life
He felt things, he did not study them
If women hadn't memory, she answered, they wouldn't have much
Lilt of existence lulling to sleep wisdom and tried experience
Lonely we come into the world, and lonely we go out of it
Never to be content with superficial reasons and the obvious

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