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MICHEL AND ANGELE

[A Ladder of Swords]

By Gilbert Parker

Volume 1.

INTRODUCTION

If it does not seem too childish a candour to say so, 'Michel and Angele' always seems to me like some old letter lifted out of an ancient cabinet with the faint perfume of bygone days upon it. Perhaps that is because the story itself had its origin in a true but brief record of some good Huguenots who fled from France and took refuge in England, to be found, as the book declares, at the Walloon Church, in Southampton.

The record in the first paragraphs of the first chapter of the book fascinated my imagination, and I wove round Michel de la Foret and Angele Aubert a soft, bright cloud of romance which would not leave my vision until I sat down and wrote out what, in the writing, seemed to me a true history. It was as though some telepathy between the days of Elizabeth and our own controlled me—self-hypnotism, I suppose; but still, there it was. The story, in its original form, was first published in 'Harper's Weekly'

under the name of Michel and Angele, but the fear, I think, that many people would mispronounce the first word of the title, induced me to change it when, double in length, it became a volume called 'A Ladder of Swords'.

As it originally appeared, I wrote it in the Island of Jersey, out at the little Bay of Rozel in a house called La Chaire, a few yards away from the bay itself, and having a pretty garden with a seat at its highest point, from which, beyond the little bay, the English Channel ran away to the Atlantic. It was written in complete seclusion. I had no visitors; there was no one near, indeed, except the landlord of the little hotel in the bay, and his wife. All through the Island, however, were people whom I knew, like the Malet de Carterets, the Lemprieres, and old General Pipon, for whom the Jersey of three hundred years ago was as near as the Jersey of to-day, so do the Jersiais prize, cultivate, and conserve every hour of its recorded history.

As the sea opens out to a vessel making between the promontories to the main, so, while writing this tale which originally was short, the larger scheme of 'The Battle of the Strong' spread out before me, luring me, as though in the distance were the Fortunate Isles. Eight years after 'Michel and Angele' was written and first published in 'Harper's Weekly', I decided to give it the dignity of a full-grown romance. For years I had felt that it had the essentials for a larger canvas, and at the earnest solicitation of Messrs. Harper & Brothers I settled to do what had long been in my mind. The narrative grew as naturally from what it was to larger stature as anything that had been devised upon a greater scale at the beginning; and in London town I had the same joy in the company of Michel and Angele—and a vastly increased joy in the company of Lempriere, the hulking, joyous giant—as I had years before in Jersey itself when the story first stirred in my mind and reached my pen.

While adverse reviews of the book were few if any, it cannot be said that this romance is a companion in popularity with, for instance, 'The Right of Way'. It had its friends, but it has apparently appealed to smaller audiences—to those who watch the world go by; who are not searching for the exposure of life's grim realities; who do not seek the clinic of the soul's tragedies. There was tragedy here, but there was comedy too; there was also joy and faith, patience and courage. The book, taken by itself, could not make a permanent reputation for any man, but it has its place in the scheme of my work, and I would not have it otherwise than it is.

A NOTE

There will be found a few anachronisms in this tale, but none so important as to give a wrong impression of the events of Queen Elizabeth's reign.

MICHEL AND ANGELE

CHAPTER I

If you go to Southampton and search the register of the Walloon Church there, you will find that in the summer of 157_,

"Madame Vefue de Montgomery with all her family and servants were admitted to the Communion"—"Tous ceux cj furent Recus la a Cene du 157_, comme passans, sans avoir Rendu Raison de la foj, mes sur la tesmognage de Mons. Forest, Ministre de Madame, quj certifia quj ne cognoisoit Rien en tout ceux la po' quoy Il ne leur deust administre la Cene s'il estoit en lieu po' a ferre."

There is another striking record, which says that in August of the same year Demoiselle Angele Claude Aubert, daughter of Monsieur de la Haie Aubert, Councillor of the Parliament of Rouen, was married to Michel de la Foret, of the most noble Flemish family of that name.

When I first saw these records, now grown dim with time, I fell to wondering what was the real life-history of these two people. Forthwith, in imagination, I began to make their story piece by piece; and I

had reached a romantic 'denouement' satisfactory to myself and in sympathy with fact, when the Angel of Accident stepped forward with some "human documents." Then I found that my tale, woven back from the two obscure records I have given, was the true story of two most unhappy yet most happy people. From the note struck in my mind, when my finger touched that sorrowful page in the register of the Church of the Refugees at Southampton, had spread out the whole melody and the very book of the song.

One of the later-discovered records was a letter, tear-stained, faded, beautifully written in old French, from Demoiselle Angele Claude Aubert to Michel de la Foret at Anvers in March of the year 157_. The letter lies beside me as I write, and I can scarcely believe that three and a quarter centuries have passed since it was written, and that she who wrote it was but eighteen years old at the time. I translate it into English, though it is impossible adequately to carry over either the flavour or the idiom of the language:

Written on this May Day of the year 157_, at the place hight Rozel in the Manor called of the same of Jersey Isle, to Michel de la Foret, at Anvers in Flanders.

MICHEL, Thy good letter by safe carriage cometh to my hand, bringing to my heart a lightness it hath not known since that day when I was hastily carried to the port of St. Malo, and thou towards the King his prison. In what great fear have I lived, having no news of thee and fearing all manner of mischance! But our God hath benignly saved thee from death, and me He hath set safely here in this isle of the sea.

Thou hast ever been a brave soldier, enduring and not fearing; thou shalt find enow to keep thy blood stirring in these days of trial and peril to us who are so opprobriously called Les Huguenots. If thou wouldst know more of my mind thereupon, come hither. Safety is here, and work for thee—smugglers and pirates do abound on these coasts, and Popish wolves do harry the flock even in this island province of England. Michel, I plead for the cause which thou hast nobly espoused, but—alas! my selfish heart, where thou art lie work and fighting, and the same high cause, and sadly, I confess, it is for mine own happiness that I ask thee to come. I wot well that escape from France hath peril, that the way hither from that point upon yonder coast called Carteret is hazardous, but yet-but yet all ways to happiness are set with hazard.

If thou dost come to Carteret thou wilt see two lights turning this- wards: one upon a headland called Tour de Rozel, and one upon the great rock called of the Ecrehos. These will be in line with thy sight by the sands of Hatainville. Near by the Tour de Rozel shall I be watching and awaiting thee. By day and night doth my prayer ascend for thee.

The messenger who bears this to thee (a piratical knave with a most kind heart, having, I am told, a wife in every port of France and of England the south, a most heinous sin!) will wait for thy answer, or will bring thee hither, which is still better. He is worthy of trust if thou makest him swear by the little finger of St. Peter. By all other swearings he doth deceive freely.

The Lord make thee true, Michel. If thou art faithful to me, I shall know how faithful thou art in all; for thy vows to me were most frequent and pronounced, with a full savour that might warrant short seasoning. Yet, because thou mayst still be given to such dear fantasies of truth as were on thy lips in those dark days wherein thy sword saved my life 'twixt Paris and Rouen, I tell thee now that I do love thee, and shall so love when, as my heart inspires me, the cloud shall fall that will hide us from each other forever.

ANGELE.

An Afterword:

I doubt not we shall come to the heights where there is peace, though we climb thereto by a ladder of swords. A.

Some years before Angele's letter was written, Michel de la Foret had become an officer in the army of Comte Gabriel de Montgomery, and fought with him until what time the great chief was besieged in the Castle of Domfront in Normandy. When the siege grew desperate, Montgomery besought the intrepid young Huguenot soldier to escort Madame de Montgomery to England, to be safe from the oppression and misery sure to follow any mishap to this noble leader of the Camisards.

At the very moment of departure of the refugees from Domfront with the Comtesse, Angele's messenger—the "piratical knave with the most kind heart" presented himself, delivered her letter to De

la Foret, and proceeded with the party to the coast of Normandy by St. Brieuc. Embarking there in a lugger which Buonespoir the pirate secured for them, they made for England.

Having come but half-way of the Channel, the lugger was stopped by an English frigate. After much persuasion the captain of the frigate agreed to land Madame de Montgomery upon the island of Jersey, but forced De la Foret to return to the coast of France; and Buonespoir elected to return with him.

CHAPTER II

Meanwhile Angele had gone through many phases of alternate hope and despair. She knew that Montgomery the Camisard was dead, and a rumour, carried by refugees, reached her that De la Foret had been with him to the end. To this was presently added the word that De la Foret had been beheaded. But one day she learned that the Comtesse de Montgomery was sheltered by the Governor, Sir Hugh Pawlett, her kinsman, at Mont Orgueil Castle. Thither she went in fear from her refuge at Rozel, and was admitted to the Comtesse. There she learned the joyful truth that De la Foret had not been slain, and was in hiding on the coast of Normandy.

The long waiting was a sore trial, yet laughter was often upon her lips henceforth. The peasants, the farmers and fishermen of Jersey, at first—as they have ever been—little inclined towards strangers, learned at last to look for her in the fields and upon the shore, and laughed in response, they knew not why, to the quick smiling of her eyes. She even learned to speak their unmusical but friendly Norman-Jersey French. There were at least a half-dozen fishermen who, for her, would have gone at night straight to the Witches' Rock in St. Clement's Bay—and this was bravery unmatched.

