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HUGO'S TOILERS OF THE SEA

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INTRODUCTION BY ERNEST RHYS

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## INTRODUCTION

Victor Hugo was thinking much of Æschylus and his Prometheus at the time he conceived the figure of Gilliatt, heroic warrer with the elements. But it is to a creature of the Gothic mind like Byron's Manfred, and not to any earlier, or classic, type of the

eternal rebellion against fate or time or circumstance, that Hugo's readers will be tempted to turn for the fellow to his Guernsey hero:

"My joy was in the wilderness—to breathe  
The difficult air of the iced mountain's top,  
Where the birds dare not build—nor insects wing  
Flit o'er the herbless granite; or to plunge  
Into the torrent, and to roll along  
On the swift whirl of the new-breaking wave  
Of river-stream, or ocean, in their flow."

The island of Guernsey was Gilliatt's Alp and sea-solitude, where he, too, had his avalanches waiting to fall "like foam from the round ocean of old Hell." And as Byron figured his own revolt against the bonds in Manfred, so Hugo, being in exile, put himself with lyrical and rhetorical impetuosity into the island marcou and child of destiny that he concocted with "a little sand and a little blood and a deal of fantasy" in the years 1864 and 1865. There is a familiar glimpse of the Hugo household to be had in the first winter of its transference to the Channel Islands, years before *Les Travailleurs* was written, which betrays the mood from which finally sprang this concrete fable of the man-at-odds. It was the end of November 1852, and a father and his younger son sat in a room of a house of Marine Terrace, Jersey—a plain, unpicturesque house; square, hard in outline, and newly whitewashed,—Methodism, said Hugo, in stones and mortar. Outside its windows the rain fell and the wind blew: the house was like a thing benumbed by the angry noise. The two inmates sat plunged in thought, possibly thinking of the sad significance of these beginnings of winter and of exile which had arrived together. At length the son (François Hugo) asked the father what he meant to do during their exile, which he had already predicted would be long? The father said, "I shall look at the sea." Then came a silence, broken by a question as to what the son would do? To which he replied that he would translate Shakespeare.

Victor Hugo's own study or eulogy of Shakespeare was written as a preamble to his son's translation of the plays. It is not too much to connect the new and ample creative work that followed, including his great novel of Revolution, *Les Misérables*, and his poems in *La Légende des Siècles* (first series) with the double artistic stimulus gained from this conditioned solitude and his closer acquaintance with the dramatic mind of that "giant of the great art of the ages," as he termed our English poet in the book already quoted from.

The Shakespeare book is dated from Hauteville House, 1864. *Les Travailleurs* from the same quarters, March 1866. The Hugos had perforce suddenly left Jersey for Guernsey

in 1855, owing to the gibes and flouts of an unlucky revolutionary Jersey journal, *L'Homme*, at the two governments: Victor Hugo being already a marked man for his pains. The Guernsey house he inhabited for so many years had a spacious study in its upper story, with a large window, free to the sun and to the sea. Here he wrote, tirelessly, tremendously, as his custom was: beginning betimes in the early morning, and writing on till the time for his *déjeuner*: standing at a tall desk to write in his sea-tower. You must turn to certain of his poems and to the pages of *Les Misérables* and *Les Travailleurs* for the mental colours and phantasmagoria of those days and years.

It would be easy to point out, resuming an immense amount of criticism of his romances and of this story in particular, the defects on the side of dramatic and true life-likeness to be found in Hugo's prose-narrative. But it is more helpful in turning to a story-book to know what has been said unreservedly in its favour. Hugo's greatest appreciator was superlative in his praise, and it need hardly be explained that it was Swinburne who brought his tribute to the romance of Gilliatt also, after positing the parallel claims of Hugo's five chief romances. Of the five, they were not, he said, to be comparatively classified in order of merit. "But I may perhaps be permitted to say without fear of deserved rebuke that none is to me personally a treasure of greater price than *Les Travailleurs de la Mer*. The splendid energy of the book makes the superhuman energy of the hero seem not only possible but natural, and his triumph over all physical impossibilities not only natural but inevitable." Swinburne's love for the Channel Islands, and his poems inspired by them, were mainly due as we know to Hugo's life and his books lived and written there.

E.R.

The following is a list of the chief publications of Victor Hugo:—

Poetical Works:—*Nouvelles Odes*, 1824; *Odes et Poésies Diverses*, 1822; *Odes et Ballades*, 1826; *Les Orientales*, 1829; *Feuilles d'Automne*, 1831; *Les Chants du Crépuscule*, 1835; *Les Voix Intérieures*, 1837; *Les Rayons et les Ombres*, 1840; *Odes sur Napoléon*, 1840; *Les Châtiments*, 1853; *Les Contemplations*, 1856; *La Légende des Siècles* (1st part), 1859; *Les Chansons des Rues et des Bois*, 1865; *L'Année Terrible*, 1872; *La Légende des Siècles* (2nd part), 1877; *L'Art d'être Grand-père*, 1877; *Le Pape*, 1878; *La Pitié Suprême*, 1879; *L'Âne*, 1880; *Religion et Religions*, 1880; *Les Quatre Vents de l'Esprit*, 1881; *La Légende des Siècles* (3rd part), 1883.

Dramatic Works:—*Cromwell*, 1827; *Amy Robsart*, 1828; *Hernani*, 1830; *Marion Delorme*, 1831; *Le Roi s'amuse*, 1832; *Lucrece Borgia*, 1833; *Marie Tudor*, 1833;

Angelo, Tyran de Padoue, 1835; La Esmeralda (libretto for Opera), 1836; Ruy Blas, 1838; Burgraves, 1843; Torquemada, 1882.

Novels and other Prose Works:—Hans d'Islande, 1823; Bug-Jargal (enlarged for book form), 1826; Le Dernier Jour d'un Condamné, 1829; Notre-Dame de Paris, 1831; Étude sur Mirabeau, 1834; Claude Gueux, 1834; Le Rhin, 1842; Napoléon le Petit, 1852; Les Misérables, 1862; Littérature et Philosophie mêlées, 1864; William Shakespeare, 1864; Les Travailleurs de la Mer, 1866; L'Homme qui rit, 1869; Actes et Paroles, 1872; Quatre-Vingt-Treize, 1873; Histoire d'un Crime, 1877; Discours pour Voltaire, 1878; Le Domaine public payant, 1878; L'Archipel de la Manche, 1883.

Hugo left a mass of manuscripts, of which some have been published since his death:—Le Théâtre en Liberté, La Fin de Satan, Dieu, Choses Vues, Tonte la Lyre, Océan, En Voyage, Postscriptum de ma Vie.

An Edition Définitive of his works in 48 volumes was published 1880-5.

Translations:—Of novels, 28 vols., 1895, 1899, etc.; of dramas, by I.G. Burnham, 1895. Separate translations of prose and poetical works.

Life:—Among the biographies and appreciations are:—Sainte-Beuve, Biographie des Contemporains, vol. iv., 1831; Portraits Contemporains, vol. i., 1846; Victor Hugo raconté par un témoin de sa vie (Madame Hugo), 1863; A. Barbou, 1880 (trans. 1881); E. Biré, Victor Hugo avant 1830, 1883; après 1830, 1891; après 1852, 1894; F.W.H. Myers, Essays, 1883; Paul de Saint Victor, 1885, 1892; Alfred Asseline, Victor Hugo intime, 1885; G.B. Smith, 1885; J. Cappon, A Memoir and a Study, 1885; A.C. Swinburne, A Study of Victor Hugo, 1886; E. Dupuy, Victor Hugo, l'homme et le poète, 1886; F.T. Marzials (Great Writers), 1888; Charles Renouvier, Victor Hugo le Poète, 1892; L. Mabileau, 1893; J.P. Nichol, 1893; C. Renouvier, Victor Hugo le Philosophe, 1900; E. Rigal, 1900; G.V. Hugo, Mon Grand-père, 1902; Juana Lesclide, Victor Hugo intime, 1902; Theophile Gautier, 1902; F. Greggh, Étude sur Victor Hugo, 1905; P. Stappers, Victor Hugo à Guernsey, 1905.

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## PREFACE

Religion, Society, and Nature! these are the three struggles of man. They constitute at the same time his three needs. He has need of a faith; hence the temple. He must create; hence the city. He must live; hence the plough and the ship. But these three solutions comprise three perpetual conflicts. The mysterious difficulty of life results from all three. Man strives with obstacles under the form of superstition, under the

form of prejudice, and under the form of the elements. A triple ἀνάγκη weighs upon us. There is the fatality of dogmas, the oppression of human laws, the inexorability of nature. In *Notre Dame de Paris* the author denounced the first; in the *Misérables* he exemplified the second; in this book he indicates the third. With these three fatalities mingles that inward fatality—the supreme ἀνάγκη, the human heart.

Hauteville House,

March, 1866.

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I DEDICATE THIS BOOK  
TO THE  
ROCK OF HOSPITALITY AND LIBERTY  
TO THAT PORTION OF OLD NORMAN GROUND  
INHABITED BY  
THE NOBLE LITTLE NATION OF THE SEA  
TO THE ISLAND OF GUERNSEY  
SEVERE YET KIND, MY PRESENT ASYLUM  
PERHAPS MY TOMB.

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## TOILERS OF THE SEA

### PART I.—SIEUR CLUBIN

#### BOOK I

##### THE HISTORY OF A BAD REPUTATION

I

##### A WORD WRITTEN ON A WHITE PAGE

Christmas Day in the year 182- was somewhat remarkable in the island of Guernsey. Snow fell on that day. In the Channel Islands a frosty winter is uncommon, and a fall of snow is an event.

On that Christmas morning, the road which skirts the seashore from St. Peter's Port to the Vale was clothed in white. From midnight till the break of day the snow had been falling. Towards nine o'clock, a little after the rising of the wintry sun, as it was too early yet for the Church of England folks to go to St. Sampson's, or for the Wesleyans to repair to Eldad Chapel, the road was almost deserted. Throughout that portion of the highway which separates the first from the second tower, only three foot-passengers could be seen. These were a child, a man, and a woman. Walking at a distance from each other, these wayfarers had no visible connection. The child, a boy of about eight years old, had stopped, and was looking curiously at the wintry scene. The man walked behind the woman, at a distance of about a hundred paces. Like her he was coming from the direction of the church of St. Sampson. The appearance of the man, who was still young, was something between that of a workman and a sailor. He wore his working-day clothes—a kind of Guernsey shirt of coarse brown stuff, and trousers partly concealed by tarpaulin leggings—a costume which seemed to indicate that, notwithstanding the holy day, he was going to no place of worship. His heavy shoes of rough leather, with their[Pg 2] soles covered with large nails, left upon the snow, as he walked, a print more like that of a prison lock than the foot of a man. The woman, on the contrary, was evidently dressed for church. She wore a large mantle of black silk, wadded, under which she had coquettishly adjusted a dress of Irish poplin,

trimmed alternately with white and pink; but for her red stockings, she might have been taken for a Parisian. She walked on with a light and free step, so little suggestive of the burden of life that it might easily be seen that she was young. Her movements possessed that subtle grace which indicates the most delicate of all transitions—that soft intermingling, as it were, of two twilights—the passage from the condition of a child to that of womanhood. The man seemed to take no heed of her.

Suddenly, near a group of oaks at the corner of a field, and at the spot called the Basses Maisons, she turned, and the movement seemed to attract the attention of the man. She stopped, seemed to reflect a moment, then stooped, and the man fancied that he could discern that she was tracing with her finger some letters in the snow. Then she rose again, went on her way at a quicker pace, turned once more, this time smiling, and disappeared to the left of the roadway, by the footpath under the hedges which leads to the Ivy Castle. When she had turned for the second time, the man had recognised her as Déruchette, a charming girl of that neighbourhood.

The man felt no need of quickening his pace; and some minutes later he found himself near the group of oaks. Already he had ceased to think of the vanished Déruchette; and if, at that moment, a porpoise had appeared above the water, or a robin had caught his eye in the hedges, it is probable that he would have passed on his way. But it happened that his eyes were fixed upon the ground; his gaze fell mechanically upon the spot where the girl had stopped. Two little footprints were there plainly visible; and beside them he read this word, evidently written by her in the snow—

“GILLIATT.”

It was his own name.

He lingered for awhile motionless, looking at the letters, the little footprints, and the snow; and then walked on, evidently in a thoughtful mood.[Pg 3]

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II

## THE BÛ DE LA RUE

Gilliatt lived in the parish of St. Sampson. He was not liked by his neighbours; and there were reasons for that fact.

To begin with, he lived in a queer kind of “haunted” dwelling. In the islands of Jersey and Guernsey, sometimes in the country, but often in streets with many inhabitants, you will come upon a house the entrance to which is completely barricaded. Holly

bushes obstruct the doorway, hideous boards, with nails, conceal the windows below; while the casements of the upper stories are neither closed nor open: for all the window-frames are barred, but the glass is broken. If there is a little yard, grass grows between its stones; and the parapet of its wall is crumbling away. If there is a garden, it is choked with nettles, brambles, and hemlock, and strange insects abound in it. The chimneys are cracked, the roof is falling in; so much as can be seen from without of the rooms presents a dismantled appearance. The woodwork is rotten; the stone mildewed. The paper of the walls has dropped away and hangs loose, until it presents a history of the bygone fashions of paper-hangings—the scrawling patterns of the time of the Empire, the crescent-shaped draperies of the Directory, the balustrades and pillars of the days of Louis XVI. The thick draperies of cobwebs, filled with flies, indicate the quiet reign long enjoyed by innumerable spiders. Sometimes a broken jug may be noticed on a shelf. Such houses are considered to be haunted. Satan is popularly believed to visit them by night. Houses are like the human beings who inhabit them. They become to their former selves what the corpse is to the living body. A superstitious belief among the people is sufficient to reduce them to this state of death. Then their aspect is terrible. These ghostly houses are common in the Channel Islands.

The rural and maritime populations are easily moved with notions of the active agency of the powers of evil. Among the Channel Isles, and on the neighbouring coast of France, the ideas of the people on this subject are deeply rooted. In their view, Beelzebub has his ministers in all parts of the earth. It is certain that Belphegor is the ambassador from the infernal regions in France, Hutgin in Italy, Belial in Turkey, Thamuz in Spain, Martinet in Switzerland, and Mammon in England.[Pg 4] Satan is an Emperor just like any other: a sort of Satan Cæsar. His establishment is well organised. Dagon is grand almoner, Succor Benoth chief of the Eunuchs; Asmodeus, banker at the gaming-table; Kobal, manager of the theatre, and Verdelet, grand-master of the ceremonies. Nybbas is the court-fool; Wierus, a savant, a good strylogogue, and a man of much learning in demonology, calls Nybbas the great parodist.

The Norman fishermen, who frequent the Channel, have many precautions to take at sea, by reason of the illusions with which Satan environs them. It has long been an article of popular faith, that Saint Maclou inhabited the great square rock called Ortach, in the sea between Aurigny and the Casquets; and many old sailors used to declare that they had often seen him there, seated and reading in a book. Accordingly the sailors, as they passed, were in the habit of kneeling many times before the Ortach rock, until the day when the fable was destroyed, and the truth took its place. For it

has been discovered, and is now well established, that the lonely inhabitant of the rock is not a saint, but a devil. This evil spirit, whose name is Jochmus, had the impudence to pass himself off, for many centuries, as Saint Maclou. Even the Church herself is not proof against snares of this kind. The demons Raguhel, Oribel, and Tobiel, were regarded as saints until the year 745; when Pope Zachary, having at length exposed them, turned them out of saintly company. This sort of weeding of the saintly calendar is certainly very useful; but it can only be practised by very accomplished judges of devils and their ways.

The old inhabitants of these parts relate—though all this refers to bygone times—that the Catholic population of the Norman Archipelago was once, though quite involuntarily, even in more intimate correspondence with the powers of darkness than the Huguenots themselves. How this happened, however, we do not pretend to say; but it is certain that the people suffered considerable annoyance from this cause. It appears that Satan had taken a fancy to the Catholics, and sought their company a good deal; a circumstance which has given rise to the belief that the devil is more Catholic than Protestant. One of his most insufferable familiarities consisted in paying nocturnal visits to married Catholics in bed, just at the moment when the husband had fallen fast asleep, and the wife had begun to doze; a fruitful source of domestic trouble. Patouillet was of opinion that a faithful biography of Voltaire ought not to be without some allusion to this practice of the evil one. The truth of all [Pg 5] this is perfectly well known, and described in the forms of excommunication in the rubric *de erroribus nocturnis et de semine diabolorum*. The practice was raging particularly at St. Helier's towards the end of the last century, probably as a punishment for the Revolution; for the evil consequences of revolutionary excesses are incalculable. However this may have been, it is certain that this possibility of a visit from the demon at night, when it is impossible to see distinctly, or even in slumber, caused much embarrassment among orthodox dames. The idea of giving to the world a Voltaire was by no means a pleasant one. One of these, in some anxiety, consulted her confessor on this extremely difficult subject, and the best mode for timely discovery of the cheat. The confessor replied, "In order to be sure that it is your husband by your side, and not a demon, place your hand upon his head. If you find horns, you may be sure there is something wrong." But this test was far from satisfactory to the worthy dame.

