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THE BATTLE OF THE STRONG

[A ROMANCE OF TWO KINGDOMS]

By Gilbert Parker

Volume 4.

CHAPTER XXIII

With what seemed an unnecessary boldness Detricand slept that night at the inn, "The Golden Crown," in the town of Bercy: a Royalist of the Vendee exposing himself to deadly peril in a town sworn to alliance with the Revolutionary Government. He knew that the town, even the inn, might be full of spies; but one other thing he also knew: the innkeeper of "The Golden Crown" would not betray him, unless he had greatly changed since fifteen years ago. Then they had been friends, for his uncle of Vaufontaine had had a small estate in Bercy itself, in ironical proximity to the castle.

He walked boldly into the inn parlour. There were but four men in the room--the landlord, two stout burghers, and Frange Pergot, the porter of the castle, who had lost no time carrying his news: not to betray his old comrade in escapade, but to tell a chosen few, Royalists under the rose, that he had seen one of those servants of God, an officer of the Vendee.

At sight of the white badge with the red cross on Detricand’s coat, the four stood up and answered his greeting with devout respect; and he had speedy assurance that in this inn he was safe from betrayal. Presently he learned that three days hence a meeting of the States of Bercy was to be held for setting the seal upon the Duke’s formal adoption of Philip, and to execute a deed of succession. It was deemed certain that, ere this, the officer sent to England would have returned with Philip’s freedom and King George’s licence to accept the succession in the duchy. From interest in these matters alone Detricand would not have remained at Bercy, but he thought to use the time for secretly meeting officers of the duchy likely to favour the cause of the Royalists.

During these three days of waiting he heard with grave concern a rumour that the great meeting of the States would be marked by Philip’s betrothal with the Comtesse Chantavoine. He cared naught for the succession, but there was ever with him the remembrance of Guida Landresse de Landresse, and what touched Philip d’Avranche he had come to associate with her. Of the true relations between Guida and Philip he knew nothing, but from that last day in Jersey he did know that Philip had roused in her emotions, perhaps less vital than love but certainly less equable than friendship.

Now in his fear that Guida might suffer, the more he thought of the Comtesse Chantavoine as the chosen wife of Philip the more it troubled him. He could not shake off oppressive thoughts concerning Guida and

this betrothal. They interwove themselves through all his secret business with the Royalists of Bercy. For his own part, he would have gone far and done much to shield her from injury. He had seen and known in her something higher than Philip might understand--a simple womanliness, a profound depth of character. His pledge to her had been the key-note of his new life. Some day, if he lived and his cause prospered, he would go back to Jersey--too late perhaps to tell her what was in his heart, but not too late to tell her the promise had been kept.

It was a relief when the morning of the third day came, bright and joyous, and he knew that before the sun went down he should be on his way back to Saumur.

His friend the innkeeper urged him not to attend the meeting of the States of Bercy, lest he should be recognised by spies of government. He was, however, firm in his will to go, but he exchanged his coat with the red cross for one less conspicuous.

With this eventful morn came the news that the envoy to England had returned with Philip's freedom by exchange of prisoners, and with the needful licence from King George. But other news too was carrying through the town: the French Government, having learned of the Duke's intentions towards Philip, had despatched envoys from Paris to forbid the adoption and deed of succession.

Though the Duke would have defied them, it behoved him to end the matter, if possible, before these envoys' arrival. The States therefore was hurriedly convened two hours before the time appointed, and the race began between the Duke and the emissaries of the French Government.

It was a perfect day, and as the brilliant procession wound down the great rock from the castle, in ever-increasing, glittering line, the effect was mediaeval in its glowing splendour. All had been ready for two days, and the general enthusiasm had seized upon the occasion with an adventurous picturesqueness, in keeping with this strange elevation of a simple British captain to royal estate. This buoyant, clear-faced, stalwart figure had sprung suddenly out of the dark into the garish light of sovereign place, and the imagination of the people had been touched. He was so genial too, so easy-mannered, this d'Avranche of Jersey, whose genealogy had been posted on a hundred walls and carried by a thousand mouths through the principality. As Philip rode past on the left of the exulting Duke, the crowds cheered him wildly. Only on the faces of Comte Carignan Damour and his friends was discontent, and they must perforce be still. Philip himself was outwardly calm, with that desperate quiet which belongs to the most perilous, most adventurous achieving. Words he had used many years ago in Jersey kept ringing in his ears--"'Good-bye, Sir Philip'--I'll be more than that some day."

The Assembly being opened, in a breathless silence the Governor-General of the duchy read aloud the licence of the King of England for Philip d'Avranche, an officer in his navy, to assume the honours to be conferred upon him by the Duke and the States of Bercy. Then, by command of the Duke, the President of the States read aloud the new order of succession:

"1. To the Hereditary Prince Leopold John and his heirs male; in default of which to

"2. The Prince successor, Philip d'Avranche and his heirs male; in default of which to

"3. The heir male of the House of Vaufontaine." Afterwards came reading of the deed of gift by which the Duke made over to Prince Philip certain possessions in the province of d'Avranche. To all this the assent of Prince Leopold John had been formally secured. After the Assembly and the chief officers of the duchy should have ratified these documents and the Duke signed them, they were to be enclosed in a box with three locks and deposited with the Sovereign Court at Bercy. Duplicates were also to be sent to London and registered in the records of the College of Arms. Amid great enthusiasm, the States, by unanimous vote, at once ratified the documents. The one notable dissentient was the Intendant, Count Carignan Damour, the devout ally of the French Government. It was he who had sent Fouche word concerning Philip's adoption; it was also he who had at last, through his spies, discovered Detricand's presence in the town, and had taken action thereupon. In the States, however, he had no vote, and wisdom kept him silent, though he was watchful for any chance to delay events against the arrival of the French envoys.