It came to be known along the coast that "Ma'm'selle" was waiting for a lover fleeing from the French coast. This gave her fresh interest in the eyes of the serfs and sailors and their women folk, who at first were not inclined towards the Huguenot maiden, partly because she was French, and partly because she was not a Catholic. But even these, when they saw that she never talked religiously, that she was fast learning to speak their own homely patois, and that in the sickness of their children she was untiring in her kindness, forgave the austerity of the gloomy-browed old man her father, who spoke to them distantly, or never spoke at all; and her position was secure. Then, upon the other hand, the gentry of the manors, seeing the friendship grow between her and the Comtesse de Montgomery at Mont Orgueil Castle, made courteous advances towards her father, and towards herself through him.

She could scarce have counted the number of times she climbed the great hill like a fortress at the lift of the little bay of Rozel, and from the Nez du Guet scanned the sea for a sail and the sky for fair weather. When her eyes were not thus busy, they were searching the lee of the hillside round for yellow lilies, and the valley below for the campion, the daffodil, and the thousand pretty ferns growing in profusion there. Every night she looked out to see that her signal fire was lit upon the Nez du Guet, and she never went to bed without taking one last look over the sea, in the restless inveterate hope which at once sustained her and devoured her.

But the longest waiting must end. It came on the evening of the very day that the Seigneur of Rozel went to Angele's father and bluntly told him he was ready to forego all Norman-Jersey prejudice against the French and the Huguenot religion, and take Angele to wife without penny or estate.

In reply to the Seigneur, Monsieur Aubert said that he was conscious of an honour, and referred Monsieur to his daughter, who must answer for herself; but he must tell Monsieur of Rozel that Monsieur's religion would, in his own sight, be a high bar to the union. To that the Seigneur said that no religion that he had could be a bar to anything at all; and so long as the young lady could manage her household, drive a good bargain with the craftsmen and hucksters, and have the handsomest face and manners in the Channel Islands, he'd ask no more; and she might pray for him and his salvation without let or hindrance.

The Seigneur found the young lady in a little retreat among the rocks, called by the natives La Chaire. Here she sat sewing upon some coarse linen for a poor fisherwoman's babe when the Seigneur came near. She heard the scrunch of his heels upon the gravel, the clank of his sword upon the rocks, and looked up with a flush, her needle poised; for none should know of her presence in this place save her father. When she saw who was her visitor, she rose. After greeting and compliment, none too finely put, but more generous than fitted with Jersey parsimony, the gentleman of Rozel came at once to the point.

"My name is none too bad," said he—"Raoul Lempriere, of the Lemprieres that have been here since Rollo ruled in Normandy. My estate is none worse than any in the whole islands; I have more horses and dogs than any gentleman of my acres; and I am more in favour at court than De Carteret of St. Ouen's. I am the Queen's butler, and I am the first that royal favour granted to set up three dove-cotes, one by St. Aubin's, one by St. Helier's, and one at Rozel: and—and," he added, with a lumbering attempt at humour—"and, on my oath, I'll set up another dove-cote with out my sovereign's favour, with your leave alone. By our Lady, I do love that colour in yon cheek! Just such a colour had my mother when she snatched from the head of my cousin of Carteret's milk-maid wife the bonnet of a lady of quality and bade her get to her heifers. God's beauty! but 'tis a colour of red primroses in thy cheeks and blue campions in thine eyes. Come, I warrant I can deepen that colour"—he bowed low—"Madame of Rozel, if it be not too soon!"

The girl listened to this cheerful and loquacious proposal and courtship all in one, ending with the premature bestowal of a title, in mingled anger, amusement, disdain, and apprehension. Her heart fluttered, then stood still, then flew up in her throat, then grew terribly hot and hurt her, so that she pressed her hand to her bosom as though that might ease it. By the time he had finished, drawn himself up, and struck his foot upon the ground in burly emphasis of his devoted statements, the girl had sufficiently recovered to answer him composedly, and with a little glint of demure humour in her eyes. She loved another man; she did not care so much as a spark for this happy, swearing, swashbuckling gentleman; yet she saw he had meant to do her honour. He had treated her as courteously as was in him to do; he chose her out from all the ladies of his acquaintance to make her an honest offer of his hand—he had said nothing about his heart; he would, should she marry him, throw her scraps of good-humour, bearish tenderness, drink to her health among his fellows, and respect and admire her—even exalt her almost to the rank of a man in his own eyes; and he had the tolerance of the open-hearted and open-handed man. All these things were as much a compliment to her as though she were not a despised Huguenot, an exiled lady of no fortune. She looked at him a moment with an almost solemn intensity, so that he shifted his ground uneasily, but at once smiled encouragingly, to relieve her embarrassment at the unexpected honour done her. She had remained standing; now, as he made a step towards her, she sank down upon the seat, and waved him back courteously.

"A moment, Monsieur of Rozel," she ventured. "Did my father send you to me?"

He inclined his head and smiled again.

"Did you say to him what you have said to me?" she asked, not quite without a touch of malice.

"I left out about the colour in the cheek," he answered, with a smirk at what he took to be the quickness of his wit.

"You kept your paint-pot for me," she replied softly.

"And the dove-cote, too," he rejoined, bowing finely, and almost carried off his feet by his own brilliance. She became serious at once—so quickly that he was ill prepared for it, and could do little but stare and pluck at the tassel of his sword; for he was embarrassed before this maiden, who changed as quickly as the currents change under the brow of the Couperon Cliff, behind which lay his manor-house of Rozel.

"I have visited at your manor, Monsieur of Rozel. I have seen the state in which you live, your retainers, your men-at-arms, your farming-folk, and your sailormen. I know how your Queen receives you; how your honour is as stable as your fief."

He drew himself up again proudly. He could understand this speech.

"Your horses and your hounds I have seen," she added, "your men-servants and your maid-servants, your fields of corn, your orchards, and your larder. I have sometimes broken the Commandment and coveted them and envied you."

"Break the Commandment again, for the last time," he cried, delighted and boisterous. "Let us not waste words, lady. Let's kiss and have it over."

Her eyes flashed. "I coveted them and envied you; but then, I am but a vain girl at times, and vanity is easier to me than humbleness."

"Blood of man, but I cannot understand so various a creature!" he broke in, again puzzled.

"There is a little chapel in the dell beside your manor, Monsieur. If you will go there, and get upon your knees, and pray till the candles no more burn, and the Popish images crumble in their places, you will yet never understand myself or any woman."

"There's no question of Popish images between us," he answered, vainly trying for foothold. "Pray as you please, and I'll see no harm comes to the Mistress of Rozel."

He was out of his bearings and impatient. Religion to him was a dull recreation invented chiefly for women. She became plain enough now. "'Tis no images nor religion that stands between us," she answered, "though they might well do so. It is that I do not love you, Monsieur of Rozel."

His face, which had slowly clouded, suddenly cleared. "Love! Love!" He laughed good-humouredly. "Love comes, I'm told, with marriage. But we can do well enough without fugling on that pipe. Come, come, dost think I'm not a proper man and a gentleman? Dost think I'll not use thee well and 'fend thee, Huguenot though thou art, 'gainst trouble or fret or any man's persecutions—be he my Lord Bishop, my Lord Chancellor, or King of France, or any other?"

She came a step closer to him, even as though she would lay a hand upon his arm. "I believe that you would do all that in you lay," she answered steadily. "Yours is a rough wooing, but it is honest—"

"Rough! Rough!" he protested, for he thought he had behaved like some Adonis. Was it not ten years only since he had been at Court!

"Be assured, Monsieur, that I know how to prize the man who speaks after the light given him. I know that you are a brave and valorous gentleman. I must thank you most truly and heartily, but, Monsieur, you and yours are not for me. Seek elsewhere, among your own people, in your own religion and language and position, the Mistress of Rozel."

He was dumfounded. Now he comprehended the plain fact that he had been declined.

"You send me packing!" he blurted out, getting red in the face.

"Ah, no! Say it is my misfortune that I cannot give myself the great honour," she said; in her tone a little disdainful dryness, a little pity, a little feeling that here was a good friend lost.

"It's not because of the French soldier that was with Montgomery at Domfront?—I've heard that story. But he's gone to heaven, and 'tis vain crying for last year's breath," he added, with proud philosophy.

"He is not dead. And if he were," she added, "do you think, Monsieur, that we should find it easier to cross the gulf between us?"

"Tut, tut, that bugbear Love!" he said shortly. "And so you'd lose a good friend for a dead lover? I' faith, I'd befriend thee well if thou wert my wife, Ma'm'selle."

"It is hard for those who need friends to lose them," she answered sadly.

The sorrow of her position crept in upon her and filled her eyes with tears. She turned them to the sea—instinctively towards that point on the shore where she thought it likely Michel might be; as though by looking she might find comfort and support in this hard hour.

Even as she gazed into the soft afternoon light she could see, far over, a little sail standing out towards the Ecrehos. Not once in six months might the coast of France be seen so clearly. One might almost have noted people walking on the beach. This was no good token, for when that coast may be seen with great distinctness a storm follows hard after. The girl knew this; and though she could not know that this was Michel de la Foret's boat, the possibility fixed itself in her mind. She quickly scanned the horizon. Yes, there in the north-west was gathering a dark- blue haze, hanging like small filmy curtains in the sky.

The Seigneur of Rozel presently broke the silence so awkward for him. He had seen the tears in her eyes, and though he could not guess the cause, he vaguely thought it might be due to his announcement that she had lost a friend. He was magnanimous at once, and he meant what he said and would stand by it through thick and thin.