Gilliatt's house had been haunted, but it was no longer in that condition; it was for that reason, however, only regarded with more suspicion. No one learned in demonology can be unaware of the fact that, when a sorcerer has installed himself in a haunted dwelling, the devil considers the house sufficiently occupied, and is polite enough to abstain from visiting there, unless called in, like the doctor, on some special occasion.

This house was known by the name of the Bû de la Rue. It was situated at the extremity of a little promontory, rather of rock than of land, forming a small harbourage apart in the creek of Houmet Paradis. The water at this spot is deep. The house stood quite alone upon the point, almost separated from the island, and with just sufficient ground about it for a small garden, which was sometimes inundated by the high tides. Between the port of St. Sampson and the creek of Houmet Paradis, rises a steep hill, surmounted by the block of towers covered with ivy, and known as Vale Castle, or the Château de l'Archange; so that, at St. Sampson, the Bû de la Rue was shut out from sight.

Nothing is commoner than sorcerers in Guernsey. They exercise their profession in certain parishes, in profound indifference to the enlightenment of the nineteenth century. Some of their practices are downright criminal. They set gold boiling, they gather herbs at midnight, they cast sinister looks upon the people's cattle. When the people consult them they send for bottles containing "water of the sick," and they are [Pg 6] heard to mutter mysteriously, "the water has a sad look." In March, 1857, one of them discovered, in water of this kind, seven demons. They are universally feared. Another only lately bewitched a baker "as well as his oven." Another had the diabolical wickedness to wafer and seal up envelopes "containing nothing inside." Another went so far as to have on a shelf three bottles labelled "B." These monstrous facts are well authenticated. Some of these sorcerers are obliging, and for two or three guineas will take on themselves the complaint from which you are suffering. Then they are seen to roll upon their beds, and to groan with pain; and while they are in these agonies the believer exclaims, "There! I am well again." Others cure all kinds of diseases, by merely tying a handkerchief round the patient's loins, a remedy so simple that it is astonishing that no one had yet thought of it. In the last century, the Cour Royale of Guernsey bound such folks upon a heap of fagots and burnt them alive. In these days it condemns them to eight weeks' imprisonment; four weeks on bread and water, and the remainder of the term in solitary confinement. *Amant alterna catenæ.*

The last instance of burning sorcerers in Guernsey took place in 1747. The city authorities devoted one of its squares, the Carrefour du Bordage, to that ceremony. Between 1565 and 1700, eleven sorcerers thus suffered at this spot. As a rule the criminals made confession of their guilt. Torture was used to assist their confession. The Carrefour du Bordage has indeed rendered many other services to society and religion. It was here that heretics were brought to the stake. Under Queen Mary, among other Huguenots burnt here, were a mother and two daughters. The name of this mother was Perrotine Massy. One of the daughters was *enceinte*, and was delivered of a child even in the midst of the flames. As the old chronicle expresses it,

“*Son ventre éclata.*” The new-born infant rolled out of the fiery furnace. A man named House took it in his arms; but Helier Gosselin the bailli, like a good Catholic as he was, sternly commanded the child to be cast again into the fire.[Pg 7]

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III

#### FOR YOUR WIFE: WHEN YOU MARRY

We must return to Gilliatt.

The country people told how, towards the close of the great Revolution, a woman, bringing with her a little child, came to live in Guernsey. She was English, or perhaps French. She had a name which the Guernsey pronunciation and the country folks' bad spelling had finally converted into "Gilliatt." She lived alone with the child, which, according to some, was a nephew; according to others, a son or grandson; according to others, again, a strange child whom she was protecting. She had some means; enough to struggle on in a poor way. She had purchased a small plot of ground at La Sergentée, and another at La Roque Crespel, near Rocquaine. The house of the Bû de la Rue was haunted at this period. For more than thirty years no one had inhabited it. It was falling into ruins. The garden, so often invaded by the sea, could produce nothing. Besides noises and lights seen there at night-time, the house had this mysterious peculiarity: any one who should leave there in the evening, upon the mantelpiece, a ball of worsted, a few needles, and a plate filled with soup, would assuredly find, in the morning, the soup consumed, the plate empty, and a pair of mittens ready knitted. The house, demon included, was offered for sale for a few pounds sterling. The stranger woman became the purchaser, evidently tempted by the devil, or by the advantageous bargain.

She did more than purchase the house; she took up her abode there with the child; and from that moment peace reigned within its walls. The Bû de la Rue has found a fit tenant, said the country people. The haunting ceased. There was no longer any light seen there, save that of the tallow candle of the new comer. "Witch's candle is as good as devil's torch." The proverb satisfied the gossips of the neighbourhood.

The woman cultivated some acres of land which belonged to her. She had a good cow, of the sort which produces yellow butter. She gathered her white beans, cauliflowers, and "Golden drop" potatoes. She sold, like other people, her parsnips by the tonneau, her onions by the hundred, and her beans by the denerel. She did not go herself to market, but disposed of her crops through the agency of Guilbert Falliot, at[Pg 8] the

sign of the Abreveurs of St. Sampson. The register of Falliot bears evidence that Falliot sold for her, on one occasion, as much as twelve bushels of rare early potatoes.

The house had been meanly repaired; but sufficiently to make it habitable. It was only in very bad weather that the rain-drops found their way through the ceilings of the rooms. The interior consisted of a ground-floor suite of rooms, and a granary overhead. The ground-floor was divided into three rooms; two for sleeping, and one for meals. A ladder connected it with the granary above. The woman attended to the kitchen and taught the child to read. She did not go to church or chapel, which, all things considered, led to the conclusion that she must be French not to go to a place of worship. The circumstance was grave. In short, the new comers were a puzzle to the neighbourhood.

That the woman was French seemed probable. Volcanoes cast forth stones, and revolutions men, so families are removed to distant places; human beings come to pass their lives far from their native homes; groups of relatives and friends disperse and decay; strange people fall, as it were, from the clouds—some in Germany, some in England, some in America. The people of the country view them with surprise and curiosity. Whence come these strange faces? Yonder mountain, smoking with revolutionary fires, casts them out. These barren aërolites, these famished and ruined people, these footballs of destiny, are known as refugees, émigrés, adventurers. If they sojourn among strangers, they are tolerated; if they depart, there is a feeling of relief. Sometimes these wanderers are harmless, inoffensive people, strangers—at least, as regards the women—to the events which have led to their exile, objects of persecution, helpless and astonished at their fate. They take root again somewhere as they can. They have done no harm to any one, and scarcely comprehend the destiny that has befallen them. So thus I have seen a poor tuft of grass uprooted and carried away by the explosion of a mine. No great explosion was ever followed by more of such strays than the first French Revolution.

The strange woman whom the Guernsey folks called “Gilliatt” was, possibly, one of these human strays.

The woman grew older; the child became a youth. They lived alone and avoided by all; but they were sufficient for each other. *Louve et louveteau se pourlèchent*. This was another of the generous proverbs which the neighbourhood applied to them. Meanwhile, the youth grew to manhood; [Pg 9] and then, as the old and withered bark falls from the tree, the mother died. She left to her son the little field of Sergentée, the small property called La Roque Crespel, and the house known as the Bû de la Rue; with the addition, as the official inventory said, of “one hundred guineas in gold in

the *pid d'une cauche*," that is to say, in the foot of a stocking. The house was already sufficiently furnished with two oaken chests, two beds, six chairs and a table, besides necessary household utensils. Upon a shelf were some books, and in the corner a trunk, by no means of a mysterious character, which had to be opened for the inventory. This trunk was of drab leather, ornamented with brass nails and little stars of white metal, and it contained a bride's outfit, new and complete, of beautiful Dunkirk linen—chemises and petticoats, and some silk dresses—with a paper on which was written, in the handwriting of the deceased,—

"For your wife: when you marry."

The loss of his mother was a terrible blow for the young man. His disposition had always been unsociable; he became now moody and sullen. The solitude around him was complete. Hitherto it had been mere isolation; now his life was a blank. While we have only one companion, life is endurable; left alone, it seems as if it is impossible to struggle on, and we fall back in the race, which is the first sign of despair. As time rolls on, however, we discover that duty is a series of compromises; we contemplate life, regard its end, and submit; but it is a submission which makes the heart bleed.

Gilliatt was young; and his wound healed with time. At that age sorrows cannot be lasting. His sadness, disappearing by slow degrees, seemed to mingle itself with the scenes around him, to draw him more and more towards the face of nature, and further and further from the need of social converse; and, finally, to assimilate his spirit more completely to the solitude in which he lived.

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#### IV

##### AN UNPOPULAR MAN

Gilliatt, as we have said, was not popular in the parish. Nothing could be more natural than that antipathy among his neighbours. The reasons for it were abundant. To begin with, as we have already explained, there was the strange house he lived in; then there was his mysterious origin. Who could that [Pg 10] woman have been? and what was the meaning of this child? Country people do not like mysteries, when they relate to strange sojourners among them. Then his clothes were the clothes of a workman, while he had, although certainly not rich, sufficient to live without labour. Then there was his garden, which he succeeded in cultivating, and from which he produced crops of potatoes, in spite of the stormy equinoxes; and then there were the big books which he kept upon a shelf, and read from time to time.

More reasons: why did he live that solitary life? The Bû de la Rue was a kind of lazaretto, in which Gilliatt was kept in a sort of moral quarantine. This, in the popular judgment, made it quite simple that people should be astonished at his isolation, and should hold him responsible for the solitude which society had made around his home.

He never went to chapel. He often went out at night-time. He held converse with sorcerers. He had been seen, on one occasion, sitting on the grass with an expression of astonishment on his features. He haunted the druidical stones of the Ancresse, and the fairy caverns which are scattered about in that part. It was generally believed that he had been seen politely saluting the Roque qui Chante, or Crowing Rock. He bought all birds which people brought to him, and having bought them, set them at liberty. He was civil to the worthy folks in the streets of St. Sampson, but willingly turned out of his way to avoid them if he could. He often went out on fishing expeditions, and always returned with fish. He trimmed his garden on Sundays. He had a bagpipe which he had bought from one of the Highland soldiers who are sometimes in Guernsey, and on which he played occasionally at twilight, on the rocks by the seashore. He had been seen to make strange gestures, like those of one sowing seeds. What kind of treatment could be expected for a man like that?

As regards the books left by the deceased woman, which he was in the habit of reading, the neighbours were particularly suspicious. The Reverend Jaquemin Hérode, rector of St. Sampson, when he visited the house at the time of the woman's funeral, had read on the backs of these books the titles *Rosier's Dictionary*, *Candide*, by Voltaire, *Advice to the People on Health*, by Tissot. A French noble, an émigré, who had retired to St. Sampson, remarked that this Tissot, "must have been the Tissot who carried the head of the Princess de Lamballe upon a pike." [Pg 11]

The Reverend gentleman had also remarked upon one of these books, the highly fantastic and terribly significant title, *De Rhubarbaro*.

In justice to Gilliatt, however, it must be added that this volume being in Latin—a language which it is doubtful if he understood—the young man had possibly never read it.

But it is just those books which a man possesses, but does not read, which constitute the most suspicious evidence against him. The Spanish Inquisition have deliberated on that point, and have come to a conclusion which places the matter beyond further doubt.

The book in question, however, was no other than the treatise of Doctor Tilingius upon the rhubarb plant, published in Germany in 1679.

It was by no means certain that Gilliatt did not prepare philters and unholy decoctions. He was undoubtedly in possession of certain phials.

Why did he walk abroad at evening, and sometimes even at midnight, on the cliffs? Evidently to hold converse with the evil spirits who, by night, frequent the seashores, enveloped in smoke.

On one occasion he had aided a witch at Torteval to clean her chaise: this was an old woman named Moutonne Gahy.

When a census was taken in the island, in answer to a question about his calling, he replied, "Fisherman; when there are fish to catch." Imagine yourself in the place of Gilliatt's neighbours, and admit that there is something unpleasant in answers like this.

Poverty and wealth are comparative terms. Gilliatt had some fields and a house, his own property; compared with those who had nothing, he was not poor. One day, to test this, and perhaps, also as a step towards a correspondence—for there are base women who would marry a demon for the sake of riches—a young girl of the neighbourhood said to Gilliatt, "When are you going to take a wife, neighbour?" He answered, "I will take a wife when the Roque qui Chante takes a husband."

This Roque qui Chante is a great stone, standing in a field near Mons. Lemézurier de Fry's. It is a stone of a highly suspicious character. No one knows what deeds are done around it. At times you may hear there a cock crowing, when no cock is near—an extremely disagreeable circumstance. Then it is commonly asserted that this stone was originally placed in the [Pg 12] field by the elfin people known as *Sarregousets*, who are the same as the *Sins*.

At night, when it thunders, if you should happen to see men flying in the lurid light of the clouds, or on the rolling waves of the air, these are no other than the *Sarregousets*. A woman who lives at the Grand Mielles knows them well. One evening, when some *Sarregousets* happened to be assembled at a crossroad, this woman cried out to a man with a cart, who did not know which route to take, "Ask them your way. They are civil folks, and always ready to direct a stranger." There can be little doubt that this woman was a sorceress.

The learned and judicious King James I. had women of this kind boiled, and then tasting the water of the cauldron, was able to say from its flavour, "That was a sorceress;" or "That was not one."

It is to be regretted that the kings of these latter days no longer possess a talent which placed in so strong a light the utility of monarchical institutions.

It was not without substantial grounds that Gilliatt lived in this odour of sorcery. One midnight, during a storm, Gilliatt being at sea alone in a bark, on the coast by La Sommeilleuse, he was heard to ask—

"Is there a passage sufficient for me?"

And a voice cried from the heights above:

"Passage enough: steer boldly."

To whom could he have been speaking, if not to those who replied to him? This seems something like evidence.

Another time, one stormy evening, when it was so dark that nothing could be distinguished, Gilliatt was near the Catiau Roque—a double row of rocks where witches, goats, and other diabolical creatures assemble and dance on Fridays—and here, it is firmly believed, that the voice of Gilliatt was heard mingling in the following terrible conversation:—

"How is Vesin Brovard?" (This was a mason who had fallen from the roof of a house.)

"He is getting better."

"Ver dia! he fell from a greater height than that of yonder peak. It is delightful to think that he was not dashed to pieces."

"Our folks had a fine time for the seaweed gathering last week."

"Ay, finer than to-day."

"I believe you. There will be little fish at the market to-day." [Pg 13]

"It blows too hard."

"They can't lower their nets."

"How is Catherine?"

"She is charming."

Catherine was evidently the name of a Sarregouset.

According to all appearance, Gilliatt had business on hand at night: at least none doubted it.

Sometimes he was seen with a pitcher in his hand, pouring water on the ground. Now water, cast upon the ground, is known to make a shape like that of devils.

On the road to St. Sampson, opposite the Martello tower, number 1, stand three stones, arranged in the form of steps. Upon the platform of those stones, now empty, stood anciently a cross, or perhaps a gallows. These stones are full of evil influences.

Staid and worthy people, and perfectly credible witnesses, testified to having seen Gilliatt at this spot conversing with a toad. Now there are no toads at Guernsey. The share of Guernsey in the reptiles of the Channel Isles consisting exclusively of the snakes. It is Jersey that has all the toads. This toad, then, must have swum from the neighbouring island, in order to hold converse with Gilliatt. The converse was of a friendly kind.

These facts were clearly established; and the proof is that the three stones are there to this day. Those who doubt it may go and see them; and at a little distance, there is also a house on which the passer-by may read this inscription:—

“Dealer in cattle, alive and dead, old cordage, iron, bones, and tobacco for chewing, prompt payment for goods, and every attention given to orders.”

A man must be sceptical indeed to contest the existence of those stones, and of the house in question. Now both these circumstances were injurious to the reputation of Gilliatt.