"Well, well, I'll be thy everlasting friend if not thy husband," he said with ornate generosity. "Cheer thy heart, lady."

With a sudden impulse she seized his hand and kissed it, and, turning, ran swiftly down the rocks towards her home.

He stood and looked after her, then, dumfounded, at the hand she had kissed.

"Blood of my heart!" he said, and shook his head in utter amazement.

Then he turned and looked out upon the Channel. He saw the little boat Angele had descried making from France. Glancing at the sky, "What fools come there!" he said anxiously.

They were Michel de la Foret and Buonespoir the pirate, in a black-bellied cutter with red sails.

CHAPTER III

For weeks De la Foret and Buonespoir had lain in hiding at St. Brieuc. At last Buonespoir declared all was ready once again. He had secured for the Camisard the passport and clothes of a priest who had but just died at Granville. Once again they made the attempt to reach English soil.

Standing out from Carteret on the Belle Suzanne, they steered for the light upon the Marmotier Rocks of the Ecrehos, which Angele had paid a fisherman to keep going every night. This light had caused the French and English frigates some uneasiness, and they had patrolled the Channel from Cap de la Hague to the Bay of St. Brieuc with a vigilance worthy of a larger cause. One fine day an English frigate anchored off the Ecrehos, and the fisherman was seized. He, poor man, swore that he kept the light burning to guide his brother fishermen to and fro between Boulay Bay and the Ecrehos. The captain of the frigate tried severities; but the fisherman stuck to his tale, and the light burned on as before—a lantern stuck upon a pole. One day, with a telescope, Buonespoir had seen the exact position of the staff supporting the light, and had mapped out his course accordingly. He would head straight for the beacon and pass between the Marmotier and the Maitre Ile, where is a narrow channel for a boat drawing only a few feet of water. Unless he made this, he must run south and skirt the Ecriviere Rock and bank, where the streams setting over the sandy ridges make a confusing perilous sea to mariners in bad weather. Else, he must sail north between the Ecrehos and the Dirouilles, in the channel called Etoc, a tortuous and dangerous passage save in good weather, and then safe only to the mariner who knows the floor of that strait like his own hand. De la Foret was wholly in the hands of Buonespoir, for he knew nothing of these waters and coasts; also he was a soldier and no sailor.

They cleared Cape Carteret with a fair wind from the north-east, which should carry them safely as the bird flies to the haven of Rozel. The high, pinkish sands of Hatainville were behind them; the treacherous Taillepied Rocks lay to the north, and a sweet sea before. Nothing could have seemed fairer and more hopeful. But a few old fishermen on shore at Carteret shook their heads dubiously, and at Port Bail, some miles below, a disabled naval officer, watching through a glass, rasped out, "Criminals or fools!" But he shrugged his shoulders, for if they were criminals he was sure they would expiate their crimes this night, and if they were fools—he had no pity for fools.

But Buonespoir knew his danger. Truth is, he had chosen this night because they would be safest from pursuit, because no sensible seafaring man, were he King's officer or another, would venture forth upon the impish Channel, save to court disaster. Pirate, and soldier in priest's garb, had frankly taken the chances.

With a fair wind they might, with all canvas set—mainsail, foresail, jib, and fore-topsail—make Rozel Bay within two hours and a quarter. All seemed well for a brief half-hour. Then, even as the passage between the Marmotier and the Ecrehos opened out, the wind suddenly shifted from the north-east to the southwest and a squall came hurrying on them—a few moments too soon; for, had they been clear of the Ecrehos, clear of the Taillepieds, Felee Bank, and the Ecriviere, they could have stood out towards the north in a more open sea.

Yet there was one thing in their favour: the tide was now running hard from the north-west, so fighting for them while the wind was against them. Their only safety lay in getting beyond the Ecrehos. If they attempted to run in to the Marmotier for safety, they would presently be at the mercy of the French. To trust their doubtful fortunes and bear on was the only way. The tide was running fast. They gave the mainsail to the wind still more, and bore on towards the passage. At last, as they were opening on it, the wind suddenly veered full north-east. The sails flapped, the boat seemed to hover for a moment, and then a wave swept her towards the rocks. Buonespoir put the helm hard over, she went about, and they close-hauled her as she trembled towards the rocky opening.

This was the critical instant. A heavy sea was running, the gale was blowing hard from the north-east, and under the close-hauled sail the Belle Suzanne was lying over dangerously. But the tide, too, was running hard from the south, fighting the wind; and, at the moment when all seemed terribly uncertain, swept them past the opening and into the swift-running channel, where the indraught sucked them

through to the more open water beyond.

Although the Belle Suzanne was in more open water now, the danger was not over. Ahead lay a treacherous sea, around them roaring winds, and the perilous coast of Jersey beyond all.

"Do you think we shall land?" quietly asked De la Foret, nodding towards the Jersey coast.

"As many chances 'gainst it as for it, M'sieu'," said Buonespoir, turning his face to the north, for the wind had veered again to north-east, and he feared its passing to the north-west, giving them a head-wind and a swooping sea.

Night came down, but with a clear sky and a bright moon; the wind, however, not abating. The next three hours were spent in tacking, in beating towards the Jersey coast under seas which almost swamped them. They were standing off about a mile from the island, and could see lighted fires and groups of people upon the shore, when suddenly a gale came out from the southwest, the wind having again shifted. With an oath, Buonespoir put the helm hard over, the Belle Suzanne came about quickly, but as the gale struck her, the mast snapped like a pencil, she heeled over, and the two adventurers were engulfed in the waves.

A cry of dismay went up from the watchers on the shore. They turned with a half-conscious sympathy towards Angele, for her story was known by all, and in her face they read her mortal fear, though she made no cry, but only clasped her hands in agony. Her heart told her that yonder Michel de la Foret was fighting for his life. For an instant only she stood, the terror of death in her eyes, then she turned to the excited fishermen near.

"Men, oh men," she cried, "will you not save them? Will no one come with me?"

Some shook their heads sullenly, others appeared uncertain, but their wives and children clung to them, and none stirred. Looking round helplessly, Angele saw the tall figure of the Seigneur of Rozel. He had been watching the scene for some time. Now he came quickly to her.

"Is it the very man?" he asked her, jerking a finger towards the struggling figures in the sea.

"Yes, oh yes," she replied, nodding her head piteously. "God tells my heart it is."

Her father drew near and interposed.

"Let us kneel and pray for two dying men," said he, and straightway knelt upon the sand.

"By St. Martin, we've better medicine than that, apothecary!" said Lempriere of Rozel loudly, and, turning round, summoned two serving-men. "Launch my strong boat," he added. "We will pick these gentlemen from the brine, or know the end of it all."

The men hurried gloomily to the long-boat, ran her down to the shore and into the surf.

"You are going—you are going to save him, dear Seigneur?" asked the girl tremulously.

"To save him—that's to be seen, mistress," answered Lempriere, and advanced to the fishermen. By dint of hard words, and as hearty encouragement and promises, he got a half-dozen strong sailors to man the boat.

A moment after, they were all in. At a motion from the Seigneur, the boat was shot out into the surf, and a cheer from the shore gave heart to De la Foret and Buonespoir, who were being driven upon the rocks.

The Jersey men rowed gallantly; and the Seigneur, to give them heart, promised a shilling, a capon, and a gallon of beer to each, if the rescue was made. Again and again the two men seemed to sink beneath the sea, and again and again they came to the surface and battled further, torn, battered, and bloody, but not beaten. Cries of "We're coming, gentles, we're coming!" from the Seigneur of Rozel, came ringing through the surf to the dulled ears of the drowning men, and they struggled on.

There never was a more gallant rescue. Almost at their last gasp the two were rescued.

"Mistress Aubert sends you welcome, sir, if you be Michel de la Foret," said Lempriere of Rozel, and offered the fugitive his horn of liquor as he lay blown and beaten in the boat.

"I am he," De la Foret answered. "I owe you my life, Monsieur," he added.

Lempriere laughed. "You owe it to the lady; and I doubt you can properly pay the debt," he answered,

with a toss of the head; for had not the lady refused him, the Seigneur of Rozel, six feet six in height, and all else in proportion, while this gentleman was scarce six feet.

"We can have no quarrel upon the point," answered De la Foret, reaching out his hand; "you have at least done tough work for her, and if I cannot pay in gold, I can in kind. It was a generous deed, and it has made a friend for ever of Michel de la Foret."

"Raoul Lempriere of Rozel they call me, Michel de la Foret, and by Rollo the Duke, but I'll take your word in the way of friendship, as the lady yonder takes it for riper fruit! Though, faith, 'tis fruit of a short summer, to my thinking."

All this while Buonespoir the pirate, his face covered with blood, had been swearing by the little finger of St. Peter that each Jerseyman there should have the half of a keg of rum. He went so far in gratitude as to offer the price of ten sheep which he had once secretly raided from the Seigneur of Rozel and sold in France; for which he had been seized on his later return to the island, and had escaped without punishment.

Hearing, Lempriere of Rozel roared at him in anger: "Durst speak to me! For every fleece you thieved I'll have you flayed with bow-strings if ever I sight your face within my boundaries."

"Then I'll fetch and carry no more for M'sieu' of Rozel," said Buonespoir, in an offended tone, but grinning under his reddish beard.

"When didst fetch and carry for me, varlet?" Lempriere roared again.

"When the Seigneur of Rozel fell from his horse, overslung with sack, the night of the royal Duke's visit, and the footpads were on him, I carried him on my back to the lodge of Rozel Manor. The footpads had scores to settle with the great Rozel."

For a moment the Seigneur stared, then roared again, but this time with laughter.

"By the devil and Rollo, I have sworn to this hour that there was no man in the isle could have carried me on his shoulders. And I was right, for Jersiais you're none, neither by adoption nor grace, but a citizen of the sea."

He laughed again as a wave swept over them, drenching them, and a sudden squall of wind came out of the north. "There's no better head in the isle than mine for measurement and thinking, and I swore no man under eighteen stone could carry me, and I am twenty-five—I take you to be nineteen stone, eh?"

"Nineteen, less two ounces," grinned Buonespoir.

"I'll laugh De Carteret of St. Ouen's out of his stockings over this," answered Lempriere. "Trust me for knowing weights and measures! Look you, varlet, thy sins be forgiven thee. I care not about the fleeces, if there be no more stealing. St. Ouen's has no head—I said no one man in Jersey could have done it—I'm heavier by three stone than any man in the island." Thereafter there was little speaking among them, for the danger was greater as they neared the shore. The wind and the sea were against them; the tide, however, was in their favour. Others besides M. Aubert offered up prayers for the safe-landing of the rescued and rescuers. Presently an ancient fisherman broke out into a rude sailor's chanty, and every voice, even those of the two Huguenots, took it up:

"When the Four Winds, the Wrestlers, strive with the Sun,
When the Sun is slain in the dark;
When the stars burn out, and the night cries
To the blind sea-reapers, and they rise,
And the water-ways are stark—
God save us when the reapers reap!
When the ships sweep in with the tide to the shore,
And the little white boats return no more;
When the reapers reap, Lord give Thy sailors sleep,
If Thou cast us not upon the shore,
To bless Thee evermore:
To walk in Thy sight as heretofore
Though the way of the Lord be steep!
By Thy grace,
Show Thy face,
Lord of the land and the deep!"

The song stilled at last. It died away in the roar of the surf, in the happy cries of foolish women, and the laughter of men back from a dangerous adventure. As the Seigneur's boat was drawn up the shore, Angele threw herself into the arms of Michel de la Foret, the soldier dressed as a priest.

Lempriere of Rozel stood abashed before this rich display of feeling. In his hottest youth he could not have made such passionate motions of affection. His feelings ran neither high nor broad, but neither did they run low and muddy. His nature was a straight level of sensibility—a rough stream between high banks of prejudice, topped with the foam of vanity, now brawling in season, and now going steady and strong to the sea. Angele had come to feel what he was beneath the surface. She felt how unimaginative he was, and how his humour, which was but the horse-play of vanity, helped him little to understand the world or himself. His vanity was ridiculous, his self-importance was against knowledge or wisdom; and Heaven had given him a small brain, a big and noble heart, a pedigree back to Rollo, and the absurd pride of a little lord in a little land. Angele knew all this; but realised also that he had offered her all he was able to offer to any woman.

She went now and put out both hands to him. "I shall ever pray God's blessing on the lord of Rozel," she said, in a low voice.

"'Twould fit me no better than St. Ouen's sword fits his fingers. I'll take thine own benison, lady—but on my cheek, not on my hand as this day before at four of the clock." His big voice lowered. "Come, come, the hand thou kissed, it hath been the hand of a friend to thee, as Raoul Lempriere of Rozel said he'd be. Thy lips upon his cheek, though it be but a rough fellow's fancy, and I warrant, come good, come ill, Rozel's face will never be turned from thee. Pooh, pooh! let yon soldier-priest shut his eyes a minute; this is 'tween me and thee; and what's done before the world's without shame."

He stopped short, his black eyes blazing with honest mirth and kindness, his breath short, having spoken in such haste.

Her eyes could scarce see him, so full of tears were they; and, standing on tiptoe, she kissed him upon each cheek.

"'Tis much to get for so little given," she said, with a quiver in her voice; "yet this price for friendship would be too high to pay to any save the Seigneur of Rozel."

She hastily turned to the men who had rescued Michel and Buonespoir. "If I had riches, riches ye should have, brave men of Jersey," she said; "but I have naught save love and thanks, and my prayers too, if ye will have them."

"'Tis a man's duty to save his fellow an' he can," cried a gaunt fisherman, whose daughter was holding to his lips a bowl of conger-eel soup.

"'Twas a good deed to send us forth to save a priest of Holy Church," cried a weazened boat-builder with a giant's arm, as he buried his face in a cup of sack, and plunged his hand into a fishwife's basket of limpets.

"Aye, but what means she by kissing and arm-getting with a priest?" cried a snarling vraic-gatherer. "'Tis some jest upon Holy Church, or yon priest is no better than common men but an idle shame."

By this time Michel was among them. "Priest I am none, but a soldier," he said in a loud voice, and told them bluntly the reasons for his disguise; then, taking a purse from his pocket, thrust into the hands of his rescuers and their families pieces of silver and gave them brave words of thanks.

But the Seigneur was not to be outdone in generosity. His vanity ran high; he was fain to show Angele what a gorgeous gentleman she had failed to make her own; and he was in ripe good-humour all round.

"Come, ye shall come, all of ye, to the Manor of Rozel, every man and woman here. Ye shall be fed, and fuddled too ye shall be an' ye will; for honest drink which sends to honest sleep hurts no man. To my kitchen with ye all; and you, messieurs"—turning to M. Aubert and De la Fore—"and you, Mademoiselle, come, know how open is the door and full the table at my Manor of Rozel—St. Ouen's keeps a beggarly board."

CHAPTER IV

Thus began the friendship of the bragging Seigneur of Rozel for the three Huguenots, all because he had seen tears in a girl's eyes and misunderstood them, and because the same girl had kissed him. His pride was flattered that they should receive protection from him, and the flattery became almost a canonising when De Carteret of St. Ouen's brought him to task for harbouring and comforting the despised Huguenots; for when De Carteret railed he was envious. So henceforth Lempriere played Lord Protector with still more boisterous unction. His pride knew no bounds when, three days after the rescue, Sir Hugh Pawlett, the Governor, answering De la Foret's letter requesting permission to visit the Comtesse de Montgomery, sent him word to fetch De la Foret to Mont Orgueil Castle. Clanking and blowing, he was shown into the great hall with De la Foret, where waited Sir Hugh and the widow of the renowned Camisard. Clanking and purring like an enormous cat, he turned his head away to the window when De la Foret dropped on his knees and kissed the hand of the Comtesse, whose eyes were full of tears. Clanking and gurgling, he sat to a mighty meal of turbot, eels, lobsters, ormers, capons, boar's head, brawn, and mustard, swan, curlew, and spiced meats. This he washed down with bastard, malmsey, and good ale, topped with almonds, comfits, perfumed cherries with "ipocras," then sprinkled himself with rose-water and dabbled his face and hands in it. Filled to the turret, he lurched to his feet, and drinking to Sir Hugh's toast, 27

"Her sacred Majesty!" he clanked and roared. "Elizabeth!" as though upon the field of battle. He felt the star of De Carteret declining and Rozel's glory ascending like a comet. Once set in a course, nothing could change him. Other men might err, but once right, the Seigneur of Rozel was everlasting.

Of late he had made the cause of Michel de la Foret and Angele Aubert his own. For this he had been raked upon the coals by De Carteret of St. Ouen's and his following, who taunted him with the saying: "Save a thief from hanging and he'll cut your throat." Not that there was ill feeling against De la Foret in person. He had won most hearts by a frank yet still manner, and his story and love for Angele had touched the women folk where their hearts were softest. But the island was not true to itself or its history if it did not divide itself into factions, headed by the Seigneurs, and there had been no ground for good division for five years till De la Foret came.

Short of actual battle, this new strife was the keenest ever known, for Sir Hugh Pawlett was ranged on the side of the Seigneur of Rozel. Kinsman of the Comtesse de Montgomery, of Queen Elizabeth's own Protestant religion, and admiring De la Foret, he had given every countenance to the Camisard refugee. He had even besought the Royal Court of Jersey to grant a pardon to Buonespoir the pirate, on condition that he should never commit a depredation upon an inhabitant of the island—this he was to swear to by the little finger of St. Peter. Should he break his word, he was to be banished the island for ten years, under penalty of death if he returned. When the hour had come for Buonespoir to take the oath, he failed to appear; and the next morning the Seigneur of St. Ouen's discovered that during the night his cellar had been raided of two kegs of canary, many flagons of muscadella, pots of anchovies and boxes of candied "eringo," kept solely for the visit which the Queen had promised the island. There was no doubt of the misdemeanor, for Buonespoir returned to De Carteret from St. Brieuc the gabardine of one of his retainers, in which he had carried off the stolen delicacies.

This aggravated the feud between the partisans of St. Ouen's and Rozel, for Lempriere of Rozel had laughed loudly when he heard of the robbery, and said "'Tis like St. Ouen's to hoard for a Queen and glut a pirate. We feed as we get at Rozel, and will feed the Court well too when it comes, or I'm no butler to Elizabeth."

But trouble was at hand for Michel and for his protector. The spies of Catherine de Medici, mother of the King of France, were everywhere. These had sent word that De la Foret was now attached to the meagre suite of the widow of the great Camisard Montgomery, near the Castle of Mont Orgueil. The Medici, having treacherously slain the chief, became mad with desire to slay the lieutenant. She was set to have the man, either through diplomacy with England, or to end him by assassination through her spies. Having determined upon his death, with relentless soul she pursued the cause as closely as though this exiled soldier were a powerful enemy at the head of an army in France.