Only the most ignorant are unaware of the fact that the greatest danger of the coasts of the Channel Islands is the King of the Auxcriniers. No inhabitant of the seas is more redoubtable. Whoever has seen him is certain to be wrecked between one St. Michel and the other. He is little, being in fact a dwarf; and is deaf, in his quality of king. He knows the names of all those who have been drowned in the seas, and the spots where they lie. He has a profound knowledge of that great graveyard which stretches far and wide beneath the waters of the ocean. A head, massive in the lower part and narrow in [Pg 14] the forehead; a squat and corpulent figure; a skull, covered with warty excrescences; long legs, long arms, fins for feet, claws for hands, and a sea-green countenance; such are the chief characteristics of this king of the waves. His claws have palms like hands; his fins human nails. Imagine a spectral fish with the face of a human being. No power could check his career unless he could be

exorcised, or mayhap, fished up from the sea. Meanwhile he continues his sinister operations. Nothing is more unpleasant than an interview with this monster: amid the rolling waves and breakers, or in the thick of the mist, the sailor perceives, sometimes, a strange creature with a beetle brow, wide nostrils, flattened ears, an enormous mouth, gap-toothed jaws, peaked eyebrows, and great grinning eyes. When the lightning is livid, he appears red; when it is purple, he looks wan. He has a stiff spreading beard, running with water, and overlapping a sort of pelerine, ornamented with fourteen shells, seven before and seven behind. These shells are curious to those who are learned in conchology. The King of the Auxcriniers is only seen in stormy seas. He is the terrible harbinger of the tempest. His hideous form traces itself in the fog, in the squall, in the tempest of rain. His breast is hideous. A coat of scales covers his sides like a vest. He rises above the waves which fly before the wind, twisting and curling like thin shavings of wood beneath the carpenter's plane. Then his entire form issues out of the foam, and if there should happen to be in the horizon any vessels in distress, pale in the twilight, or his face lighted up with a sinister smile, he dances terrible and uncouth to behold. It is an evil omen indeed to meet him on a voyage.

At the period when the people of St. Sampson were particularly excited on the subject of Gilliatt, the last persons who had seen the King of the Auxcriniers declared that his pelerine was now ornamented with only thirteen shells. Thirteen! He was only the more dangerous. But what had become of the fourteenth? Had he given it to some one? No one would say positively; and folks confined themselves to conjecture. But it was an undoubted fact that a certain Mons. Lupin Mabier, of Godaines, a man of property, paying a good sum to the land tax, was ready to depose on oath, that he had once seen in the hands of Gilliatt a very remarkable kind of shell.

It was not uncommon to hear dialogues like the following among the country people:—

“I have a fine bull here, neighbour, what do you say?”

“Very fine, neighbour?”[Pg 15]

“It is a fact, tho' 'tis I who say it; he is better though for tallow than for meat.”

“Ver dia!”

“Are you sure that Gilliatt hasn't cast his eye upon it?”

Gilliatt would stop sometimes beside a field where some labourers were assembled, or near gardens in which gardeners were engaged, and would perhaps hear these mysterious words:

“When the *mors du diable* flourishes, reap the winter rye.”

(The *mors du diable* is the scabwort plant.)

“The ash tree is coming out in leaf. There will be no more frost.”

“Summer solstice, thistle in flower.”

“If it rain not in June, the wheat will turn white. Look out for mildew.”

“When the wild cherry appears, beware of the full moon.”

“If the weather on the sixth day of the new moon is like that of the fourth, or like that of the fifth day, it will be the same nine times out of twelve, in the first case, and eleven times out of twelve in the second, during the whole month.”

“Keep your eye on neighbours who go to law with you. Beware of malicious influences. A pig which has had warm milk given to it will die. A cow which has had its teeth rubbed with leeks will eat no more.”

“Spawning time with the smelts; beware of fevers.”

“When frogs begin to appear, sow your melons.”

“When the liverwort flowers, sow your barley.”

“When the limes are in bloom, mow the meadows.”

“When the elm-tree flowers, open the hot-bed frames.”

“When tobacco fields are in blossom, close your greenhouses.”

And, fearful to relate, these occult precepts were not without truth. Those who put faith in them could vouch for the fact.

One night, in the month of June, when Gilliatt was playing upon his bagpipe, upon the sand-hills on the shore of the Demie de Fontenelle, it had happened that the mackerel fishing had failed.

One evening, at low water, it came to pass that a cart filled with seaweed for manure overturned on the beach, in front of Gilliatt’s house. It is most probable that he was afraid of being brought before the magistrates, for he took considerable trouble in helping to raise the cart, and he filled it again himself.

A little neglected child of the neighbourhood being troubled [Pg 16] with vermin, he had gone himself to St. Peter’s Port, and had returned with an ointment, with which he rubbed the child’s head. Thus Gilliatt had removed the pest from the poor child, which

was an evidence that Gilliatt himself had originally given it; for everybody knows that there is a certain charm for giving vermin to people.

Gilliatt was suspected of looking into wells—a dangerous practice with those who have an evil eye; and, in fact, at Arculons, near St. Peter's Port, the water of a well became unwholesome. The good woman to whom this well belonged said to Gilliatt:

“Look here, at this water;” and she showed him a glassful. Gilliatt acknowledged it.

“The water is thick,” he said; “that is true.”

The good woman, who dreaded him in her heart, said, “Make it sweet again for me.”

Gilliatt asked her some questions: whether she had a stable? whether the stable had a drain? whether the gutter of the drain did not pass near the well? The good woman replied “Yes.” Gilliatt went into the stable; worked at the drain; turned the gutter in another direction; and the water became pure again. People in the country round might think what they pleased. A well does not become foul one moment and sweet the next without good cause; the bottom of the affair was involved in obscurity; and, in short, it was difficult to escape the conclusion that Gilliatt himself had bewitched the water.

On one occasion, when he went to Jersey, it was remarked that he had taken a lodging in the street called the Rue des Alleurs. Now the word *alleurs* signifies spirits from the other world.

In villages it is the custom to gather together all these little hints and indications of a man's career; and when they are gathered together, the total constitutes his reputation among the inhabitants.

It happened that Gilliatt was once caught with blood issuing from his nose. The circumstances appeared grave. The master of a barque who had sailed almost entirely round the world, affirmed that among the Tongusians all sorcerers were subject to bleeding at the nose. In fact, when you see a man in those parts bleeding at the nose, you know at once what is in the wind. Moderate reasoners, however, remarked that the characteristics of sorcerers among the Tongusians may possibly not apply in the same degree to the sorcerers of Guernsey.[Pg 17]

In the environs of one of the St. Michels, he had been seen to stop in a close belonging to the Huriaux, skirting the highway from the Videclins. He whistled in the field, and a moment afterwards a crow alighted there; a moment later, a magpie. The fact was attested by a worthy man who has since been appointed to the office of Douzenier of

the Douzaine, as those are called who are authorised to make a new survey and register of the fief of the king.

At Hamel, in the Vingtaine of L'Epine, there lived some old women who were positive of having heard one morning a number of swallows distinctly calling "Gilliatt."

Add to all this that he was of a malicious temper.

One day, a poor man was beating an ass. The ass was obstinate. The poor man gave him a few kicks in the belly with his wooden shoe, and the ass fell. Gilliatt ran to raise the unlucky beast, but he was dead. Upon this Gilliatt administered to the poor man a sound thrashing.

Another day, Gilliatt seeing a boy come down from a tree with a brood of little birds, newly hatched and unfledged, he took the brood away from the boy, and carried his malevolence so far as even to take them back and replace them in the tree.

Some passers-by took up the boy's complaint; but Gilliatt made no reply, except to point to the old birds, who were hovering and crying plaintively over the tree, as they looked for their nest. He had a weakness for birds—another sign by which the people recognise a magician.

Children take a pleasure in robbing the nests of birds along the cliff. They bring home quantities of yellow, blue, and green eggs, with which they make rosaries for mantelpiece ornaments. As the cliffs are peaked, they sometimes slip and are killed. Nothing is prettier than shutters decorated with sea-birds' eggs. Gilliatt's mischievous ingenuity had no end. He would climb, at the peril of his own life, into the steep places of the sea rocks, and hang up bundles of hay, old hats, and all kinds of scarecrows, to deter the birds from building there, and, as a consequence, to prevent the children from visiting those spots.

These are some of the reasons why Gilliatt was disliked throughout the country. Perhaps nothing less could have been expected.[Pg 18]

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V

#### MORE SUSPICIOUS FACTS ABOUT GILLIATT

Public opinion was not yet quite settled with regard to Gilliatt.

In general he was regarded as a *Marcou*: some went so far as to believe him to be a *Cambion*. A cambion is the child of a woman begotten by a devil.

When a woman bears to her husband seven male children consecutively, the seventh is a marcou. But the series must not be broken by the birth of any female child.

The marcou has a natural fleur-de-lys imprinted upon some part of his body; for which reason he has the power of curing scrofula, exactly the same as the King of France. Marcous are found in all parts of France, but particularly in the Orléanais. Every village of Gâtinais has its marcou. It is sufficient for the cure of the sick that the marcou should breathe upon their wounds, or let them touch his fleur-de-lys. The night of Good Friday is particularly favourable to these ceremonies. Ten years ago there lived, at Ormes in Gâtinais, one of these creatures who was nicknamed the Beau Marcou, and consulted by all the country of Beauce. He was a cooper, named Foulon, who kept a horse and vehicle. To put a stop to his miracles, it was found necessary to call in the assistance of the gendarmes. His fleur-de-lys was on the left breast; other marcous have it in different parts.

There are marcous at Jersey, Auvigny, and at Guernsey. This fact is doubtless in some way connected with the rights possessed by France over Normandy: or why the fleur-de-lys?

There are also, in the Channel Islands, people afflicted with scrofula; which of course necessitates a due supply of these marcous.

Some people, who happened to be present one day when Gilliatt was bathing in the sea, had fancied that they could perceive upon him a fleur-de-lys. Interrogated on that subject he made no reply, but merely burst into laughter. For he laughed sometimes like other men. From that time, however, no one ever saw him bathe: he bathed thenceforth only in perilous and solitary places; probably by moonlight: a thing in itself somewhat suspicious.

Those who obstinately regarded him as a cambion, or son of the devil, were evidently in error. They ought to have known [Pg 19] that cambions scarcely exist out of Germany. But The Vale and St. Sampson were, fifty years ago, places remarkable for the ignorance of their inhabitants.

To fancy that a resident of the island of Guernsey could be the son of a devil was evidently absurd.

Gilliatt, for the very reason that he caused disquietude among the people, was sought for and consulted. The peasants came in fear, to talk to him of their diseases. That fear itself had in it something of faith in his powers; for in the country, the more the doctor is suspected of magic, the more certain is the cure. Gilliatt had certain remedies of his own, which he had inherited from the deceased woman. He communicated them to

all who had need of them, and would never receive money for them. He cured whitlows with applications of herbs. A liquor in one of his phials allayed fever. The chemist of St. Sampson, or *pharmacien*, as they would call him in France, thought that this was probably a decoction of Jesuits' bark. The more generous among his censors admitted that Gilliatt was not so bad a demon in his dealings with the sick, so far as regarded his ordinary remedies. But in his character of a *marcou*, he would do nothing. If persons afflicted with scrofula came to him to ask to touch the fleur-de-lys on his skin, he made no other answer than that of shutting the door in their faces. He persistently refused to perform any miracles—a ridiculous position for a sorcerer. No one is bound to be a sorcerer; but when a man is one, he ought not to shirk the duties of his position.

One or two exceptions might be found to this almost universal antipathy. Sieur Landoys, of the Clos-Landés, was clerk and registrar of St. Peter's Port, custodian of the documents, and keeper of the register of births, marriages, and deaths. This Landoys was vain of his descent from Peter Landoys, treasurer of the province of Brittany, who was hanged in 1485. One day, when Sieur Landoys was bathing in the sea, he ventured to swim out too far, and was on the point of drowning: Gilliatt plunged into the water, narrowly escaping drowning himself, and succeeded in saving him. From that day Landoys never spoke an evil word of Gilliatt. To those who expressed surprise at this change, he replied, "Why should I detest a man who never did me any harm, and who has rendered me a service?" The parish clerk and registrar even came at last to feel a sort of friendship for Gilliatt. This public functionary was a man without prejudices. He had no faith in sorcerers. He laughed at people who went in fear of ghostly[Pg 20] visitors. As for him, he had a boat in which he amused himself by making fishing excursions in his leisure hours; but he had never seen anything extraordinary, unless it was on one occasion—a woman clothed in white, who rose about the waters in the light of the moon—and even of this circumstance he was not quite sure. Moutonne Gahy, the old witch of Torteval, had given him a little bag to be worn under the cravat, as a protection against evil spirits: he ridiculed the bag, and knew not what it contained, though, to be sure, he carried it about him, feeling more security with this charm hanging on his neck.

Some courageous persons, emboldened by the example of Landoys, ventured to cite, in Gilliatt's favour, certain extenuating circumstances; a few signs of good qualities, as his sobriety, his abstinence from spirits and tobacco; and sometimes they went so far as to pass this elegant eulogium upon him: "He neither smokes, drinks, chews tobacco, or takes snuff."

Sobriety, however, can only count as a virtue when there are other virtues to support it.

The ban of public opinion lay heavily upon Gilliatt.

In any case, as a marcou, Gilliatt had it in his power to render great services. On a certain Good Friday, at midnight, a day and an hour propitious to this kind of cure, all the scrofulous people of the island, either by sudden inspiration, or by concerted action, presented themselves in a crowd at the Bû de la Rue, and with pitiable sores and imploring gestures, called on Gilliatt to make them clean. But he refused; and herein the people found another proof of his malevolence.

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VI

## THE DUTCH SLOOP

Such was the character of Gilliatt.

The young women considered him ugly.

Ugly he was not. He might, perhaps, have been called handsome. There was something in his profile of rude but antique grace. In repose it had some resemblance to that of a sculptured Dacian on the Trajan column. His ears were small, delicate, without lobes, and of an admirable form for hearing. Between his eyes he had that proud vertical line which indicates in a man boldness and perseverance. The corners of his mouth were depressed, giving a slight expression [Pg 21] of bitterness. His forehead had a calm and noble roundness. The clear pupils of his eyes possessed a steadfast look, although troubled a little with that involuntary movement of the eyelids which fishermen contract from the glitter of the waves. His laugh was boyish and pleasing. No ivory could be of a finer white than his teeth; but exposure to the sun had made him swarthy as a moor. The ocean, the tempest, and the darkness cannot be braved with impunity. At thirty he looked already like a man of forty-five. He wore the sombre mask of the wind and the sea.

The people had nicknamed him "Malicious Gilliatt."

There is an Indian fable to the effect that one day the god Brahma inquired of the Spirit of Power, "Who is stronger than thee?" and the spirit replied "Cunning." A Chinese proverb says, "What could not the lion do, if he was the monkey also?" Gilliatt was neither the lion nor the monkey; but his actions gave some evidence of the truth of the Chinese proverb, and of the Hindoo fable. Although only of ordinary height and

strength, he was enabled, so inventive and powerful was his dexterity, to lift burdens that might have taxed a giant, and to accomplish feats which would have done credit to an athlete.

He had in him something of the power of the gymnast. He used, with equal address, his left hand and his right.

He never carried a gun; but was often seen with his net. He spared the birds, but not the fish. Ill-luck to these dumb creatures! He was an excellent swimmer.

Solitude either develops the mental powers, or renders men dull and vicious. Gilliatt sometimes presented himself under both these aspects. At times, when his features wore that air of strange surprise already mentioned, he might have been taken for a man of mental powers scarcely superior to the savage. At other moments an indescribable air of penetration lighted up his face. Ancient Chaldea possessed some men of this stamp. At certain times the dullness of the shepherd mind became transparent, and revealed the inspired sage.

After all, he was but a poor man; uninstructed, save to the extent of reading and writing. It is probable that the condition of his mind was at that limit which separates the dreamer from the thinker. The thinker wills, the dreamer is a passive instrument. Solitude sinks deeply into pure natures, and modifies them in a certain degree. They become, unconsciously, penetrated with a kind of sacred awe. The shadow in which the mind of Gilliatt constantly dwelt was composed in almost [Pg 22] equal degrees of two elements, both obscure, but very different. Within himself all was ignorance and weakness; without, infinity and mysterious power.

By dint of frequent climbing on the rocks, of escalading the rugged cliffs, of going to and fro among the islands in all weathers, of navigating any sort of craft which came to hand, of venturing night and day in difficult channels, he had become, without taking count of his other advantages, and merely in following his fancy and pleasure, a seaman of extraordinary skill.

He was a born pilot. The true pilot is the man who navigates the bed of the ocean even more than its surface. The waves of the sea are an external problem, continually modified by the submarine conditions of the waters in which the vessel is making her way. To see Gilliatt guiding his craft among the reefs and shallows of the Norman Archipelago, one might have fancied that he carried in his head a plan of the bottom of the sea. He was familiar with it all, and feared nothing.