Thus it was that she wrote to Queen Elizabeth, asking that "this arrant foe of France, this churl, conspirator, and reviler of the Sacraments, be rendered unto our hands for well-deserved punishment as warning to all such evil-doers." She told Elizabeth of De la Foret's arrival in Jersey, disguised as a priest of the Church of France, and set forth his doings since landing with the Seigneur of Rozel. Further she went on to say to "our sister of England" that "these dark figures of murder and revolt be a peril to the soft peace of this good realm."

To this, Elizabeth, who had no knowledge of Michel, who desired peace with France at this time, who had favours to ask of Catherine, and who in her own realm had fresh reason to fear conspiracy through the Queen of the Scots and others, replied forthwith that "If this De la Foret falleth into our hands, and if it were found he had in truth conspired against France its throne, had he a million lives, not one

should remain." Having despatched this letter, she straightway sent a messenger to Sir Hugh Pawlett in Jersey, making quest of De la Foret, and commanding that he should be sent to her in England at once.

When the Queen's messenger arrived at Orgueil Castle, Lempriere chanced to be with Sir Hugh Pawlett, and the contents of Elizabeth's letter were made known to him.

At the moment Monsieur of Rozel was munching macaroons and washing them down with canary. The Governor's announcement was such a shock that he choked and coughed, the crumbs flying in all directions; and another pint of canary must be taken to flush his throat. Thus cleared for action, he struck out.

"'Tis St. Ouen's work," he growled.

"'Tis the work of the Medici," said Sir Hugh. "Read," he added, holding out the paper.

Now Lempriere of Rozel had a poor eye for reading. He had wit enough to wind about the difficulty.

"If I see not the Queen's commands, I've no warrant but Sir Hugh Pawlett's words, and I'll to London and ask 'fore her Majesty's face if she wrote them, and why. I'll tell my tale and speak my mind, I pledge you, sir."

"You'll offend her Majesty. Her commands are here." Pawlett tapped the letter with his finger.

"I'm butler to the Queen, and she will list to me. I'll not smirk and caper like St. Ouen's; I'll bear me like a man not speaking for himself. I'll speak as Harry her father spoke—straight to the purpose. . . . No, no, no, I'm not to be wheedled, even by a Pawlett, and you shall not ask me. If you want Michel de la Foret, come and take him. He is in my house. But ye must take him, for come he shall not!"

"You will not oppose the Queen's officers?"

"De la Foret is under my roof. He must be taken. I will give him up to no one; and I'll tell my sovereign these things when I see her in her palace."

"I misdoubt you'll play the bear," said Pawlett, with a dry smile.

"The Queen's tongue is none so tame. I'll travel by my star, get sweet or sour."

"Well, well, 'give a man luck, and throw him into the sea,' is the old proverb. I'm coming for your friend to-night."

"I'll be waiting with my fingers on the door, sir," said Rozel, with a grim vanity and an outrageous pride in himself.

CHAPTER V

The Seigneur of Rozel found De la Foret at the house of M. Aubert. His face was flushed with hard riding, and perhaps the loving attitude of Michel and Angele deepened it, for at the garden gate the lovers were saying adieu.

"You have come for Monsieur de la Foret?" asked Angele anxiously. Her quick look at the Seigneur's face had told her there were things amiss.

"There's commands from the Queen. They're for the ears of De la Foret," said the Seigneur.

"I will hear them too," said Angele, her colour going, her bearing determined.

The Seigneur looked down at her with boyish appreciation, then said to De la Foret: "Two Queens make claim for you. The wolfish Catherine writes to England for her lost Camisard, with much fool's talk about 'dark figures,' and 'conspirators,' 'churls,' and foes of 'soft peace'; and England takes the bait and sends to Sir Hugh Pawlett yonder. And, in brief, Monsieur, the Governor is to have you under arrest and send you to England. God knows why two Queens make such a pother over a fellow with naught but a sword and a lass to love him—though, come to think, 'a man's a man if he have but a hose on his head,' as the proverb runs."

De la Foret smiled, then looked grave, as he caught sight of Angele's face. "'Tis arrest, then?" he asked.

"'Tis come willy nilly," answered the Seigneur. "And once they've forced you from my doors, I'm for England to speak my mind to the Queen. I can make interest for her presence—I hold court office," he added with puffing confidence.

Angele looked up at him with quick tears, yet with a smile on her lips.

"You are going to England for Michel's sake?" she said in a low voice.

"For Michel, or for you, or for mine honour, what matter, so that I go!" he answered, then added: "there must be haste to Rozel, friend, lest the Governor take Lempriere's guest like a potato-digger in the fields."

Putting spurs to his horse, he cantered heavily away, not forgetting to wave a pompous farewell to Angele. De la Foret was smiling as he turned to Angele. She looked wonderingly at him, for she had felt that she must comfort him, and she looked not for this sudden change in his manner.

"Is prison-going so blithe, then?" she asked, with a little uneasy laugh which was half a sob.

"It will bring things to a head," he answered. "After danger and busy days, to be merely safe, it is scarce the life for Michel de la Foret. I have my duty to the Comtesse; I have my love for you; but I seem of little use by contrast with my past. And yet, and yet," he added, half sadly, "how futile has been all our fighting, so far as human eye can see."

"Nothing is futile that is right, Michel," the girl replied. "Thou hast done as thy soul answered to God's messages: thou hast fought when thou couldst, and thou hast sheathed thy blade when there was naught else to do. Are not both right?"

He clasped her to his breast; then, holding her from him a little, looked into her eyes steadily a moment. "God hath given thee a true heart, and the true heart hath wisdom," he answered.

"You will not seek escape? Nor resist the Governor?" she asked eagerly.

"Whither should I go? My place is here by you, by the Comtesse de Montgomery. One day it may be I shall return to France, and to our cause—"

"If it be God's will."

"If it be God's will."

"Whatever comes, you will love me, Michel?"

"I will love you, whatever comes."

"Listen." She drew his head down. "I am no dragweight to thy life? Thou wouldst not do otherwise if there were no foolish Angele?"

He did not hesitate. "What is best is. I might do otherwise if there were no Angele in my life to pilot my heart, but that were worse for me."

"Thou art the best lover in all the world."

"I hope to make a better husband. To-morrow is carmine-lettered in my calendar, if thou sayst thou wilt still have me under the sword of the Medici."

Her hand pressed her heart suddenly. "Under the sword, if it be God's will," she answered. Then, with a faint smile: "But no, I will not believe the Queen of England will send thee, one of her own Protestant faith, to the Medici."

"And thou wilt marry me?"

"When the Queen of England approves thee," she answered, and buried her face in the hollow of his arm.

An hour later Sir Hugh Pawlett came to the manor-house of Rozel with two-score men-at-arms. The Seigneur himself answered the Governor's knocking, and showed himself in the doorway, with a dozen halberdiers behind him.

"I have come seeking Michel de la Foret," said the Governor.

"He is my guest."

"I have the Queen's command to take him."

"He is my cherished guest."

"Must I force my way?"

"Is it the Queen's will that blood be shed?"

"The Queen's commands must be obeyed."

"The Queen is a miracle of the world, God save her! What is the charge against him?"

"Summon Michel de la Foret, 'gainst whom it lies."

"He is my guest; ye shall have him only by force." The Governor turned to his men. "Force the passage and search the house," he commanded.

The company advanced with levelled pikes, but at a motion from the Seigneur his men fell back before them, and, making a lane, disclosed Michel de la Foret at the end of it. Michel had not approved of Lempriere's mummery of defence, but he understood from what good spirit it sprung, and how it flattered the Seigneur's vanity to make show of resistance.

The Governor greeted De la Foret with a sour smile, read to him the Queen's writ, and politely begged his company towards Mont Orgueil Castle.

"I'll fetch other commands from her Majesty, or write me down a pedlar of St. Ouen's follies," the Seigneur said from his doorway, as the Governor and De la Foret bade him good-bye and took the road to the Castle.

CHAPTER VI

Michel de la Foret was gone, a prisoner. From the dusk of the trees by the little chapel of Rozel, Angele had watched his exit in charge of the Governor's men. She had not sought to show her presence: she had seen him—that was comfort to her heart; and she would not mar the memory of that last night's farewell by another before these strangers. She saw with what quiet Michel bore his arrest, and she said to herself, as the last halberdier vanished:

"If the Queen do but speak with him, if she but look upon his face and hear his voice, she must needs deal kindly by him. My Michel—ah, it is a face for all men to trust and all women—"

But she sighed and averted her head as though before prying eyes.

The bell of Rozel Chapel broke gently on the evening air; the sound, softened by the leaves and mellowed by the wood of the great elm-trees, billowed away till it was lost in faint reverberation in the sea beneath the cliffs of the Couperon, where a little craft was coming to anchor in the dead water.

At first the sound of the bell soothed her, softening the thought of the danger to Michel. She moved with it towards the sea, the tones of her grief chiming with it. Presently, as she went, a priest in cassock and robes and stole crossed the path in front of her, an acolyte before him swinging a censer, his voice chanting Latin verses from the service for the sick, in his hands the sacred elements of the sacrament for the dying. The priest was fat and heavy, his voice was lazy, his eyes expressionless, and his robes were dirty. The plaintive, peaceful sense which the sound of the vesper bell had thrown over Angele's sad reflections passed away, and the thought smote her that, were it not for such as this black-toothed priest, Michel would not now be on his way to England, a prisoner. To her this vesper bell was the symbol of tyranny and hate. It was fighting, it was martyrdom, it was exile, it was the Medici. All that she had borne, all that her father had borne, the thought of the home lost, the mother dead before her time, the name ruined, the heritage dispossessed, the red war of the Camisards, the rivulets of blood in the streets of Paris and of her loved Rouen, smote upon her mind, and drove her to her knees in the forest glade, her hands upon her ears to shut out the sound of the bell. It came upon her that the bell had said "Peace! Peace!" to her mind when there should be no peace; that it had said "Be patient!" when she should be up and doing; that it had whispered "Stay!" when she should tread the path her

lover trod, her feet following in his footsteps as his feet had trod in hers.

She pressed her hands tight upon her ears and prayed with a passion and a fervour she had never known before. A revelation seemed to come upon her, and, for the first time, she was a Huguenot to the core. Hitherto she had suffered for her religion because it was her mother's broken life, her father's faith, and because they had suffered, and her lover had suffered. Her mind had been convinced, her loyalty had been unwavering, her words for the great cause had measured well with her deeds. But new senses were suddenly born in her, new eyes were given to her mind, new powers for endurance to her soul. She saw now as the martyrs of Meaux had seen; a passionate faith descended on her as it had descended on them; no longer only patient, she was fain for action. Tears rained from her eyes. Her heart burst itself in entreaty and confession.

"Thy light shall be my light, and Thy will my will, O Lord," she cried at the last. "Teach me Thy way, create a right spirit within me. Give me boldness without rashness, and hope without vain thinking. Bear up my arms, O Lord, and save me when falling. A poor Samaritan am I. Give me the water that shall be a well of water springing up to everlasting life, that I thirst not in the fever of doing. Give me the manna of life to eat that I faint not nor cry out in plague, pestilence, or famine. Give me Thy grace, O God, as Thou hast given it to Michel de la Foret, and guide my feet as I follow him in life and in death, for Christ's sake. Amen."

As she rose from her knees she heard the evening gun from the castle of Mont Orgueil, whither Michel was being borne by the Queen's men. The vesper bell had stopped. Through the wood came the salt savour of the sea on the cool sunset air. She threw back her head and walked swiftly towards it, her heart beating hard, her eyes shining with the light of purpose, her step elastic with the vigour of youth and health. A quarter-hour's walking brought her to the cliff of the Couperon.

As she gazed out over the sea, however, a voice in the bay below caught her ear. She looked down. On the deck of the little craft which had entered the harbour when the vesper bell was ringing stood a man who waved a hand up towards her, then gave a peculiar call. She stared with amazement: it was Buonespoir the pirate. What did this mean? Had God sent this man to her, by his presence to suggest what she should do in this crisis in her life? For even as she ran down the shore towards him, it came to her mind that Buonespoir should take her in his craft to England.

What to do in England? Who could tell? She only knew that a voice called her to England, to follow the footsteps of Michel de la Foret, who even this night would be setting forth in the Governor's brigantine for London.

Buonespoir met her upon the shore, grinning like a boy.

"God save you, lady!" he said.

"What brings you hither, friend?" she asked.

If he had said that a voice had called him hither as one called her to England, it had not sounded strange; for she was not thinking that this was one who superstitiously swore by the little finger of St. Peter, but only that he was the man who had brought her Michel from France, who had been a faithful friend to her and to her father.

"What brings me hither?" Buonespoir laughed low in his chest. "Even to fetch to the Seigneur of Rozel, a friend of mine by every token of remembrance, a dozen flagons of golden muscadella."

To Angele no suggestion flashed that these flagons of muscadella had come from the cellar of the Seigneur of St. Ouen's, where they had been reserved for a certain royal visit. Nothing was in her mind save the one thought—that she must follow Michel.

"Will you take me to England?" she asked, putting a hand quickly on his arm.

He had been laughing hard, picturing to himself what Lempriere of Rozel would say when he sniffed the flagon of St. Ouen's best wine, and for an instant he did not take in the question; but he stared at her now as the laugh slowly subsided through notes of abstraction and her words worked their way into his brain.

"Will you take me, Buonespoir?" she urged. "Take you—?" he questioned.

"To England."

"And myself to Tyburn?"

"Nay, to the Queen."

"'Tis the same thing. Head of Abel! Elizabeth hath heard of me. The Seigneur of St. Ouen's and others have writ me down a pirate to her. She would not pardon the muscadella," he added, with another laugh, looking down where the flagons lay.

"She must pardon more than that," exclaimed Angele, and hastily she told him of what had happened to Michel de la Foret, and why she would go.

"Thy father, then?" he asked, scowling hard in his attempt to think it out.

"He must go with me—I will seek him now."

"It must be at once, i' faith, for how long, think you, can I stay here unharmed? I was sighted off St. Ouen's shore a few hours ago."

"To-night?" she asked.

"By twelve, when we shall have the moon and the tide," he answered. "But hold!" he hastily added. "What, think you, could you and your father do alone in England? And with me it were worse than alone. These be dark times, when strangers have spies at their heels, and all travellers are suspect."

"We will trust in God," she answered.

"Have you money?" he questioned—"for London, not for me," he added hastily.

"Enough," she replied.

"The trust with the money is a weighty matter," he added; "but they suffice not. You must have 'fending."

"There is no one," she answered sadly, "no one save—"

"Save the Seigneur of Rozel!" Buonespoir finished the sentence. "Good. You to your father, and I to the Seigneur. If you can fetch your father by your pot-of-honey tongue, I'll fetch the great Lempriere with muscadella. Is't a bargain?"

"In which I gain all," she answered, and again touched his arm with her finger-tips.

"You shall be aboard here at ten, and I will join you on the stroke of twelve," he said, and gave a low whistle.

At the signal three men sprang up like magic out of the bowels of the boat beneath them, and scurried over the side; three as ripe knaves as ever cheated stocks and gallows, but simple knaves, unlike their master. Two of them had served with Francis Drake in that good ship of his lying even now not far from Elizabeth's palace at Greenwich. The third was a rogue who had been banished from Jersey for a habitual drunkenness which only attacked him on land—at sea he was sacredly sober. His name was Jean Nicolle. The names of the other two were Herve Robin and Rouge le Riche, but their master called them by other names.

"Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego," said Buonespoir in ceremony, and waved a hand of homage between them and Angele. "Kiss dirt, and know where duty lies. The lady's word on my ship is law till we anchor at the Queen's Stairs at Greenwich. So, Heaven help you, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego!" said Buonespoir.

A wave of humour passed over Angele's grave face, for a stranger quartet never sailed high seas together: one blind of an eye, one game of a leg, one bald as a bottle and bereft of two front teeth; but Buonespoir was sound of wind and limb, his small face with the big eyes lost in the masses of his red hair, and a body like Hercules. It flashed through Angele's mind even as she answered the gurgling salutations of the triumvirate that they had been got together for no gentle summer sailing in the Channel. Her conscience smote her that she should use such churls; but she gave it comfort by the thought that while serving her they could do naught worse; and her cause was good. Yet they presented so bizarre an aspect, their ugliness was so varied and particular, that she almost laughed. Buonespoir understood her thoughts, for with a look of mocking innocence in his great blue eyes he waved a hand again towards the graceless trio, and said, "For deep-sea fishing." Then he solemnly winked at the three.

A moment later Angele was speeding along the shore towards her home on the farther hillside up the little glen; and within an hour Buonespoir rolled from the dusk of the trees by the manor-house of Rozel and knocked at the door. He carried on his head, as a fishwife carries a tray of ormers, a basket full of flagons of muscadella; and he did not lower the basket when he was shown into the room where the

Seigneur of Rozel was sitting before a trencher of spiced veal and a great pot of ale. Lempriere roared a hearty greeting to the pirate, for he was in a sour humour because of the taking off of Michel de la Foret; and of all men this pirate-fellow, who had quips and cranks, and had played tricks on his cousin of St. Ouen's, was most welcome.

"What's that on your teacup of a head?" he roared again as Buonespoir grinned pleasure at the greeting. "Muscadella," said Buonespoir, and lowered the basket to the table.

Lempriere seized a flagon, drew it forth, looked closely at it, then burst into laughter, and spluttered: "St. Ouen's muscadella, by the hand of Rufus!"

Seizing Buonespoir by the shoulders, he forced him down upon a bench at the table, and pushed the trencher of spiced meat against his chest. "Eat, my noble lord of the sea and master of the cellar," he gurgled out, and, tipping the flagon of muscadella, took a long draught. "God-a-mercy—but it has saved my life," he gasped in satisfaction as he lay back in his great chair, and put his feet on the bench whereon Buonespoir sat.

They raised their flagons and toasted each other, and Lempriere burst forth into song, in the refrain of which Buonespoir joined boisterously:

"King Rufus he did hunt the deer,
With a hey ho, come and kiss me, Dolly!
It was the spring-time of the year,
Hey ho, Dolly shut her eyes!
King Rufus was a bully boy,
He hunted all the day for joy,
Sweet Dolly she was ever coy:
And who would e'er be wise
That looked in Dolly's eyes?