He was better acquainted with the buoys in the channels than the cormorants who make them their resting-places. The almost imperceptible differences which

distinguish the four upright buoys of the Creux, Alligande, the Trémies, and the Sardrette, were perfectly visible and clear to him, even in misty weather. He hesitated neither at the oval, apple-headed buoy of Anfré, nor at the triple iron point of the Rousse, nor at the white ball of the Corbette, nor at the black ball of Longue Pierre; and there was no fear of his confounding the cross of Goubeau with the sword planted in earth at La Platte, nor the hammer-shaped buoy of the Barbées with the curled-tail buoy of the Moulinet.

His rare skill in seamanship showed itself in a striking manner one day at Guernsey, on the occasion of one of those sea tournaments which are called regattas. The feat to be performed was to navigate alone a boat with four sails from St. Sampson to the Isle of Herm, at one league distance, and to bring the boat back from Herm to St. Sampson. To manage, without assistance, a boat with four sails, is a feat which every fisherman is equal to, and the difficulty seemed little; but there was a condition which rendered it far from simple. The boat, to begin with, was one of those large and heavy sloops of bygone times which the sailors of the last century knew by the name of "Dutch Belly Boats." This ancient style of flat, pot-bellied craft, carrying on the larboard and starboard sides, in compensation [Pg 23] for the want of a keel, two wings, which lowered themselves, sometimes the one, sometimes the other, according to the wind, may occasionally be met with still at sea. In the second place, there was the return from Herm, a journey which was rendered more difficult by a heavy ballasting of stones. The conditions were to go empty, but to return loaded. The sloop was the prize of the contest. It was dedicated beforehand to the winner. This "Dutch Belly Boat" had been employed as a pilot-boat. The pilot who had rigged and worked it for twenty years was the most robust of all the sailors of the channel. When he died no one had been found capable of managing the sloop; and it was, in consequence, determined to make it the prize of the regatta. The sloop, though not decked, had some sea qualities, and was a tempting prize for a skilful sailor. Her mast was somewhat forward, which increased the motive-power of her sails; besides having the advantage of not being in the way of her pilot. It was a strong-built vessel, heavy, but roomy, and taking the open sea well; in fact, a good, serviceable craft. There was eager anxiety for the prize; the task was a rough one, but the reward of success was worth having. Seven or eight fishermen, among the most vigorous of the island, presented themselves. One by one they essayed; but not one could succeed in reaching Herm. The last one who tried his skill was known for having crossed, in a rowing-boat, the terrible narrow sea between Sark and Brecq-Hou. Sweating with his exertions, he brought back the sloop, and said, "It is impossible." Gilliatt then entered the bark, seized first of all the oar, then the mainsail, and pushed out to sea. Then,

without either making fast the boom, which would have been imprudent, or letting it go, which kept the sail under his direction, and leaving the boom to move with the wind without drifting, he held the tiller with his left hand. In three quarters of an hour he was at Herm. Three hours later, although a strong breeze had sprung up and was blowing across the roads, the sloop, guided by Gilliatt, returned to St. Sampson with its load of stones. He had, with an extravagant display of his resources, even added to the cargo the little bronze cannon at Herm, which the people were in the habit of firing off on the 5th of November, by way of rejoicing over the death of Guy Fawkes.

Guy Fawkes, by the way, has been dead two hundred and sixty years; a remarkably long period of rejoicing.

Gilliatt, thus burdened and encumbered, although he had the Guy Fawkes'-day cannon in the boat and the south wind in his[Pg 24] sails, steered, or rather brought back, the heavy craft to St. Sampson.

Seeing which, Mess Lethierry exclaimed, "There's a bold sailor for you!"

And he held out his hand to Gilliatt.

We shall have occasion to speak again of Mess Lethierry.

The sloop was awarded to Gilliatt.

This adventure detracted nothing from his evil reputation.

Several persons declared that the feat was not at all astonishing, for that Gilliatt had concealed in the boat a branch of wild medlar. But this could not be proved.

From that day forward, Gilliatt navigated no boat except the old sloop. In this heavy craft he went on his fishing avocation. He kept it at anchor in the excellent little shelter which he had all to himself, under the very wall of his house of the Bû de la Rue. At nightfall, he cast his nets over his shoulder, traversed his little garden, climbed over the parapet of dry stones, stepped lightly from rock to rock, and jumping into the sloop, pushed out to sea.

He brought home heavy takes of fish; but people said that his medlar branch was always hanging up in the boat. No one had ever seen this branch, but every one believed in its existence.

When he had more fish than he wanted, he did not sell it, but gave it away.

The poor people took his gift, but were little grateful, for they knew the secret of his medlar branch. Such devices cannot be permitted. It is unlawful to trick the sea out of its treasures.

He was a fisherman; but he was something more. He had, by instinct, or for amusement, acquired a knowledge of three or four trades. He was a carpenter, worker in iron, wheelwright, boat-caulker, and, to some extent, an engineer. No one could mend a broken wheel better than he could. He manufactured, in a fashion of his own, all the things which fishermen use. In a corner of the Bû de la Rue he had a small forge and an anvil; and the sloop having but one anchor, he had succeeded, without help, in making another. The anchor was excellent. The ring had the necessary strength; and Gilliatt, though entirely uninstructed in this branch of the smith's art, had found the exact dimensions of the stock for preventing the over-balancing of the fluke ends.

He had patiently replaced all the nails in the planks by rivets; which rendered rust in the holes impossible.

In this way he had much improved the sea-going qualities of [Pg 25] the sloop. He employed it sometimes when he took a fancy to spend a month or two in some solitary islet, like Chousey or the Casquets. People said, "Ay! ay! Gilliatt is away;" but this was a circumstance which nobody regretted.

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## VII

### A FIT TENANT FOR A HAUNTED HOUSE

Gilliatt was a man of dreams, hence his daring, hence also his timidity. He had ideas on many things which were peculiarly his own.

There was in his character, perhaps, something of the visionary and the transcendentalist. Hallucinations may haunt the poor peasant like Martin, no less than the king like Henry IV. There are times when the unknown reveals itself in a mysterious way to the spirit of man. A sudden rent in the veil of darkness will make manifest things hitherto unseen, and then close again upon the mysteries within. Such visions have occasionally the power to effect a transfiguration in those whom they visit. They convert a poor camel-driver into a Mahomet; a peasant girl tending her goats into a Joan of Arc. Solitude generates a certain amount of sublime exaltation. It is like the smoke arising from the burning bush. A mysterious lucidity of mind results, which converts the student into a seer, and the poet into a prophet: herein we find a key to the mysteries of Horeb, Kedron, Ombos; to the intoxication of Castilian laurels,

the revelations of the month Busion. Hence, too, we have Peleia at Dodona, Phe-monoe at Delphos, Trophonius in Lebadea, Ezekiel on the Chebar, and Jerome in the Thetais.

More frequently this visionary state overwhelms and stupefies its victim. There is such a thing as a divine besottedness. The Hindoo fakir bears about with him the burden of his vision, as the Cretin his goître. Luther holding converse with devils in his garret at Wittenburg; Pascal shutting out the view of the infernal regions with the screen of his cabinet; the African Obi conversing with the white-faced god Bossum; are each and all the same phenomenon, diversely interpreted by the minds in which they manifest themselves, according to their capacity and power. Luther and Pascal were grand, and are grand still; the Obi is simply a poor half-witted creature.

Gilliatt was neither so exalted nor so low. He was a dreamer: nothing more.[Pg 26]

Nature presented itself to him under a somewhat strange aspect.

Just as he had often found in the perfectly limpid water of the sea strange creatures of considerable size and of various shapes, of the Medusa genus, which out of the water bore a resemblance to soft crystal, and which, cast again into the sea, became lost to sight in that medium by reason of their identity in transparency and colour, so he imagined that other transparencies, similar to these almost invisible denizens of the ocean, might probably inhabit the air around us. The birds are scarcely inhabitants of the air, but rather amphibious creatures passing much of their lives upon the earth. Gilliatt could not believe the air a mere desert. He used to say, "Since the water is filled with life, why not the atmosphere?" Creatures colourless and transparent like the air would escape from our observation. What proof have we that there are no such creatures? Analogy indicates that the liquid fields of air must have their swimming habitants, even as the waters of the deep. These aerial fish would, of course, be diaphanous; a provision of their wise Creator for our sakes as well as their own. Allowing the light to pass through their forms, casting no shadow, having no defined outline, they would necessarily remain unknown to us, and beyond the grasp of human sense. Gilliatt indulged the wild fancy that if it were possible to exhaust the earth of its atmosphere, or if we could fish the air as we fish the depths of the sea, we should discover the existence of a multitude of strange animals. And then, he would add in his reverie, many things would be made clear.

Reverie, which is thought in its nebulous state, borders closely upon the land of sleep, by which it is bounded as by a natural frontier. The discovery of a new world, in the form of an atmosphere filled with transparent creatures, would be the beginning of a knowledge of the vast unknown. But beyond opens up the illimitable domain of the

possible, teeming with yet other beings, and characterised by other phenomena. All this would be nothing supernatural, but merely the occult continuation of the infinite variety of creation. In the midst of that laborious idleness, which was the chief feature in his existence, Gilliatt was singularly observant. He even carried his observations into the domain of sleep. Sleep has a close relation with the possible, which we call also the *invraisemblable*. The world of sleep has an existence of its own. Night-time, regarded as a separate sphere of creation, is a universe in itself. [Pg 27] The material nature of man, upon which philosophers tell us that a column of air forty-five miles in height continually presses, is wearied out at night, sinks into lassitude, lies down, and finds repose. The eyes of the flesh are closed; but in that drooping head, less inactive than is supposed, other eyes are opened. The unknown reveals itself. The shadowy existences of the invisible world become more akin to man; whether it be that there is a real communication, or whether things far off in the unfathomable abyss are mysteriously brought nearer, it seems as if the impalpable creatures inhabiting space come then to contemplate our natures, curious to comprehend the denizens of the earth. Some phantom creation ascends or descends to walk beside us in the dim twilight: some existence altogether different from our own, composed partly of human consciousness, partly of something else, quits his fellows and returns again, after presenting himself for a moment to our inward sight; and the sleeper, not wholly slumbering, nor yet entirely conscious, beholds around him strange manifestations of life—pale spectres, terrible or smiling, dismal phantoms, uncouth masks, unknown faces, hydra-headed monsters, undefined shapes, reflections of moonlight where there is no moon, vague fragments of monstrous forms. All these things which come and go in the troubled atmosphere of sleep, and to which men give the name of dreams, are, in truth, only realities invisible to those who walk about the daylight world. The dream-world is the Aquarium of Night.

So, at least, thought Gilliatt.

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VIII

#### THE GILD-HOLM-'UR SEAT

The curious visitor, in these days, would seek in vain in the little bay of Houmet for the house in which Gilliatt lived, or for his garden, or the creek in which he sheltered the Dutch sloop. The Bû de la Rue no longer exists. Even the little peninsula on which his house stood has vanished, levelled by the pickaxe of the quarryman, and carried away, cart-load by cart-load, by dealers in rock and granite. It must be sought now in

the churches, the palaces, and the quays of a great city. All that ridge of rocks has been long ago conveyed to London.[Pg 28]

These long lines of broken cliffs in the sea, with their frequent gaps and crevices, are like miniature chains of mountains. They strike the eye with the impression which a giant may be supposed to have in contemplating the Cordilleras. In the language of the country they are called "Banques." These banques vary considerably in form. Some resemble a long spine, of which each rock forms one of the vertebræ; others are like the backbone of a fish; while some bear an odd resemblance to a crocodile in the act of drinking.

At the extremity of the ridge on which the Bû de la Rue was situate, was a large rock, which the fishing people of Houmet called the "Beast's Horn." This rock, a sort of pyramid, resembled, though less in height, the "Pinnacle" of Jersey. At high water the sea divided it from the ridge, and the Horn stood alone; at low water it was approached by an isthmus of rocks. The remarkable feature of this "Beast's Horn" was a sort of natural seat on the side next the sea, hollowed out by the water, and polished by the rains. The seat, however, was a treacherous one. The stranger was insensibly attracted to it by "the beauty of the prospect," as the Guernsey folks said. Something detained him there in spite of himself, for there is a charm in a wide view. The seat seemed to offer itself for his convenience; it formed a sort of niche in the peaked *façade* of the rock. To climb up to it was easy, for the sea, which had fashioned it out of its rocky base, had also cast beneath it, at convenient distances, a kind of natural stairs composed of flat stones. The perilous abyss is full of these snares; beware, therefore, of its proffered aids. The spot was tempting: the stranger mounted and sat down. There he found himself at his ease; for his seat he had the granite rounded and hollowed out by the foam; for supports, two rocky elbows which seemed made expressly for him; against his back, the high vertical wall of rock which he looked up to and admired, without thinking of the impossibility of scaling it. Nothing could be more simple than to fall into reverie in that convenient resting-place. All around spread the wide sea; far off the ships were seen passing to and fro. It was possible to follow a sail with the eye, till it sank in the horizon beyond the Casquets. The stranger was entranced: he looked around, enjoying the beauty of the scene, and the light touch of wind and wave. There is a sort of bat found at Cayenne, which has the power of fanning people to sleep in the shade with a gentle beating of its dusky wings. Like this strange creature the wind wanders about, alternately[Pg 29] ravaging or lulling into security. So the stranger would continue contemplating the sea, listening for a movement in the air, and yielding himself up to dreamy indolence. When the eyes are satiated with light and beauty, it is a luxury to close them for awhile.

Suddenly the loiterer would arouse; but it was too late. The sea had crept up step by step; the waters surrounded the rock; the stranger had been lured on to his death.

A terrible rock was this in a rising sea.

The tide gathers at first insensibly, then with violence; when it touches the rocks a sudden wrath seems to possess it, and it foams. Swimming is difficult in the breakers: excellent swimmers have been lost at the Horn of the Bû de la Rue.

In certain places, and at certain periods, the aspect of the sea is dangerous—fatal; as at times is the glance of a woman.

Very old inhabitants of Guernsey used to call this niche, fashioned in the rock by the waves, “Gild-Holm-’Ur” seat, or Kidormur; a Celtic word, say some authorities, which those who understand Celtic cannot interpret, and which all who understand French can—“*Qui-dort-meurt*:”<sup>[1]</sup> such is the country folks’ translation.

The reader may choose between the translation, *Qui-dort-meurt*, and that given in 1819, I believe in *The Armorican*, by M. Athenas. According to this learned Celtic scholar, Gild-Holm-’Ur signifies “The resting-place of birds.”

There is, at Aurigny, another seat of this kind, called the Monk’s Chair, so well sculptured by the waves, and with steps of rock so conveniently placed, that it might be said that the sea politely sets a footstool for those who rest there.

In the open sea, at high water, the Gild-Holm-’Ur was no longer visible; the water covered it entirely.

The Gild-Holm-’Ur was a neighbour of the Bû de la Rue. Gilliatt knew it well, and often seated himself there. Was it his meditating place? No. We have already said he did not meditate, but dream. The sea, however, never entrapped him there.

[Pg 30]

FOOTNOTES:

[1] He who sleeps must die.

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BOOK II

MESS LETHIERRY

I

## A TROUBLED LIFE, BUT A QUIET CONSCIENCE

Mess Lethierry, a conspicuous man in St. Sampson, was a redoubtable sailor. He had voyaged a great deal. He had been a cabin-boy, seaman, topmast-man, second mate, mate, pilot, and captain. He was at this period a ship-owner. There was not a man to compare with him for general knowledge of the sea. He was brave in putting off to ships in distress. In foul weather he would take his way along the beach, scanning the horizon. "What have we yonder?" he would say; "some craft in trouble?" Whether it were an interloping Weymouth fisherman, a cutter from Aurigny, a bisquine from Courseulle, the yacht of some nobleman, an English craft or a French one—poor or rich, mattered little. He jumped into a boat, called together two or three strong fellows, or did without them, as the case might be, pushed out to sea, rose and sank, and rose again on rolling waves, plunged into the storm, and encountered the danger face to face. Then afar off, amid the rain and lightning, and drenched with water, he was sometimes seen upright in his boat like a lion with a foaming mane. Often he would pass whole days in danger amidst the waves, the hail, and the wind, making his way to the sides of foundering vessels during the tempest, and rescuing men and merchandise. At night, after feats like these, he would return home, and pass his time in knitting stockings.

For fifty years he led this kind of life—from ten years of age to sixty—so long did he feel himself still young. At sixty, he began to discover that he could no longer lift with one hand the great anvil at the forge of Varclin. This anvil weighed three hundredweight. At length rheumatic pains compelled him to be a prisoner; he was forced to give up his old struggle with the sea, to pass from the heroic into the patriarchal stage, to sink into the condition of a harmless, worthy old fellow.[Pg 31]

Happily his rheumatism attacks happened at the period when he had secured a comfortable competency. These two consequences of labour are natural companions. At the moment when men become rich, how often comes paralysis—the sorrowful crowning of a laborious life!

Old and weary men say among themselves, "Let us rest and enjoy life."