"King Rufus he did have his day,
With a hey ho, come and kiss me, Dolly!
So get ye forth where dun deer play—
Hey ho, Dolly comes again!
The greenwood is the place for me,
For that is where the dun deer be,
'Tis where my Dolly comes to me:
And who would stay at home,
That might with Dolly roam?
Sing hey ho, come and kiss me, Dolly!"

Lempriere, perspiring with the exertion, mopped his forehead, then lapsed into a plaintive mood.

"I've had naught but trouble of late," he wheezed. "Trouble, trouble, trouble, like gnats on a filly's flank!" and in spluttering words, twice bracketed in muscadella, he told of Michel de la Foret's arrest, and of his purpose to go to England if he could get a boat to take him.

"'Tis that same business brings me here," said Buonespoir, and forthwith told of his meeting with Angele and what was then agreed upon.

"You to go to England!" cried Lempriere amazed. "They want you for Tyburn there."

"They want me for the gallows here," said Buonespoir. Rolling a piece of spiced meat in his hand, he stuffed it into his mouth and chewed till the grease came out of his eyes, and took eagerly from a servant a flagon of malmsey and a dish of ormers.

"Hush, chew thy tongue a minute!" said the Seigneur, suddenly starting and laying a finger beside his nose. "Hush!" he said again, and looked into the flicker of the candle by him with half-shut eyes.

"May I have no rushes for a bed, and die like a rat in a moat, if I don't get thy pardon too of the Queen, and bring thee back to Jersey, a thorn in the side of De Carteret for ever! He'll look upon thee assoilzied by the Queen, spitting fire in his rage, and no canary or muscadella in his cellar."

It came not to the mind of either that this expedition would be made at cost to themselves. They had not heard of Don Quixote, and their gifts were not imitative. They were of a day when men held their lives as lightly as many men hold their honour now; when championship was as the breath of life to men's nostrils, and to adventure for what was worth having or doing in life the only road of reputation.

Buonespoir was as much a champion in his way as Lempriere of Rozel. They were of like kidney, though so far apart in rank. Had Lempriere been born as low and as poor as Buonespoir, he would have been a pirate too, no doubt; and had Buonespoir been born as high as the Seigneur, he would have carried himself with the same rough sense of honour, with as ripe a vanity; have been as naive, as sincere, as true to the real heart of man untaught in the dissimulation of modesty or reserve. When they shook hands across the trencher of spiced veal, it was as man shakes hand with man, not man with master.

They were about to start upon their journey when there came a knocking at the door. On its being opened the bald and toothless Abednego stumbled in with the word that immediately after Angele and her father came aboard the Honeyflower some fifty halberdiers suddenly appeared upon the Couperon. They had at once set sail, and got away even before the sailors had reached the shore. As they had rounded the point, where they were hid from view, Abednego dropped overboard and swam ashore on the rising tide, making his way to the manor to warn Buonespoir. On his way hither, stealing through the trees, he had passed a half-score of halberdiers making for the manor, and he had seen others going towards the shore.

Buonespoir looked to the priming of his pistols, and buckling his belt tightly about him, turned to the Seigneur and said: "I will take my chances with Abednego. Where does she lie—the Honeyflower, Abednego?"

"Off the point called Verclut," answered the little man, who had travelled with Francis Drake.

"Good; we will make a run for it, flying dot-and-carry-one as we go."

While they had been speaking the Seigneur had been thinking; and now, even as several figures appeared at a little distance in the trees, making towards the manor, he said, with a loud laugh:

"No. 'Tis the way of a fool to put his head between the door and the jamb. 'Tis but a hundred yards to safety. Follow me—to the sea—Abednego last. This way, bullies!"

Without a word all three left the house and walked on in the order indicated, as De Carteret's halberdiers ran forward threatening.

"Stand!" shouted the sergeant of the halberdiers. "Stand, or we fire!"

But the three walked straight on unheeding. When the sergeant of the men-at-arms recognised the Seigneur, he ordered down the blunderbusses.

"We come for Buonespoir the pirate," said the sergeant.

"Whose warrant?" said the Seigneur, fronting the halberdiers, Buonespoir and Abednego behind him. "The Seigneur of St. Ouen's," was the reply.

"My compliments to the Seigneur of St. Ouen's, and tell him that Buonespoir is my guest," he bellowed, and strode on, the halberdiers following. Suddenly the Seigneur swerved towards the chapel and quickened his footsteps, the others but a step behind. The sergeant of the halberdiers was in a quandary. He longed to shoot, but dared not, and while he was making up his mind what to do, the Seigneur had reached the chapel door. Opening it, he quickly pushed Buonespoir and Abednego inside, whispering to them, then slammed the door and put his back against it.

There was another moment's hesitation on the sergeant's part, then a door at the other end of the chapel was heard to open and shut, and the Seigneur laughed loudly. The halberdiers ran round the chapel. There stood Buonespoir and Abednego in a narrow roadway, motionless and unconcerned. The halberdiers rushed forward.

"Perquage! Perquage! Perquage!" shouted Buonespoir, and the bright moonlight showed him grinning. For an instant there was deadly stillness, in which the approaching footsteps of the Seigneur sounded loud.

"Perquage!" Buonespoir repeated.

"Perquage! Fall back!" said the Seigneur, and waved off the pikes of the halberdiers. "He has sanctuary to the sea."

This narrow road in which the pirates stood was the last of three in the Isle of Jersey running from churches to the sea, in which a criminal was safe from arrest by virtue of an old statute. The other perquages had been taken away; but this one of Rozel remained, a concession made by Henry VIII to the father of this Raoul Lempriere. The privilege had been used but once in the present Seigneur's day,

because the criminal must be put upon the road from the chapel by the Seigneur himself, and he had used his privilege modestly.

No man in Jersey but knew the sacredness of this perquage, though it was ten years since it had been used; and no man, not even the Governor himself, dare lift his hand to one upon that road.

So it was that Buonespoir and Abednego, two fugitives from justice, walked quietly to the sea down the perquage, halberdiers, balked of their prey, prowling on their steps and cursing the Seigneur of Rozel for his gift of sanctuary: for the Seigneur of St. Ouen's and the Royal Court had promised each halberdier three shillings and all the ale he could drink at a sitting, if Buonespoir was brought in alive or dead.

In peace and safety the three boarded the Honeyflower off the point called Verclut, and set sail for England, just seven hours after Michel de la Foret had gone his way upon the Channel, a prisoner.

CHAPTER VII

A fortnight later, of a Sunday morning, the Lord Chamberlain of England was disturbed out of his usual equanimity. As he was treading the rushes in the presence-chamber of the Royal Palace at Greenwich, his eye busy in inspection—for the Queen would soon pass on her way to chapel—his head nodding right and left to archbishop, bishop, councillors of state, courtiers, and officers of the crown, he heard a rude noise at the door leading into the ante-chapel, where the Queen received petitions from the people. Hurrying thither in shocked anxiety, he found a curled gentleman of the guard, resplendent in red velvet and gold chains, in peevish argument with a boisterous Seigneur of a bronzed good-humoured face, who urged his entrance to the presence-chamber.

The Lord Chamberlain swept down upon the pair like a flamingo with wings outspread. "God's death, what means this turmoil? Her Majesty comes hither!" he cried, and scowled upon the intruder, who now stepped back a little, treading on the toes of a huge sailor with a small head and bushy red hair and beard.

"Because her Majesty comes I come also," the Seigneur interposed grandly.

"What is your name and quality?"

"Yours first, and I shall know how to answer."

"I am the Lord Chamberlain of England."

"And I, my lord, am Lempriere, Seigneur of Rozel—and butler to the Queen."

"Where is Rozel?" asked my Lord Chamberlain.

The face of the Seigneur suddenly flushed, his mouth swelled, and then burst.

"Where is Rozel!" he cried in a voice of rage. "Where is Rozel! Have you heard of Hugh Pawlett," he asked, with a huge contempt—"of Governor Hugh Pawlett?" The Lord Chamberlain nodded. "Then ask his Excellency when next you see him, Where is Rozel? But take good counsel and keep your ignorance from the Queen," he added. "She has no love for stupid." "You say you are butler to the Queen? Whence came your commission?" said the Lord Chamberlain, smiling now; for Lempriere's words and ways were of some simple world where odd folk lived, and his boyish vanity disarmed anger.

"By royal warrant and heritage. And of all of the Jersey Isle, I only may have dove-totes, which is the everlasting thorn in the side of De Carteret of St. Ouen's. Now will you let me in, my lord?" he said, all in a breath.

At a stir behind him the Lord Chamberlain turned, and with a horrified exclamation hurried away, for the procession from the Queen's apartments had already entered the presence-chamber: gentlemen, barons, earls, knights of the garter, in brave attire, with bare heads and sumptuous calves. The Lord Chamberlain had scarce got to his place when the Chancellor, bearing the seals in a red silk purse, entered, flanked by two gorgeous folk with the royal sceptre and the sword of state in a red scabbard, all flourished with fleur-de-lis. Moving in and out among them all was the Queen's fool, who jested and

shook his bells under the noses of the highest.

It was an event of which the Seigneur of Rozel told to his dying day: that he entered the presence-chamber of the Royal Palace of Greenwich at the same instant as the Queen—"Rozel at one end, Elizabeth at the other, and all the world at gaze," he was wont to say with loud guffaws. But what he spoke of afterwards with preposterous ease and pride was neither pride nor ease at the moment; for the Queen's eyes fell on him as he shoved past the gentlemen who kept the door. For an instant she stood still, regarding him intently, then turned quickly to the Lord Chamberlain in inquiry, and with sharp reproof too in her look. The Lord Chamberlain fell on his knee and with low uncertain voice explained the incident.