The population of islands like Guernsey is composed of men who have passed their lives in going about their little fields or in sailing round the world. These are the two classes of the labouring people; the labourers on the land, and the toilers of the sea. Mess Lethierry was of the latter class; he had had a life of hard work. He had been upon the continent; was for some time a ship carpenter at Rochefort, and afterwards at Cette. We have just spoken of sailing round the world; he had made the circuit of all France, getting work as a journeyman carpenter; and had been employed at the great

salt works of Franche-Comte. Though a humble man, he had led a life of adventure. In France he had learned to read, to think, to have a will of his own. He had had a hand in many things, and in all he had done had kept a character for probity. At bottom, however, he was simply a sailor. The water was his element; he used to say that he lived with the fish when really at home. In short, his whole existence, except two or three years, had been devoted to the ocean. Flung into the water, as he said, he had navigated the great oceans both of the Atlantic and the Pacific, but he preferred the Channel. He used to exclaim enthusiastically, "That is the sea for a rough time of it!" He was born at sea, and at sea would have preferred to end his days. After sailing several times round the world, and seeing most countries, he had returned to Guernsey, and never permanently left the island again. Henceforth his great voyages were to Granville and St. Malo.

Mess Lethierry was a Guernsey man—that peculiar amalgamation of Frenchman and Norman, or rather English. He had within himself this quadruple extraction, merged and almost lost in that far wider country, the ocean. Throughout his life and wheresoever he went, he had preserved the habits of a Norman fisherman.

All this, however, did not prevent his looking now and then into some old book; of taking pleasure in reading, in knowing the names of philosophers and poets, and in talking a little now and then in all languages.[Pg 32]

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## II

### A CERTAIN PREDILECTION

Gilliatt was a child of Nature. Mess Lethierry was the same.

Lethierry's uncultivated nature, however, was not without certain refinements.

He was fastidious upon the subject of women's hands. In his early years, while still a lad, passing from the stage of cabin-boy to that of sailor, he had heard the Admiral de Suffren say, "There goes a pretty girl; but what horrible great red hands." An observation from an admiral on any subject is a command, a law, an authority far above that of an oracle. The exclamation of Admiral de Suffren had rendered Lethierry fastidious and exacting in the matter of small and white hands. His own hand, a large club fist of the colour of mahogany, was like a mallet or a pair of pincers for a friendly grasp, and, tightly closed, would almost break a paving-stone.

He had never married; he had either no inclination for matrimony, or had never found a suitable match. That, perhaps, was due to his being a stickler for hands like those of

a duchess. Such hands are, indeed, somewhat rare among the fishermen's daughters at Portbail.

It was whispered, however, that at Rochefort, on the Charente, he had, once upon a time, made the acquaintance of a certain grisette, realising his ideal. She was a pretty girl with graceful hands; but she was a vixen, and had also a habit of scratching. Woe betide any one who attacked her! yet her nails, though capable at a pinch of being turned into claws, were of a cleanliness which left nothing to be desired. It was these peculiarly bewitching nails which had first enchanted and then disturbed the peace of Lethierry, who, fearing that he might one day become no longer master of his mistress, had decided not to conduct that young lady to the nuptial altar.

Another time he met at Aurigny a country girl who pleased him. He thought of marriage, when one of the inhabitants of the place said to him, "I congratulate you; you will have for your wife a good fuel maker." Lethierry asked the meaning of this. It appeared that the country people at Aurigny have a certain custom of collecting manure from their cow-houses, which they throw against a wall, where it is left to dry and fall to the ground. Cakes of dried manure of this kind are used for [Pg 33] fuel, and are called *coipiaux*. A country girl of Aurigny has no chance of getting a husband if she is not a good fuel maker; but the young lady's especial talent only inspired disgust in Lethierry.

Besides, he had in his love matters a kind of rough country folks' philosophy, a sailor-like sort of habit of mind. Always smitten but never enslaved, he boasted of having been in his youth easily conquered by a petticoat, or rather a *cotillon*; for what is now-a-days called a crinoline, was in his time called a *cotillon*; a term which, in his use of it, signifies both something more and something less than a wife.

These rude seafaring men of the Norman Archipelago, have a certain amount of shrewdness. Almost all can read and write. On Sundays, little cabin-boys may be seen in those parts, seated upon a coil of ropes, reading, with book in hand. From all time these Norman sailors have had a peculiar satirical vein, and have been famous for clever sayings. It was one of these men, the bold pilot Quéripel, who said to Montgomery, when he sought refuge in Jersey after the unfortunate accident in killing Henry II. at a tournament, with a blow of his lance, "*Tête folle a cassé tête vide.*" Another one, Touzeau, a sea-captain at St. Brélade, was the author of that philosophical pun, erroneously attributed to Camus, "*Après la mort, les papes deviennent papillons, et les sires deviennent cirons.*"

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## THE OLD SEA LANGUAGE

The mariners of the Channel are the true ancient Gauls. The islands, which in these days become rapidly more and more English—preserved for many ages their old French character. The peasant in Sark speaks the language of Louis XIV. Forty years ago, the old classical nautical language was to be found in the mouths of the sailors of Jersey and Aurigny. When amongst them, it was possible to imagine oneself carried back to the sea life of the seventeenth century. From that speaking trumpet which terrified Admiral Hidde, a philologist might have learnt the ancient technicalities of manœuvring and giving orders at sea, in the very words which were roared out to his sailors by Jean Bart. The old French maritime vocabulary is now almost entirely changed, but was still in use in Jersey in [Pg 34] 1820. A ship that was a good plyer was *bon boulinier*; one that carried a weather-helm in spite of her foresails and rudder was *un vaisseau ardent*; to get under way was *prendre aire*; to lie to in a storm, *capeyer*; to make fast running rigging was *faire dormant*; to get to windward, *faire chapelle*; to keep the cable tight, *faire teste*; to be out of trim, *être en pantenne*; to keep the sails full, *porter plain*. These expressions have fallen out of use. To-day we say *louvoyer* for to beat to windward, they said *leuvoyer*; for *naviguer*, sail, they said *naviger*; for *virer vent devant*, to tack, *donner vent devant*; for *aller de l'avant*, to make headway, *tailler de l'avant*; for *tirez d'accord*, haul together, *halez d'accord*; for *dérapez*, to weigh anchor, *deplantez*; for *embraquez*, to haul tight, *abraquez*; for *taquets*, cleats, *bittons*; for *burins*, toggles, *tappes*; for *balancine*, fore-lift, main-lift, etc., *valancine*; for *tribord*, starboard, *stribord*; for *les hommes de quart à bâbord*, men of the larboard watch, *les basbourdis*. Tourville wrote to Hocquincourt: *nous avons singlét* (sailed), for *cinglé*. Instead of *la rafale*, squall, *le raffal*; instead of *bossoir*, cat-head, *boussoir*; instead of *drosse*, truss, *drousse*; instead of *loffer*, to luff, *faire une olofée*; instead of *elonger*, to lay alongside, *alonger*; instead of *forte brise*, stiff breeze, *survent*; instead of *jouail*, stock of an anchor, *jas*; instead of *soute*, store-room, *fosse*.

Such, at the beginning of this century, was the maritime dialect of the Channel Islands. Ango would have been startled had he heard the speech of a Jersey pilot. Whilst everywhere else the sails *faseyaient* (shivered), in these islands they *barbeyaient*. A *saute de vent*, sudden shift of wind, was a *folle-vente*. The old methods of mooring known as *la valture* and *la portugaise* were alone used, and such commands as *jour-et-chaque!* and *bosse et vilte!* might still be heard. While a sailor of Granville was already employing the word *clan* for sheave-hold, one of St. Aubin or of St. Sampson still stuck to his *canal de pouliot*. What was called *bout d'alonge* (upper

fultock) at St. Malo, was *oreille d'âne* at St. Helier. Mess Lethierry, as did the Duke de Vibonne, called the sheer of the decks *la tonture*, and the caulker's chisel *la patarasse*.

It was with this uncouth sea dialect in his mouth that Duquesne beat De Ruyter, that Duguay Trouin defeated Wasnaer, and that Tourville, in 1681, poured a broadside into the first galley which bombarded Algiers. It is now a dead language. The idiom of the sea is altogether different. Duperré would not be able to understand Suffren. [Pg 35]

The language of French naval signals is not less transformed; there is a long distance between the four pennants, red, white, yellow, and blue, of Labourdonnaye, and the eighteen flags of these days, which, hoisted two and two, three and three, or four and four, furnish, for distant communication, sixty-six thousand combinations, are never deficient, and, so to speak, foresee the unforeseen.

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#### IV

##### ONE IS VULNERABLE WHERE ONE LOVES

Mess Lethierry's heart and hand were always ready—a large heart and a large hand. His failing was that admirable one, self-confidence. He had a certain fashion of his own of undertaking to do a thing. It was a solemn fashion. He said, "I give my word of honour to do it, with God's help." That said, he went through with his duty. He put his faith in God—nothing more. His rare churchgoing was merely formal. At sea he was superstitious.

Nevertheless, the storm had never yet arisen which could daunt him. One reason of this was his impatience of opposition. He could tolerate it neither from the ocean nor anything else. He meant to have his way; so much the worse for the sea if it thwarted him. It might try, if it would, but Mess Lethierry would not give in. A refractory wave could no more stop him than an angry neighbour. What he had said was said; what he planned out was done. He bent neither before an objection nor before the tempest. The word "no" had no existence for him, whether it was in the mouth of a man or in the angry muttering of a thunder-cloud. In the teeth of all he went on in his way. He would take no refusals. Hence his obstinacy in life, and his intrepidity on the ocean.

He seasoned his simple meal of fish soup for himself, knowing the quantities of pepper, salt, and herbs which it required, and was as well pleased with the cooking as with the meal. To complete the sketch of Lethierry's peculiarities, the reader must conjure a being to whom the putting on of a surtout would amount to a transfiguration;

whom a landsman's greatcoat would convert into a strange animal; one who, standing with his locks blown about by the wind, might have represented old Jean Bart, but who, in the landsman's round hat, would have looked an idiot; awkward in cities, wild and redoubtable at sea; [Pg 36] a man with broad shoulders, fit for a porter; one who indulged in no oaths, was rarely in anger, whose voice had a soft accent, which became like thunder in a speaking-trumpet; a peasant who had read something of the philosophy of Diderot and D'Alembert; a Guernsey man who had seen the great Revolution; a learned ignoramus, free from bigotry, but indulging in visions, with more faith in the White Lady than in the Holy Virgin; possessing the strength of Polyphemus, the perseverance of Columbus, with a little of the bull in his nature, and a little of the child. Add to these physical and mental peculiarities a somewhat flat nose, large cheeks, a set of teeth still perfect, a face filled with wrinkles, and which seemed to have been buffeted by the waves and subjected to the beating of the winds of forty years, a brow in which the storm and tempest were plainly written—an incarnation of a rock in the open sea. Add to this, too, a good-tempered smile always ready to light up his weather-beaten countenance, and you have before you Mess Lethierry.

Mess Lethierry had two special objects of affection only. Their names were Durande and Déruchette. [Pg 37]

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### BOOK III

#### DURANDE AND DÉRUCHETTE

##### I

#### PRATTLE AND SMOKE

The human body might well be regarded as a mere simulacrum; but it envelopes our reality, it darkens our light, and broadens the shadow in which we live. The soul is the reality of our existence. Strictly speaking, the human visage is a mask. The true man is that which exists under what is called man. If that being, which thus exists sheltered and secreted behind that illusion which we call the flesh, could be approached, more than one strange revelation would be made. The vulgar error is to mistake the outward husk for the living spirit. Yonder maiden, for example, if we could see her as she really is, might she not figure as some bird of the air?

A bird transmuted into a young maiden, what could be more exquisite? Picture it in your own home, and call it Déruchette. Delicious creature! One might be almost tempted to say, "Good-morning, Mademoiselle Goldfinch." The wings are invisible, but

the chirping may still be heard. Sometimes, too, she pipes a clear, loud song. In her childlike prattle, the creature is, perhaps, inferior; but in her song, how superior to humanity! When womanhood dawns, this angel flies away; but sometimes returns, bringing back a little one to a mother. Meanwhile, she who is one day to be a mother is for a long while a child; the girl becomes a maiden, fresh and joyous as the lark. Noting her movements, we feel as if it was good of her not to fly away. The dear familiar companion moves at her own sweet will about the house; flits from branch to branch, or rather from room to room; goes to and fro; approaches and retires; plumes her wings, or rather combs her hair, and makes all kinds of gentle noises—murmurings of unspeakable delight to certain ears. She asks a question, and is answered; is asked something in return, and chirps a reply. It is delightful to chat with her when tired of serious talk; for this creature carries with her something of her skyey element. She is, as it were, a thread of [Pg 38] gold interwoven with your sombre thoughts; you feel almost grateful to her for her kindness in not making herself invisible, when it would be so easy for her to be even impalpable; for the beautiful is a necessary of life. There is, in this world, no function more important than that of being charming. The forest-glade would be incomplete without the humming-bird. To shed joy around, to radiate happiness, to cast light upon dark days, to be the golden thread of our destiny, and the very spirit of grace and harmony, is not this to render a service? Does not beauty confer a benefit upon us, even by the simple fact of being beautiful? Here and there we meet with one who possesses that fairy-like power of enchanting all about her; sometimes she is ignorant herself of this magical influence, which is, however, for that reason, only the more perfect. Her presence lights up the home; her approach is like a cheerful warmth; she passes by; and we are content; she stays awhile, and we are happy. To behold her is to live: she is the Aurora with a human face. She has no need to do more than simply to be: she makes an Eden of the house; Paradise breathes from her; and she communicates this delight to all, without taking any greater trouble than that of existing beside them. Is it not a thing divine to have a smile which, none know how, has the power to lighten the weight of that enormous chain which all the living, in common, drag behind them? *Déruchette* possessed this smile: we may even say that this smile was *Déruchette* herself. There is one thing which has more resemblance to ourselves than even our face, and that is our expression: but there is yet another thing which more resembles us than this, and that is our smile. *Déruchette* smiling was simply *Déruchette*.

There is something peculiarly attractive in the Jersey and Guernsey race. The women, particularly the young, are remarkable for a pure and exquisite beauty. Their complexion is a combination of the Saxon fairness, with the proverbial ruddiness of

the Norman people—rosy cheeks and blue eyes; but the eyes want brilliancy. The English training dulls them. Their liquid glances will be irresistible whenever the secret is found of giving them that depth which is the glory of the Parisienne. Happily Englishwomen are not yet quite transformed into the Parisian type. Déruchette was not a Parisian; yet she was certainly not a Guernesiaise. Lethierry had brought her up to be neat and delicate and pretty; and so she was.[Pg 39]

Déruchette had, at times, an air of bewitching langour, and a certain mischief in the eye, which were altogether involuntary. She scarcely knew, perhaps, the meaning of the word love, and yet not unwillingly ensnared those about her in the toils. But all this in her was innocent. She never thought of marrying.

Déruchette had the prettiest little hands in the world, and little feet to match them. Sweetness and goodness reigned throughout her person; her family and fortune were her uncle Mess Lethierry; her occupation was only to live her daily life; her accomplishments were the knowledge of a few songs; her intellectual gifts were summed up in her simple innocence; she had the graceful repose of the West Indian woman, mingled at times with giddiness and vivacity, with the teasing playfulness of a child, yet with a dash of melancholy. Her dress was somewhat rustic, and like that peculiar to her country—elegant, though not in accordance with the fashions of great cities; for she wore flowers in her bonnet all the year round. Add to all this an open brow, a neck supple and graceful, chestnut hair, a fair skin slightly freckled with exposure to the sun, a mouth somewhat large, but well-defined, and visited from time to time by a dangerous smile. This was Déruchette.

Sometimes in the evening, a little after sunset, at the moment when the dusk of the sky mingles with the dusk of the sea, and twilight invests the waves with a mysterious awe, the people beheld, entering the harbour of St. Sampson, upon the dark rolling waters, a strange, undefined thing, a monstrous form which puffed and blew; a horrid machine which roared like a wild beast, and smoked like a volcano; a species of Hydra foaming among the breakers, and leaving behind it a dense cloud, as it rushed on towards the town with a frightful beating of its fins, and a throat belching forth flame. This was Durande.

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## II

### THE OLD STORY OF UTOPIA

A steamboat was a prodigious novelty in the waters of the Channel in 182-. The whole coast of Normandy was long strangely excited by it. Now-a-days, ten or a dozen steam

vessels, crossing and recrossing within the bounds of the horizon, scarcely attract a glance from loiterers on the shore. At the most, some persons, whose interest or business it is to [Pg 40] note such things, will observe the indications in their smoke of whether they burn Welsh or Newcastle coal. They pass, and that is all. "Welcome," if coming home; "a pleasant passage," if outward bound.

Folks were less calm on the subject of these wonderful inventions in the first quarter of the present century; and the new and strange machines, and their long lines of smoke regarded with no good-will by the Channel Islanders. In that Puritanical Archipelago, where the Queen of England has been censured for violating the Scriptures<sup>[2]</sup> by using chloroform during her accouchments, the first steam-vessel which made its appearance received the name of the "Devil Boat." In the eyes of these worthy fishermen, once Catholics, now Calvinists, but always bigots, it seemed to be a portion of the infernal regions which had been somehow set afloat. A local preacher selected for his discourse the question of "Whether man has the right to make fire and water work together when God had divided them."<sup>[3]</sup> This beast, composed of iron and fire, did it not resemble Leviathan? Was it not an attempt to bring chaos again into the universe? This is not the only occasion on which the progress of civilisation has been stigmatised as a return to chaos.

"A mad notion—a gross delusion—an absurdity!" Such was the verdict of the Academy of Sciences when consulted by Napoleon on the subject of steamboats, early in the present century. The poor fishermen of St. Sampson may be excused for not being, in scientific matters, any wiser than the mathematicians of Paris; and in religious matters, a little island like Guernsey is not bound to be more enlightened than a great continent like America. In the year 1807, when the first steamboat of Fulton, commanded by Livingston, furnished with one of Watt's engines, sent from England, and manœuvred, besides her ordinary crew, by two Frenchmen only, André Michaux and another, made her first voyage from New York to Albany, it happened that she set sail on the 17th of August. The Methodists took up this important fact, and in numberless chapels, preachers were heard calling down a malediction on the machine, and declaring that this number 17 was no other than the total of the ten horns and seven heads of the beast of the Apocalypse. In America, they invoked against the steamboats the beast from the book of Revelation; in Europe, the reptile of the book of Genesis. This was the simple difference.

The savants had rejected steamboats as impossible; the [Pg 41] priests had anathematised them as impious. Science had condemned, and religion consigned them to perdition. Fulton was a new incarnation of Lucifer. The simple people on the coasts and in the villages were confirmed in their prejudice by the uneasiness which

they felt at the outlandish sight. The religious view of steamboats may be summed up as follows: Water and fire were divorced at the creation. This divorce was enjoined by God himself. Man has no right to join what his Maker has put asunder; to reunite what he has disunited. The peasants' view was simply, "I don't like the look of this thing."

No one but Mess Lethierry, perhaps, could have been found at that early period daring enough to dream of such an enterprise as the establishment of a steam-vessel between Guernsey and St. Malo. He, alone, as an independent thinker, was capable of conceiving such an idea, or, as a hardy mariner, of carrying it out. The French part of his nature, probably, conceived the idea; the English part supplied the energy to put it in execution.

How and when this was, we are about to inform the reader.

#### FOOTNOTES:

[2] Genesis, chap. iii. v. 16.

[3] Genesis, chap. i. v. 4.

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### III

#### RANTAINÉ

About forty years before the period of the commencement of our narrative, there stood in the suburbs of Paris, near the city wall, between the Fosse-aux-Loups and the Tombe-Issoire, a house of doubtful reputation. It was a lonely, ruinous building, evidently a place for dark deeds on an occasion. Here lived, with his wife and child, a species of town bandit; a man who had been clerk to an attorney practising at the Châtelet—he figured somewhat later at the Assize Court; the name of this family was Rantaine. On a mahogany chest of drawers in the old house were two china cups, ornamented with flowers, on one of which appeared, in gilt letters, the words, "A souvenir of friendship;" on the other, "A token of esteem." The child lived in an atmosphere of vice in this miserable home. The father and mother having belonged to the lower middle class, the boy had learnt to read, and they brought it up in a fashion. The mother, pale and almost in rags, gave "instruction," as she called it, mechanically, to the little one, heard it spell a few words to her, and interrupted the lesson to accompany her[Pg 42] husband on some criminal expedition, or to earn the wages of prostitution. Meanwhile, the book remained open on the table as she had left it, and the boy sat beside it, meditating in his way.

The father and mother, detected one day in one of their criminal enterprises, suddenly vanished into that obscurity in which the penal laws envelop convicted malefactors. The child, too, disappeared.

Lethierry, in his wanderings about the world, stumbled, one day, on an adventurer like himself; helped him out of some scrape; rendered him a kindly service, and was apparently repaid with gratitude. He took a fancy to the stranger, picked him up, and brought him to Guernsey, where, finding him intelligent in learning the duties of a sailor aboard a coasting vessel, he made him a companion. This stranger was the little Rantaine, now grown up to manhood.

Rantaine, like Lethierry, had a bull neck, a large and powerful breadth of shoulders for carrying burdens, and loins like those of the Farnese Hercules. Lethierry and he had a remarkable similarity of appearance: Rantaine was the taller. People who saw their forms behind as they were walking side by side along the port, exclaimed, "There are two brothers." On looking them in the face the effect was different: all that was open in the countenance of Lethierry was reserved and cautious in that of Rantaine. Rantaine was an expert swordsman, played on the harmonica, could snuff a candle at twenty paces with a pistol-ball, could strike a tremendous blow with the fist, recite verses from Voltaire's *Henriade*, and interpret dreams; he knew by heart *Les Tombeaux de Saint Denis*, by Treneuil. He talked sometimes of having had relations with the Sultan of Calicut, "whom the Portuguese call the Zamorin." If any one had seen the little memorandum-book which he carried about with him, he would have found notes and jottings of this kind: "At Lyons in a fissure of the wall of one of the cells in the prison of St. Joseph, a file." He spoke always with a grave deliberation; he called himself the son of a Chevalier de Saint Louis. His linen was of a miscellaneous kind, and marked with different initials. Nobody was ever more tender than he was on the point of honour; he fought and killed his man. The mother of a pretty actress could not have an eye more watchful for an insult.

He might have stood for the personification of subtlety under an outer garb of enormous strength.[Pg 43]

It was the power of his fist, applied one day at a fair, upon a *cabeza de moro*, which had originally taken the fancy of Lethierry. No one in Guernsey knew anything of his adventures. They were of a chequered kind. If the great theatre of destiny had a special wardrobe, Rantaine ought to have taken the dress of harlequin. He had lived, and had seen the world. He had run through the gamut of possible trades and qualities; had been a cook at Madagascar, trainer of birds at Honolulu, a religious journalist at the Galapagos Islands, a poet at Oomrawuttee, a freeman at Haiti. In this

latter character he had delivered at Grand Goave a funeral oration, of which the local journals have preserved this fragment: "Farewell, then, noble spirit. In the azure vault of the heavens, where thou wingest now thy flight, thou wilt, no doubt, rejoin the good Abbé Leander Crameau, of Little Goave. Tell him that, thanks to ten years of glorious efforts, thou hast completed the church of the *Ansa-à-Veau*. Adieu! transcendent genius, model mason!" His freemason's mask did not prevent him, as we see, wearing a little of the Roman Catholic. The former won to his side the men of progress, and the latter the men of order. He declared himself a white of pure caste, and hated the negroes; though, for all that, he would certainly have been an admirer of the Emperor Soulouque. In 1815, at Bordeaux, the glow of his royalist enthusiasm broke forth in the shape of a huge white feather in his cap. His life had been a series of eclipses—of appearances, disappearances, and reappearances. He was a sort of revolving light upon the coasts of scampdom. He knew a little Turkish: instead of "guillotined," would say "*néboïssé*." He had been a slave in Tripoli, in the house of a Thaleb, and had learnt Turkish by dint of blows with a stick. His employment had been to stand at evenings at the doors of the mosque, there to read aloud to the faithful the Koran inscribed upon slips of wood, or pieces of camel leather. It is not improbable that he was a renegade.

He was capable of everything, and something worse.

He had a trick of laughing loud and knitting his brows at the same time. He used to say, "In politics, I esteem only men inaccessible to influences;" or, "I am for decency and good morals;" or, "The pyramid must be replaced upon its base." His manner was rather cheerful and cordial than otherwise. The expression of his mouth contradicted the sense of his words. His nostrils had an odd way of distending themselves. In the corners of his eyes he had a little network of wrinkles, in which all [Pg 44] sorts of dark thoughts seemed to meet together. It was here alone that the secret of his physiognomy could be thoroughly studied. His flat foot was a vulture's claw. His skull was low at the top and large about the temples. His ill-shapen ear, bristled with hair, seemed to say, "Beware of speaking to the animal in this cave."

One fine day, in Guernsey, Rantaine was suddenly missing.

Lethierry's partner had absconded, leaving the treasury of their partnership empty.

In this treasury there was some money of Rantaine's, no doubt, but there were also fifty thousand francs belonging to Lethierry.

By forty years of industry and probity as a coaster and ship carpenter, Lethierry had saved one hundred thousand francs. Rantaine robbed him of half the sum.

Half ruined, Lethierry did not lose heart, but began at once to think how to repair his misfortune. A stout heart may be ruined in fortune, but not in spirit. It was just about that time that people began to talk of the new kind of boat to be moved by steam-engines. Lethierry conceived the idea of trying Fulton's invention, so much disputed about; and by one of these fire-boats to connect the Channel Islands with the French coast. He staked his all upon this idea; he devoted to it the wreck of his savings. Accordingly, six months after Rantaine's flight, the astonished people of St. Sampson beheld, issuing from the port, a vessel discharging huge volumes of smoke, and looking like a ship a-fire at sea. This was the first steam-vessel to navigate the Channel.

This vessel, to which the people in their dislike and contempt for novelty immediately gave the nickname of "Lethierry's Galley," was announced as intended to maintain a constant communication between Guernsey and St. Malo.

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#### IV

#### CONTINUATION OF THE STORY OF UTOPIA

It may be well imagined that the new enterprise did not prosper much at first. The owners of cutters passing between the Island of Guernsey and the French coast were loud in their outcries. They denounced this attack upon the Holy Scriptures and their monopoly. The chapels began to fulminate against [Pg 45] it. One reverend gentleman, named Elihu, stigmatised the new steam-vessel as an "atheistical construction," and the sailing-boat was declared the only orthodox craft. The people saw the horns of the devil among the beasts which the fireship carried to and fro. This storm of protest continued a considerable time. At last, however, it began to be perceived that these animals arrived less tired and sold better, their meat being superior; that the sea risk was less also for passengers; that this mode of travelling was less expensive, shorter, and more sure; that they started at a fixed time, and arrived at a fixed time; that consignments of fish travelling faster arrived fresher, and that it was now possible to find a sale in the French markets for the surplus of great takes of fish so common in Guernsey. The butter, too, from the far-famed Guernsey cows, made the passage quicker in the "Devil Boat" than in the old sailing vessels, and lost nothing of its good quality, insomuch that Dinan, in Brittany, began to become a customer for it, as well as St. Brieuc and Rennes. In short, thanks to what they called "Lethierry's Galley," the people enjoyed safe travelling, regular communication, prompt and easy passages to and fro, an increase of circulation, an extension of markets and of commerce, and, finally, it was felt that it was necessary to patronise this "Devil Boat," which flew in the

face of the Holy Scriptures, and brought wealth to the island. Some daring spirits even went so far as to express a positive satisfaction at it. Sieur Landoys, the registrar, bestowed his approval upon the vessel—an undoubted piece of impartiality on his part, as he did not like Lethierry. For, first of all, Lethierry was entitled to the dignity of “Mess,” while Landoys was merely “Sieur Landoys.” Then, although registrar of St. Peter’s Port, Landoys was a parishioner of St. Sampson. Now, there was not in the entire parish another man besides them devoid of prejudices. It seemed little enough, therefore, to indulge themselves with a detestation of each other. Two of a trade, says the proverb, rarely agree.

Sieur Landoys, however, had the honesty to support the steamboat. Others followed Landoys. By little and little, these facts multiplied. The growth of opinion is like the rising tide. Time and the continued and increasing success of the venture, with the evidence of real service rendered and the improvement in the general welfare, gradually converted the people; and the day at length arrived when, with the exception of a few wiseacres, every one admired “Lethierry’s Galley.”[Pg 46]

It would probably win less admiration now-a-days. This steamboat of forty years since would doubtless provoke a smile among our modern boat-builders; for this marvel was ill-shaped; this prodigy was clumsy and infirm.

The distance between our grand Atlantic steam-vessels of the present day and the boats with wheel-paddles which Denis Papin floated on the Fulda in 1707, is not greater than that between a three-decker, like the *Montebello*, 200 feet long, having a mainyard of 115 feet, carrying a weight of 3000 tons, 1100 men, 120 guns, 10,000 cannon-balls, and 160 packages of canister, belching forth at every broadside, when in action, 3300 pounds of iron, and spreading to the wind, when it moves, 5600 square mètres of canvas, and the old Danish galley of the second century, discovered, full of stone hatchets, and bows and clubs, in the mud of the seashore, at Wester-Satrup, and preserved at the Hotel de Ville at Flensburg.

Exactly one hundred years—from 1707 to 1807—separate the first paddle-boat of Papin from the first steamboat of Fulton. “Lethierry’s Galley” was assuredly a great improvement upon those two rough sketches; but it was itself only a sketch. For all that, it was a masterpiece in its way. Every scientific discovery in embryo presents that double aspect—a monster in the fœtus, a marvel in the germ.

“Lethierry’s Galley” was not masted with a view to sailing well; a fact which was not a defect; it is, indeed, one of the laws of naval construction. Besides, her motive power being steam, her sails were only accessory. A paddle steamboat, moreover, is almost insensible to sails. The new steam-vessel was too short, round, and thick-set. She had too much bow, and too great a breadth of quarter. The daring of inventors had not yet reached the point of making a steam-vessel light; Lethierry’s boat had some of the defects of Gilliatt’s Dutch sloop. She pitched very little, but she rolled a good deal. Her paddle-boxes were too high. She had too much beam for her length. The massive machinery encumbered her, and to make her capable of carrying a heavy cargo, her constructors had raised her bulwarks to an unusual height, giving to the vessel the [Pg 47] defects of old seventy-fours, a bastard model which would have to be cut down to render them really seaworthy, or fit to go into action. Being short, she ought to have been able to veer quickly—the time employed in a manœuvre of that kind being in proportion to the length of the vessel—but her weight deprived her of the advantage of her shortness. Her midship-frame was too broad, a fact which retarded her; the resistance of the sea being proportioned to the largest section below the water-line, and to the square of the speed. Her prow was vertical, which would not be regarded as a fault at the present day, but at that period this portion of the construction was invariably sloped at an angle of forty-five degrees. All the curving lines of the hull agreed well together, but it was not long enough for oblique sailing, or for lying parallel with the water displaced, which should always be thrown off laterally. In rough weather she drew too much water, sometimes fore, sometimes aft, which showed that her centre of gravity was not rightly adjusted. Owing to the weight of the engine, the cargo shifted, so that the centre of gravity was often aft of the mainmast, and then steam power had to be resorted to, for at such times the mainsail had to be furled as it only made the vessel fall off. If close to the wind, very careful manœuvring was required. The rudder was the old-fashioned bar-rudder, not the wheeled one of the present time. Two skiffs, a species of *you-yous*, were suspended to the davits. The vessel had four anchors; the sheet-anchor, the second or working anchor, and two bower-anchors. These four anchors, slung by chains, were moved, according to the occasion, by the great capstan of the poop, or by the small capstan at the prow. At that period the pump windlass had not superseded the intermitting efforts of the old handspike. Having only two bower-anchors, one on the starboard and the other on the larboard side, the vessel could not move conveniently in certain winds, though she could aid herself at such times with the second anchor. Her buoys were normal, and so constructed that they carried the weight of the buoy-ropes without dipping. The launch was of a useful size, of service in all cases of need, and able to raise the main anchor. A novelty about her was that she was rigged with chains, which in no way

detracted, however, from the mobility of the running rigging, or from the firmness of the standing rigging. The masts, yards, etc., although not of first-rate quality, were not in any way amiss, and the rigging at the mast-head was not very noticeable. The ribs were solid, but coarse, less delicacy of [Pg 48] wood being required for steam than for sail. Her speed was six knots an hour. When lying-to she rode well. Take her as she was, "Lethierry's Galley" was a good sea boat; but people felt, that in moments of danger from reefs or waterspouts, she would be hardly manageable. Unhappily her build made her roll about on the waves, with a perpetual creaking like that of a new shoe.

She was, above all, a merchandise boat, and, like all ships built more for commerce than for fighting, was constructed exclusively with a view to stowage. She carried few passengers. The transport of cattle rendered stowage difficult and very peculiar. Vessels carried bullocks at that time in the hold, which was a complication of the difficulty. At the present day they are stowed on the fore-deck. The paddle-boxes of Lethierry's "Devil Boat" were painted white, the hull, down to the water-line, red, and all the rest of the vessel black, according to the somewhat ugly fashion of this century. When empty she drew seven feet of water, and when laden fourteen.