Elizabeth again cast her eyes towards Lempriere, and the Court, following her example, scrutinised the Seigneur in varied styles of insolence or curiosity. Lempriere drew himself up with a slashing attempt at composure, but ended by flaming from head to foot, his face shining like a cock's comb, the perspiration standing out like beads upon his forehead, his eyes gone blind with confusion. That was but for a moment, however, and then, Elizabeth's look being slowly withdrawn from him, a curious smile came to her lips, and she said to the Lord Chamberlain: "Let the gentleman remain."

The Queen's fool tripped forward and tapped the Lord Chamberlain on the shoulder. "Let the gentleman remain, gossip, and see you that remaining he goeth not like a fly with his feet in the porridge." With a flippant step before the Seigneur, he shook his bells at him. "Thou shalt stay, Nuncio, and staying speak the truth. So doing you shall be as noted as a comet with three tails. You shall prove that man was made in God's image. So lift thy head and sneeze—sneezing is the fashion here; but see that thou sneeze not thy head off as they do in Tartary. 'Tis worth remembrance."

Rozel's self-importance and pride had returned. The blood came back to his heart, and he threw out his chest grandly; he even turned to Buonespoir, whose great figure might be seen beyond the door, and winked at him. For a moment he had time to note the doings of the Queen and her courtiers with wide-eyed curiosity. He saw the Earl of Leicester, exquisite, haughty, gallant, fall upon his knee, and Elizabeth slowly pull off her glove and with a none too gracious look give him her hand to kiss, the only favour of the kind granted that day. He saw Cecil, her Minister, introduce a foreign noble, who presented his letters. He heard the Queen speak in a half-dozen different languages, to people of various lands, and he was smitten with amazement.

But as Elizabeth came slowly down the hall, her white silk gown fronted with great pearls flashing back the light, a marchioness bearing the train, the crown on her head glittering as she turned from right to left, her wonderful collar of jewels sparkling on her uncovered bosom, suddenly the mantle of black, silver-shotted silk upon her shoulders became to Lempriere's heated senses a judge's robe, and Elizabeth the august judge of the world. His eyes blinded again, for it was as if she was bearing down upon him. Certainly she was looking at him now, scarce heeding the courtiers who fell to their knees on either side as she came on. The red doublets of the fifty Gentlemen Pensioners—all men of noble families proud to do this humble yet distinguished service—with battle-axes, on either side of her, seemed to Lempriere on the instant like an army with banners threatening him. From the ante-chapel behind him came the cry of the faithful subjects who, as the gentleman-at-arms fell back from the doorway, had but just caught a glimpse of her Majesty—"Long live Elizabeth!"

It seemed to Lempriere that the Gentlemen Pensioners must beat him down as they passed, yet he stood riveted to the spot; and indeed it was true that he was almost in the path of her Majesty. He was aware that two gentlemen touched him on the shoulder and bade him retire; but the Queen motioned to them to desist. So, with the eyes of the whole court on him again, and Elizabeth's calm curious gaze fixed, as it were, on his forehead, he stood still till the flaming Gentlemen Pensioners were within a few feet of him, and the battle-axes were almost over his head.

The great braggart was no better now than a wisp of grass in the wind, and it was more than homage that bent him to his knees as the Queen looked him full in the eyes. There was a moment's absolute silence, and then she said, with cold condescension:

"By what privilege do you seek our presence?"

"I am Raoul Lempriere, Seigneur of Rozel, your high Majesty," said the choking voice of the Jerseyman. The Queen raised her eyebrows. "The man seems French. You come from France?"

Lempriere flushed to his hair—the Queen did not know him, then! "From Jersey Isle, your sacred Majesty."

"Jersey Isle is dear to us. And what is your warrant here?"

"I am butler to your Majesty, by your gracious Majesty's patent, and I alone may have dove-cotes in

the isle; and I only may have the perquage- on your Majesty's patent. It is not even held by De Carteret of St. Ouen's."

The Queen smiled as she had not smiled since she entered the presence- chamber. "God preserve us," she said—"that I should not have recognised you! It is, of course, our faithful Lempriere of Rozel."

The blood came back to the Seigneur's heart, but he did not dare look up yet, and he did not see that Elizabeth was in rare mirth at his words; and though she had no ken or memory of him, she read his nature and was mindful to humour him. Beckoning Leicester to her side, she said a few words in an undertone, to which he replied with a smile more sour than sweet.

"Rise, Monsieur of Rozel," she said.

The Seigneur stood up, and met her gaze faintly. "And so, proud Seigneur, you must needs flout e'en our Lord Chamberlain, in the name of our butler with three dove-cotes and the perquage. In sooth thy office must not be set at naught lightly—not when it is flanked by the perquage. By my father's doublet, but that frieze jerkin is well cut; it suits thy figure well—I would that my Lord Leicester here had such a tailor. But this perquage—I doubt not there are those here at Court who are most ignorant of its force and moment. My Lord Chamberlain, my Lord Leicester, Cecil here—confusion sits in their faces. The perquage, which my father's patent approved, has served us well, I doubt not, is a comfort to our realm and a dignity befitting the wearer of that frieze jerkin. Speak to their better understanding, Monsieur of Rozel."

"Speak, Nuncio, and you shall have comforts, and be given in marriage, multiple or singular, even as I," said the fool, and touched him on the breast with his bells.

Lempriere had recovered his heart, and now was set full sail in the course he had charted for himself in Jersey. In large words and larger manner he explained most innocently the sacred privilege of perquage. "And how often have you used the right, friend?" asked Elizabeth.

"But once in ten years, your noble Majesty." "When last?"

"But yesterday a week, your universal Majesty." Elizabeth raised her eyebrows. "Who was the criminal, what the occasion?"

"The criminal was one Buonespoir, the occasion our coming hither to wait upon the Queen of England and our Lady of Normandy, for such is your well-born Majesty to your loyal Jersiais." And thereupon he plunged into an impeachment of De Carteret of St. Ouen's, and stumbled through a blunt broken story of the wrongs and the sorrows of Michel and Angele and the doings of Buonespoir in their behalf.

Elizabeth frowned and interrupted him. "I have heard of this Buonespoir, Monsieur, through others than the Seigneur of St. Ouen's. He is an unlikely squire of dames. There's a hill in my kingdom has long bided his coming. Where waits the rascal now?"

"In the ante-chapel, your Majesty."

"By the rood!" said Elizabeth in sudden amazement. "In my ante-chapel, forsooth!"

She looked beyond the doorway and saw the great red-topped figure of Buonespoir, his good-natured, fearless fare, his shock of hair, his clear blue eye—he was not thirty feet away.

"He comes to crave pardon for his rank offences, your benignant Majesty," said Lempriere.

The humour of the thing rushed upon the Queen. Never before were two such naive folk at court. There was not a hair of duplicity in the heads of the two, and she judged them well in her mind.

"I will see you stand together—you and your henchman," she said to Rozel, and moved on to the antechapel, the Court following. Standing still just inside the doorway, she motioned Buonespoir to come near. The pirate, unconfused, undismayed, with his wide blue asking eyes, came forward and dropped upon his knees. Elizabeth motioned Lempriere to stand a little apart.

Thereupon she set a few questions to Buonespoir, whose replies, truthfully given, showed that he had no real estimate of his crimes, and was indifferent to what might be their penalties. He had no moral sense on the one hand, on the other, no fear.

Suddenly she turned to Lempriere again. "You came, then, to speak for this Michel de la Foret, the exile—?"

"And for the demoiselle Angele Aubert, who loves him, your Majesty."

"I sent for this gentleman exile a fortnight ago—" She turned towards Leicester inquiringly.

"I have the papers here, your Majesty," said Leicester, and gave a packet over.

"And where have you De la Foret?" said Elizabeth. "In durance, your Majesty."

"When came he hither?"

"Three days gone," answered Leicester, a little gloomily, for there was acerbity in Elizabeth's voice. Elizabeth seemed about to speak, then dropped her eyes upon the papers, and glanced hastily at their contents.

"You will have this Michel de la Foret brought to my presence as fast as horse can bring him, my Lord," she said to Leicester. "This rascal of the sea—Buonespoir—you will have safe bestowed till I recall his existence again," she said to a captain of men-at-arms; "and you, Monsieur of Rozel, since you are my butler, will get you to my dining-room, and do your duty—the office is not all perquisites," she added smoothly. She was about to move on, when a thought seemed to strike her, and she added, "This Mademoiselle and her father whom you brought hither—where are they?"

"They are even within the palace grounds, your imperial Majesty," answered Lempriere.

"You will summon them when I bid you," she said to the Seigneur; "and you shall see that they have comforts and housing as befits their station," she added to the Lord Chamberlain.

So did Elizabeth, out of a whimsical humour, set the highest in the land to attend upon unknown, unconsidered exiles.

ETEXT EDITOR'S BOOKMARKS:

Boldness without rashness, and hope without vain thinking
Nothing is futile that is right
Religion to him was a dull recreation invented chiefly for women

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK MICHEL AND ANGELE [A LADDER OF SWORDS] —
VOLUME 1 ***

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