With regard to the engine, it was of considerable power. To speak exactly, its power was equal to that of one horse to every three tons burden, which is almost equal to that of a tugboat. The paddles were well placed, a little in advance of the centre of gravity of the vessel. The maximum pressure of the engine was equal to two atmospheres. It consumed a great deal of coal, although it was constructed on the condensation and expansion principles. It had no fly-wheel on account of the instability of the point of support, but this was then, as now, compensated for by two cranks at the extremities of the revolving shaft, so arranged that one was always at right angles when the other was at dead-point. The whole rested on a single sheet of cast-iron, so that even in case of any serious damage, no shock of the waves could upset its equilibrium, and even if the hull were injured the engine would remain intact. To render it stronger still, the connecting-rod had been placed near the steam-cylinders, so that the centre of oscillation of the working-beam was transferred from the middle to the end. Since then oscillating cylinders have been invented which do away with the necessity of connecting-rods, but in those days the placing of the connecting-rod near the cylinder was thought a triumph of engineering. The boiler was in sections and provided with a salt-water pump. The wheels were very large, which lessened the loss of power; the smoke-stack was lofty, which increased the draught. On the other hand, the size of [Pg 49] the wheels exposed them to the force of the waves, and the height of the smoke-stack to the violence of the wind. Wooden paddle-

floats, iron clamps, bosses of cast-iron—such were the wheels, which, well constructed, could, strange though it may seem, be taken to pieces. Three floats were always under water. The speed of the centre of the floats only exceeded by a sixth the speed of the vessel itself; this was the chief defect of the wheels. Moreover, the cranks were too long, and the slide-valve caused too much friction in the admission of steam into the cylinder. For that period the engine seemed, and indeed was, admirable. It had been constructed in France, at the works at Bercy. Mess Lethierry had roughly sketched it: the engineer who had constructed it in accordance with his diagram was dead, so that the engine was unique, and probably could not have been replaced. The designer still lived, but the constructor was no more.

The engine had cost forty thousand francs.

Lethierry had himself constructed the “Devil Boat” upon the great covered stocks by the side of the first tower between St. Peter’s Port and St. Sampson. He had been to Brême to buy the wood. All his skill as a shipwright was exhausted in its construction; his ingenuity might be seen in the planks, the seams of which were straight and even, and covered with sarangousti, an Indian mastic, better than resin. The sheathing was well beaten. To remedy the roundness of the hull, Lethierry had fitted out a boom at the bowsprit, which allowed him to add a false spritsail to the regular one. On the day of the launch, he cried aloud, “At last I am afloat!” The vessel was successful, in fact, as the reader has already learnt.

Either by chance or design she had been launched on the 14th of July, the anniversary of the taking of the Bastille. On that day, mounted upon the bridge between the two paddle-boxes, looked Lethierry upon the sea, and exclaimed, “It is your turn now! The Parisians took the Bastille, now science takes the sea.”

Lethierry’s boat made the voyage from Guernsey to St. Malo once a week. She started on the Tuesday morning, and returned on the Friday evening, in time for the Saturday market. She was a stronger craft than any of the largest coasting sloops in all the Archipelago, and her capacity being in proportion to her dimensions, one of her voyages was equal to four voyages of an ordinary boat in the same trade; hence they were very profitable. The reputation of a vessel depends on its stowage, and Lethierry[Pg 50] was an admirable stower of cargo. When he was no longer able to work himself, he trained up a sailor to undertake this duty. At the end of two years, the steamboat brought in a clear seven hundred and fifty pounds sterling a year, or eighteen thousand francs. The pound sterling of Guernsey is worth twenty-four francs only, that of England twenty-five, and that of Jersey twenty-six. These differences are

less unimportant than they seem: the banks, at all events, know how to turn them to advantage.

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## VI

### LETHIERRY'S EXALTATION

The "Devil Boat" prospered. Mess Lethierry began to look forward to the time when he should be called "Monsieur." At Guernsey, people do not become "Monsieurs" at one bound. Between the plain man and the gentleman, there is quite a scale to climb. To begin with, we have the simple name, plain "Peter," let us suppose; the second step is "Neighbour Peter;" the third, "Father Peter;" the fourth, "Sieur Peter;" the fifth, "Mess Peter;" and then we reach the summit in "Monsieur Peter."

This scale ascending thus from the ground is carried to still greater heights. All the upper classes of England join on and continue it. Here are the various steps, becoming more and more glorious. Above the Monsieur, or "Mr.," there is the "Esquire;" above the squire, the knight; above the knight, still rising, we have the baronet, the Scotch laird, the baron, the viscount, the earl (called count in France, and jarl in Norway); the marquis, the duke, the prince of the blood royal, and the king: so, by degrees, we ascend from the people to the middle class, from the middle class to the baronetage, from the baronetage to the peerage, from the peerage to royalty.

Thanks to his successful ingenuity, thanks to steam, and his engines, and the "Devil Boat," Mess Lethierry was fast becoming an important personage. When building his vessel he had been compelled to borrow money. He had become indebted at Brême, he had become indebted at St. Malo; but every year he diminished his obligations.

He had, moreover, purchased on credit, at the very entrance to the port of St. Sampson, a pretty stone-built house, entirely new, situate between the sea and a garden. On the corner of [Pg 51] this house was inscribed the name of the "Bravées." Its front formed a part of the wall of the port itself, and it was remarkable for a double row of windows: on the north, alongside a little enclosure filled with flowers, and on the south commanding a view of the ocean. It had thus two *façades*, one open to the tempest and the sea, the other looking into a garden filled with roses.

These two frontages seemed made for the two inmates of the house—Mess Lethierry and Déruchette.

The "Bravées" was popular at St. Sampson, for Mess Lethierry had at length become a popular man. This popularity was due partly to his good nature, his devotedness, and

his courage; partly to the number of lives he had saved; and a great deal to his success, and to the fact that he had awarded to St. Sampson the honour of being the port of the departure and arrival of the new steamboat. Having made the discovery that the “Devil Boat” was decidedly a success, St. Peter’s, the capital, desired to obtain it for that port, but Lethierry held fast to St. Sampson. It was his native town. “It was there that I was first pitched into the water,” he used to say; hence his great local popularity. His position as a small landed proprietor paying land-tax, made him, what they call in Guernsey, an *unhabitant*. He was chosen douzenier. The poor sailor had mounted five out of six steps of the Guernsey social scale; he had attained the dignity of “Mess”; he was rapidly approaching the Monsieur; and who could predict whether he might not even rise higher than that? who could say that they might not one day find in the almanack of Guernsey, under the heading of “Nobility and Gentry,” the astonishing and superb inscription,—*Lethierry, Esq.*?

But Mess Lethierry had nothing of vanity in his nature, or he had no sense of it; or if he had, disdained it: to know that he was useful was his greatest pleasure; to be popular touched him less than being necessary; he had, as we have already said, only two objects of delight, and consequently only two ambitions: the Durande and Déruchette.

However this may have been, he had embarked in the lottery of the sea, and had gained the chief prize.

This chief prize was the Durande steaming away in all her pride.[Pg 52]

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## VII

### THE SAME GODFATHER AND THE SAME PATRON SAINT

Having created his steamboat, Lethierry had christened it: he had called it Durande—“La Durande.” We will speak of her henceforth by no other name; we will claim the liberty, also, in spite of typographical usage, of not italicising this name Durande; conforming in this to the notion of Mess Lethierry, in whose eyes La Durande was almost a living person.

Durande and Déruchette are the same name. Déruchette is the diminutive.

This diminutive is very common in France.

In the country the names of saints are endowed with all these diminutives as well as all their augmentatives. One might suppose there were several persons when there is,

in fact, only one. This system of patrons and patronesses under different names is by no means rare. Lise, Lisette, Lisa, Elisa, Isabelle, Lisbeth, Betsy, all these are simply Elizabeth. It is probable that Mahout, Maclou, Malo, and Magloire are the same saint: this, however, we do not vouch for.

Saint Durande is a saint of l'Angoumois, and of the Charente; whether she is an orthodox member of the calendar is a question for the Bollandists: orthodox or not, she has been made the patron saint of numerous chapels.

It was while Lethierry was a young sailor at Rochefort that he had made the acquaintance of this saint, probably in the person of some pretty Charantaise, perhaps in that of the grisette with the white nails. The saint had remained sufficiently in his memory for him to give the name to the two things which he loved most—Durande to the steamboat, Déruchette to the girl.

Of one he was the father, of the other the uncle.

Déruchette was the daughter of a brother who had died: she was an orphan child: he had adopted her, and had taken the place both of father and mother.

Déruchette was not only his niece, she was his godchild; he had held her in his arms at the baptismal font; it was he who had chosen her patron saint, Durande, and her Christian name, Déruchette.

Déruchette, as we have said, was born at St. Peter's Port. Her name was inscribed at its date on the register of the parish.[Pg 53]

As long as the niece was a child, and the uncle poor, nobody took heed of her appellation of Déruchette; but when the little girl became a miss, and the sailor a gentleman, the name of Déruchette shocked the feelings of Guernsey society. The uncouthness of the sound astonished every one. Folks asked Mess Lethierry "why Déruchette?" He answered, "It is a very good name in its way." Several attempts were made to get him to obtain a change in the baptismal name, but he would be no party to them. One day, a fine lady of the upper circle of society in St. Sampson, the wife of a rich retired ironfounder, said to Mess Lethierry, "In future, I shall call your daughter Nancy."

"If names of country towns are in fashion," said he, "why not Lons le Saulnier?" The fine lady did not yield her point, and on the morrow said, "We are determined not to have it Déruchette; I have found for your daughter a pretty name—*Marianne*." "A very pretty name, indeed," replied Mess Lethierry, "composed of two words which signify—a husband and an ass."<sup>[4]</sup> He held fast to Déruchette.

It would be a mistake to infer from Lethierry's pun that he had no wish to see his niece married. He desired to see her married, certainly; but in his own way: he intended her to have a husband after his own heart, one who would work hard, and whose wife would have little to do. He liked rough hands in a man, and delicate ones in a woman. To prevent Déruchette spoiling her pretty hands he had always brought her up like a young lady; he had provided her with a music-master, a piano, a little library, and a few needles and threads in a pretty work-basket. She was, indeed, more often reading than stitching; more often playing than reading. This was as Mess Lethierry wished it. To be charming was all that he expected of her. He had reared the young girl like a flower. Whoever has studied the character of sailors will understand this: rude and hard in their nature, they have an odd partiality for grace and delicacy. To realise the idea of the uncle, the niece ought to have been rich; so indeed felt Mess Lethierry. His steamboat voyaged for this end. The mission of Durande was to provide a marriage portion for Déruchette.

[Pg 54]

FOOTNOTES:

[4] A play upon the French words, *mar* and *âne*.

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VIII

“BONNIE DUNDEE”

Déruchette occupied the prettiest room at the Bravées. It had two windows, was furnished with various articles made of fine-grained mahogany, had a bed with four curtains, green and white, and looked out upon the garden, and beyond it towards the high hill, on which stands the Vale Castle. Gilliatt's house, the Bû de la Rue, was on the other side of this hill.

Déruchette had her music and piano in this chamber; she accompanied herself on the instrument when singing the melody which she preferred—the melancholy Scottish air of “Bonnie Dundee.” The very spirit of night breathes in this melody; but her voice was full of the freshness of dawn. The contrast was quaint and pleasing; people said, “Miss Déruchette is at her piano.”

The passers-by at the foot of the hill stopped sometimes before the wall of the garden of the Bravées to listen to that sweet voice and plaintive song.

Déruchette was the very embodiment of joy as she went to and fro in the house. She brought with her a perpetual spring. She was beautiful, but more pretty than beautiful; and still more graceful than pretty. She reminded the good old pilots, friends of Mess Lethierry, of that princess in the song which the soldiers and sailors sing, who was so beautiful:

“Qu’elle passait pour telle dans le regiment.”

Mess Lethierry used to say, “She has a head of hair like a ship’s cable.”

From her infancy she had been remarkable for beauty. The learned in such matters had grave doubts about her nose, but the little one having probably determined to be pretty, had finally satisfied their requirements. She grew to girlhood without any serious loss of beauty; her nose became neither too long nor too short; and when grown up, her critics admitted her to be charming.

She never addressed her uncle otherwise than as father.

Lethierry allowed her to soil her fingers a little in gardening, and even in some kind of household duties: she watered her beds of pink hollyhocks, purple foxgloves, perennial phloxes, and scarlet herb bennets. She took good advantage of the [Pg 55] climate of Guernsey, so favourable to flowers. She had, like many other persons there, aloes in the open ground, and, what is more difficult, she succeeded in cultivating the Nepaulese cinquefoil. Her little kitchen-garden was scientifically arranged; she was able to produce from it several kinds of rare vegetables. She sowed Dutch cauliflower and Brussels cabbages, which she thinned out in July, turnips for August, endive for September, short parsnip for the autumn, and rampions for winter. Mess Lethierry did not interfere with her in this, so long as she did not handle the spade and rake too much, or meddle with the coarser kinds of garden labour. He had provided her with two servants, one named Grace, and the other Douce, which are favourite names in Guernsey. Grace and Douce did the hard work of the house and garden, and they had the right to have red hands.

With regard to Mess Lethierry, his room was a little retreat with a view over the harbour, and communicating with the great lower room of the ground floor, on which was situated the door of the house, near which the various staircases met.

His room was furnished with his hammock, his chronometer, and his pipe: there were also a table and a chair. The ceiling had been whitewashed, as well as the four walls. A fine marine map, bearing the inscription *W. Faden*, 5 Charing Cross, Geographer to His Majesty, and representing the Channel Islands, was nailed up at the side of the door, and on the left, stretched out and fastened with other nails, appeared one of

those large cotton handkerchiefs on which are printed, in colours, the signals of all countries in the world, having at the four corners the standards of France, Russia, Spain, and the United States, and in the centre the union-jack of England.

Douce and Grace were two faithful creatures within certain limits. Douce was good-natured enough, and Grace was probably good-looking. Douce was unmarried, and had secretly “a gallant.” In the Channel Islands the word is common, as indeed is the fact itself. The two girls regarded as servants had something of the Creole in their character, a sort of slowness in their movements, not out of keeping with the Norman spirit pervading the relations of servant and master in the Channel Islands. Grace, coquettish and good-looking, was always scanning the future with a nervous anxiety. This arose from the fact of her not only having, like Douce, “a gallant,” but also, as the scandal-loving averred, a sailor husband, whose return one day was a thing she dreaded. This, however, does [Pg 56] not concern us. In a household less austere and less innocent, Douce would have continued to be the servant, but Grace would have become the *soubrette*. The dangerous talents of Grace were lost upon a young mistress so pure and good as *Déruchette*. For the rest, the intrigues of Douce and Grace were cautiously concealed. Mess Lethierry knew nothing of such matters, and no token of them had ever reached *Déruchette*.

The lower room of the ground floor, a hall with a large fireplace and surrounded with benches and tables, had served in the last century as a meeting-place for a conventicle of French Protestant refugees. The sole ornament of the bare stone wall was a sheet of parchment, set in a frame of black wood, on which were represented some of the charitable deeds of the great Bossuet, Bishop of Meaux. Some poor diocesans of this famous orator, surnamed the “Eagle,” persecuted by him at the time of the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, and driven to take shelter at Guernsey, had hung this picture on the wall to preserve the remembrance of those facts. The spectator who had the patience to decipher a rude handwriting in faded ink might have learnt the following facts, which are but little known:—“29th October, 1685, Monsieur the Bishop of Meaux, appeals to the king to destroy the temples of Morcef and Nanteuil”—“2nd April, 1686, Arrest of Cochard, father and son, for their religious opinions, at the request of Monsieur the Bishop of Meaux. Released: the Cochards having recanted.”—“28th October, 1699, Monsieur the Bishop of Meaux sent to Mde. Pontchartrain a petition of remonstrance, pointing out that it will be necessary to place the young ladies named Chalandes and de Neuville, who are of the reformed religion, in the House of the ‘New Catholics’ at Paris.”—“7th July, 1703, the king’s order executed as requested by Monsieur the Bishop of Meaux, for shutting up in an asylum Baudouin and his wife, two bad Catholics of Fublaines.”

At the end of the hall, near the door of Mess Lethierry's room, was a little corner with a wooden partition, which had been the Huguenot's sanctum, and had become, thanks to its row of rails and a small hole to pass paper or money through, the steamboat office; that is to say, the office of the Durande, kept by Mess Lethierry in person. Upon the old oaken reading-desk, where once rested the Holy Bible, lay a great ledger with its alternate pages headed Dr. and Cr.[Pg 57]

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## IX

### THE MAN WHO DISCOVERED RANTAINÉ'S CHARACTER

As long as Mess Lethierry had been able to do duty, he had commanded the Durande, and had had no other pilot or captain but himself; but a time had come, as we have said, when he had been compelled to find a successor. He had chosen for that purpose Sieur Clubin, of Torteval, a taciturn man. Sieur Clubin had a character upon the coast for strict probity. He became the *alter ego*, the double, of Mess Lethierry.

Sieur Clubin, although he had rather the look of a notary than of a sailor, was a mariner of rare skill. He had all the talents which are required to meet dangers of every kind. He was a skilful stower, a safe man aloft, an able and careful boatswain, a powerful steersman, an experienced pilot, and a bold captain. He was prudent, and he carried his prudence sometimes to the point of daring, which is a great quality at sea. His natural apprehensiveness of danger was tempered by a strong instinct of what was possible in an emergency. He was one of those mariners who will face risks to a point perfectly well known to themselves, and who generally manage to come successfully out of every peril. Every certainty which a man can command, dealing with so fickle an element as the sea, he possessed. Sieur Clubin, moreover, was a renowned swimmer; he was one of that race of men broken into the buffeting of the waves, who can remain as long as they please in the water—who can start from the Havre-des-Pas at Jersey, double the Colettes, swim round the Hermitage and Castle Elizabeth, and return in two hours to the point from which they started. He came from Torteval, where he had the reputation of often having swum across the passage so much dreaded, from the Hanway rocks to the point of Pleinmont.

One circumstance which had recommended Sieur Clubin to Mess Lethierry more than any other, was his having judged correctly the character of Rantaine. He had pointed out to Lethierry the dishonesty of the man, and had said "Rantaine will rob you." His prediction was verified. More than once—in matters, it is true, not very important—Mess Lethierry had put his ever-scrupulous honesty to the proof; and he freely

communicated with him on the subject of his affairs. Mess Lethierry used to say, “A good conscience expects to be treated with perfect confidence.”[Pg 58]

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X

## LONG YARNS

Mess Lethierry, for the sake of his own ease, always wore his seafaring clothes, and preferred his tarpaulin overcoat to his pilot jacket. Déruchette felt vexed, occasionally, about this peculiarity. Nothing is prettier than a pouting beauty. She laughed and scolded. “My dear father,” she would say, “what a smell of pitch!” and she would give him a gentle tap upon his broad shoulders.

This good old seaman had gathered from his voyages many wonderful stories. He had seen at Madagascar birds’ feathers, three of which sufficed to make a roof of a house. He had seen in India, field sorrel, the stalks of which were nine inches high. In New Holland he had seen troops of turkeys and geese led about and guarded by a bird, like a flock by a shepherd’s dog; this bird was called the Agami. He had visited elephants’ cemeteries. In Africa, he had encountered gorillas, a terrible species of man-monkey. He knew the ways of all the ape tribe, from the wild dog-faced monkey, which he called the Macaco-bravo, to the howling monkey or *Macaco-barbado*. In Chili, he had seen a pouched monkey move the compassion of the huntsman by showing its little one. He had seen in California a hollow trunk of a tree fall to the ground, so vast that a man on horseback could ride one hundred paces inside. In Morocco, he had seen the Mozabites and the Bisskris fighting with matraks and bars of iron—the Bisskris, because they had been called *kelbs*, which means dogs; and the Mozabites, because they had been treated as *khamsi*, which means people of the fifth sect. He had seen in China the pirate Chanh-thong-quan-larh-Quoi cut to pieces for having assassinated the Ap of a village. At Thu-dan-mot, he had seen a lion carry off an old woman in the open market-place. He was present at the arrival of the Great Serpent brought from Canton to Saigon to celebrate in the pagoda of Cho-len the fête of Quan-nam, the goddess of navigators. He had beheld the great Quan-Sû among the Moi. At Rio de Janeiro, he had seen the Brazilian ladies in the evening put little balls of gauze into their hair, each containing a beautiful kind of firefly; and the whole forming a head-dress of little twinkling lights. He had combated in Paraguay with swarms of enormous ants and spiders, big and downy as an infant’s head,[Pg 59] and compassing with their long legs a third of a yard, and attacking men by pricking them with their bristles, which enter the skin as sharp as arrows, and raise painful blisters. On the river Arinos, a tributary of the Tocantins, in the virgin forests to the north of Diamantina, he had

determined the existence of the famous bat-shaped people, the Murcilagos, or men who are born with white hair and red eyes, who live in the shady solitudes of the woods, sleep by day, awake by night, and fish and hunt in the dark, seeing better than by the light of the moon. He told how, near Beyrout, once in an encampment of an expedition of which he formed part, a rain gauge belonging to one of the party happened to be stolen from a tent. A wizard, wearing two or three strips of leather only, and looking like a man having nothing on but his braces, thereupon rang a bell at the end of a horn so violently, that a hyena finally answered the summons by bringing back the missing instrument. The hyena was, in fact, the thief. These veritable histories bore a strong resemblance to fictions; but they amused Déruchette.

The *poupée* or “doll” of the Durande, as the people of the Channel Islands call the figure-head of a ship, was the connecting link between the vessel and Lethierry’s niece. In the Norman Islands the figure-head of a ship, a roughly-carved wooden statue, is called the Poupée. Hence the local saying, meaning to sail, “*être entre poupe et poupée.*”

The *poupée* of the Durande was particularly dear to Mess Lethierry. He had instructed the carver to make it resemble Déruchette. It looked like a rude attempt to cut out a face with a hatchet; or like a clumsy log trying hard to look like a girl.

This unshapely block produced a great effect upon Mess Lethierry’s imagination. He looked upon it with an almost superstitious admiration. His faith in it was complete. He was able to trace in it an excellent resemblance to Déruchette. Thus the dogma resembles the truth, and the idol the deity.

Mess Lethierry had two grand fête days in every week; one was Tuesday, the other Friday. His first delight consisted in seeing the Durande weigh anchor; his second in seeing her enter the port again. He leaned upon his elbows at the window contemplating his work, and was happy.

On Fridays, the presence of Mess Lethierry at his window was a signal. When people passing the Bravées saw him lighting his pipe, they said, “Ay! the steamboat is in sight.” One kind of smoke was the herald of the other.[Pg 60]

The Durande, when she entered the port, made her cable fast to a huge iron ring under Mess Lethierry’s window, and fixed in the basement of the house. On those nights Lethierry slept soundly in his hammock, with a soothing consciousness of the presence of Déruchette asleep in her room near him, and of the Durande moored opposite.

The moorings of the *Durande* were close to the great bell of the port. A little strip of quay passed thence before the door of the Bravées.

The quay, the Bravées and its house, the garden, the alleys bordered with edges, and the greater part even of the surrounding houses, no longer exist. The demand for Guernsey granite has invaded these too. The whole of this part of the town is now occupied by stone-cutters' yards.

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XI

## MATRIMONIAL PROSPECTS

Déruchette was approaching womanhood, and was still unmarried.

Mess Lethierry in bringing her up to have white hands had also rendered her somewhat fastidious. A training of that kind has its disadvantages; but Lethierry was himself still more fastidious. He would have liked to have provided at the same time for both his idols; to have found in the guide and companion of the one a commander for the other. What is a husband but the pilot on the voyage of matrimony? Why not then the same conductor for the vessel and for the girl? The affairs of a household have their tides, their ebbs and flows, and he who knows how to steer a bark, ought to know how to guide a woman's destiny, subject as both are to the influences of the moon and the wind. *Sieur Clubin* being only fifteen years younger than Lethierry, would necessarily be only a provisional master for the *Durande*. It would be necessary to find a young captain, a permanent master, a true successor of the founder, inventor, and creator of the first channel steamboat. A captain for the *Durande* who should come up to his ideal, would have been, already, almost a son-in-law in Lethierry's eyes. Why not make him son-in-law in a double sense? The idea pleased him. The husband *in posse* of Déruchette haunted his dreams. His ideal was a powerful seaman, tanned and browned [Pg 61] by weather, a sea athlete. This, however, was not exactly the ideal of Déruchette. Her dreams, if dreams they could even be called, were of a more ethereal character.

The uncle and the niece were at all events agreed in not being in haste to seek a solution of these problems. When Déruchette began to be regarded as a probable heiress, a crowd of suitors had presented themselves. Attentions under these circumstances are not generally worth much. Mess Lethierry felt this. He would grumble out the old French proverb, "*A maiden of gold, a suitor of brass.*" He politely showed the fortune-seekers to the door. He was content to wait, and so was Déruchette.

It was, perhaps, a singular fact, that he had little inclination for the local aristocracy. In that respect Mess Lethierry showed himself not entirely English. It will hardly be believed that he even refused for Déruchette a Ganduel of Jersey, and a Bugnet Nicolin of Sark. People were bold enough to affirm, although we doubt if this were possible, that he had even declined the proposals of a member of the family of Edou, which is evidently descended from “Edou-ard” (Anglicè Edward) the Confessor.

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## XII

### AN ANOMALY IN THE CHARACTER OF LETHIERRY

Mess Lethierry had a failing, and a serious one. He detested a priest; though not as an individual, but as an institution. Reading one day—for he used to read—in a work of Voltaire—for he would even read Voltaire—the remark, that priests “have something cat-like in their nature,” he laid down the book and was heard to mutter, “Then, I suppose, I have something dog-like in mine.”

It must be remembered that the priests—Lutheran and Calvinist, as well as Catholic—had vigorously combated the new “Devil Boat,” and had persecuted its inventor. To be a sort of revolutionist in the art of navigation, to introduce a spirit of progress in the Norman Archipelago, to disturb the peace of the poor little island of Guernsey with a new invention, was in their eyes, as we have not concealed from the reader, an abominable and most condemnable rashness. Nor had they omitted to condemn it pretty loudly. It must not be forgotten that we are now speaking of the Guernsey clergy of a bygone[Pg 62] generation, very different from that of the present time, who in almost all the local places of worship display a laudable sympathy with progress. They had embarrassed Lethierry in a hundred ways; every sort of resisting force which can be found in sermons and discourses had been employed against him. Detested by the churchmen, he naturally came to detest them in his turn. Their hatred was the extenuating circumstance to be taken into account in judging of his.

But it must be confessed that his dislike for priests was, in some degree, in his very nature. It was hardly necessary for them to hate him in order to inspire him with aversion. As he said, he moved among them like the dog among cats. He had an antipathy to them, not only in idea, but in what is more difficult to analyse, his instincts. He felt their secret claws, and showed his teeth; sometimes, it must be confessed, a little at random and out of season. It is a mistake to make no distinctions: a dislike in the mass is a prejudice. The good Savoyard curé would have found no favour in his eyes. It is not certain that a worthy priest was even a possible

thing in Lethierry's mind. His philosophy was carried so far that his good sense sometimes abandoned him. There is such a thing as the intolerance of tolerants, as well as the violence of moderates. But Lethierry was at bottom too good-natured to be a thorough hater. He did not attack so much as avoid. He kept the church people at a distance. He suffered evil at their hands; but he confined himself to not wishing them any good. The shade of difference, in fact, between his aversion and theirs, lay in the fact that they bore animosity, while he had only a strong antipathy. Small as is the island of Guernsey, it has, unfortunately, plenty of room for differences of religion; there, to take the broad distinction, is the Catholic faith and the Protestant faith; every form of worship has its temple or chapel. In Germany, at Heidelberg, for example, people are not so particular; they divide a church in two, one half for St. Peter, the other half for Calvin, and between the two is a partition to prevent religious variances terminating in fist-cuffs. The shares are equal; the Catholics have three altars, the Huguenots three altars. As the services are at the same hours, one bell summonses both denominations to prayers; it rings, in fact, both for God and for Satan, according as each pleases to regard it. Nothing can be more simple.

The phlegmatic character of the Germans favours, I suppose, this peculiar arrangement, but in Guernsey every religion has [Pg 63] its own domicile; there is the orthodox parish and the heretic parish; the individual may choose. "Neither one nor the other" was the choice of Mess Lethierry.

This sailor, workman, philosopher, and parvenu trader, though a simple man in appearance, was by no means simple at bottom. He had his opinions and his prejudices. On the subject of the priests he was immovable; he would have entered the lists with Montlosier.

Occasionally he indulged in rather disrespectful jokes upon this subject. He had certain odd expressions thereupon peculiar to himself, but significant enough. Going to confession he called "combing one's conscience." The little learning that he had—a certain amount of reading picked up here and there between the squalls at sea—did not prevent his making blunders in spelling. He made also mistakes in pronunciation, some of which, however, gave a double sense to his words, which might have been suspected of a sly intention. After peace had been brought about by Waterloo between the France of Louis XVIII. and the England of Wellington, Mess Lethierry was heard to say, "Bour mont a été le traître d'union entre les deux camps." On one occasion he wrote *pape ôté* for *papauté*. We do not think these puns were intentional.

Though he was a strong anti-papist, that circumstance was far from conciliating the Anglicans. He was no more liked by the Protestant rectors than by the Catholic curés.

The enunciation of the greatest dogmas did not prevent his anti-theological temper bursting forth. Accident, for example, having once brought him to hear a sermon on eternal punishment, by the Reverend Jaquemin Hérode—a magnificent discourse, filled from one end to the other with sacred texts, proving the everlasting pains, the tortures, the torments, the perditions, the inexorable chastisements, the burnings without end, the inextinguishable maledictions, the wrath of the Almighty, the celestial fury, the divine vengeance, and other incontestable realities—he was heard to say as he was going out in the midst of the faithful flock, “You see, I have an odd notion of my own on this matter; I imagine God as a merciful being.”

This leaven of atheism was doubtless due to his sojourn in France.

Although a Guernsey man of pure extraction, he was called in the island “the Frenchman;” but chiefly on account of his “improper” manner of speaking. He did not indeed conceal the truth from himself. He was impregnated with ideas sub[Pg 64]versive of established institutions. His obstinacy in constructing the “Devil Boat” had proved that. He used to say, “I was suckled by the ’89”—a bad sort of nurse. These were not his only indiscretions. In France “to preserve appearances,” in England “to be respectable,” is the chief condition of a quiet life. To be respectable implies a multitude of little observances, from the strict keeping of Sunday down to the careful tying of a cravat. “To act so that nobody may point at you;” this is the terrible social law. To be pointed at with the finger is almost the same thing as an anathematisation. Little towns, always hotbeds of gossip, are remarkable for that isolating malignancy, which is like the tremendous malediction of the Church seen through the wrong end of the telescope. The bravest are afraid of this ordeal. They are ready to confront the storm, the fire of cannon, but they shrink at the glance of “Mrs. Grundy.” Mess Lethierry was more obstinate than logical; but under pressure even his obstinacy would bend. He put—to use another of his phrases, eminently suggestive of latent compromises, not always pleasant to avow—“a little water in his wine.” He kept aloof from the clergy, but he did not absolutely close his door against them. On official occasions, and at the customary epochs of pastoral visits, he received with sufficiently good grace both the Lutheran rector and the Papist chaplain. He had even, though at distant intervals, accompanied Déruchette to the Anglican parish church, to which Déruchette herself, as we have said, only went on the four great festivals of the year.

On the whole, these little concessions, which always cost him a pang, irritated him; and far from inclining him towards the Church people, only increased his inward disinclination to them. He compensated himself by more raillery. His nature, in

general so devoid of bitterness, had no uncharitable side except this. To alter him, however, was impossible.

In fact, this was in his very temperament, and was beyond his own power to control.

Every sort of priest or clergyman was distasteful to him. He had a little of the old revolutionary want of reverence. He did not distinguish between one form of worship and another. He did not do justice to that great step in the progress of ideas, the denial of the real presence. His shortsightedness in these matters even prevented his perceiving any essential difference between a minister and an abbé. A reverend doctor and a reverend father were pretty nearly the same to him. He used [Pg 65] to say, "Wesley is not more to my taste than Loyola." When he saw a reverend pastor walking with his wife, he would turn to look at them, and mutter, "a married priest," in a tone which brought out all the absurdity which those words had in the ears of Frenchmen at that time. He used to relate how, on his last voyage to England, he had seen the "Bishopess" of London. His dislike for marriages of that sort amounted almost to disgust. "Gown and gown do not mate well," he would say. The sacerdotal function was to him in the nature of a distinct sex. It would have been natural to him to have said, "Neither a man nor a woman, only a priest;" and he had the bad taste to apply to the Anglican and the Roman Catholic clergy the same disdainful epithets. He confounded the two cassocks in the same phraseology. He did not take the trouble to vary in favour of Catholics or Lutherans, or whatever they might be, the figures of speech common among military men of that period. He would say to Déruchette, "Marry whom you please, provided you do not marry a parson."

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