They should soon be here, and, during the proceedings in the States, he watched the doors anxiously. Every minute that passed made him more restless, less hopeful. He had a double motive in preventing this new succession. With Philip as adopted son and heir there would be fewer spoils of office; with Philip as duke there would be none at all, for the instinct of distrust and antipathy was mutual. Besides, as a Republican, he looked for his reward from Fouche in good time.

Presently it was announced by the President that the signatures to the acts of the States would be set in private. Thereupon, with all the concourse standing, the Duke, surrounded by the law, military, and civil officers of the duchy, girded upon Philip the jewelled sword which had been handed down in the House of d'Avranche from generation to generation. The open function being thus ended, the people were enjoined to proceed at once to the cathedral, where a Te Deum would be sung.

The public then retired, leaving the Duke and a few of the highest officials of the duchy to formally sign and seal the deeds. When the outer doors were closed, one unofficial person remained--Comte Detricand de Tournay, of the House of Vaufontaine. Leaning against a pillar, he stood looking calmly at the group surrounding the Duke at the great council-table.

Suddenly the Duke turned to a door at the right of the President's chair, and, opening it, bowed courteously to some one beyond. An instant afterwards there entered the Comtesse Chantavoine, with her uncle the Marquis Grandjon-Larisse, an aged and feeble but distinguished figure. They advanced towards the table, the lady on the Duke's arm, and Philip, saluting them gravely, offered the Marquis a chair. At first the Marquis

declined it, but the Duke pressed him, and in the subsequent proceedings he of all the number was seated.

Detricand apprehended the meaning of the scene. This was the lady whom the Duke had chosen as wife for the new Prince. The Duke had invited the Comtesse to witness the final act which was to make Philip d'Avranche his heir in legal fact as by verbal proclamation; not doubting that the romantic nature of the incident would impress her. He had even hoped that the function might be followed by a formal betrothal in the presence of the officials; and the situation might still have been critical for Philip had it not been for the pronounced reserve of the Comtesse herself.

Tall, of gracious and stately carriage, the curious quietness of the face of the Comtesse would have been almost an unbecoming gravity were it not that the eyes, clear, dark, and strong, lightened it. The mouth had a somewhat set sweetness, even as the face was somewhat fixed in its calm. In her bearing, in all her motions, there was a regal quality; yet, too, something of isolation, of withdrawal, in her self-possession and unruffled observation. She seemed, to Detricand, a figure apart, a woman whose friendship would be everlasting, but whose love would be more an affectionate habit than a passion; and in whom devotion would be strong because devotion was the key-note of her nature. The dress of a nun would have turned her into a saint; of a peasant would have made her a Madonna; of a Quaker, would have made her a dreamer and a devote; of a queen, would have made her benign yet unapproachable. It struck him all at once as he looked, that this woman had one quality in absolute kinship with Guida Landresse--honesty of mind and nature; only with this young aristocrat the honesty would be without passion. She had straight-forwardness, a firm if limited intellect, a clear-mindedness belonging somewhat to narrowness of outlook, but a genuine capacity for understanding the right and the wrong of things. Guida, so Detricand thought, might break her heart and live on; this woman would break her heart and die: the one would grow larger through suffering, the other shrink to a numb coldness.

So he entertained himself by these flashes of discernment, presently merged in wonderment as to what was in Philip's mind as he stood there, destiny hanging in that drop of ink at the point of the pen in the Duke's fingers!

Philip was thinking of the destiny, but more than all else just now he was thinking of the woman before him and the issue to be faced by him regarding her. His thoughts were not so clear nor so discerning as Detricand's. No more than he understood Guida did he understand this clear-eyed, still, self-possessed woman. He thought her cold, unsympathetic, barren of that glow which should set the pulses of a man like himself bounding. It never occurred to him that these still waters ran deep, that to awaken this seemingly glacial nature, to kindle a fire on this altar, would be to secure unto his life's end a steady, enduring flame of devotion. He revolted from her; not alone because he had a wife, but because the Comtesse chilled him, because with her, in any case, he should never be able to play the passionate lover as he had done

with Guida; and with Philip not to be the passionate lover was to be no lover at all. One thing only appealed to him: she was the Comtesse Chantavoine, a fitting consort in the eyes of the world for a sovereign duke. He was more than a little carried off his feet by the marvel of the situation. He could think of nothing quite clearly; everything was confused and shifting in his mind.

The first words of the Duke were merely an informal greeting to his council and the high officers present. He was about to speak further when some one drew his attention to Detricand's presence. An order was given to challenge the stranger, but Detricand, without waiting for the approach of the officer, advanced towards the table, and, addressing the Duke, said:

"The Duc de Bercy will not forbid the presence of his cousin, Detricand de Tournay, at this impressive ceremony?"

The Duke, dumfounded, though he preserved an outward calm, could not answer for an instant. Then with a triumphant, vindictive smile which puckered his yellow cheeks like a wild apple, he said:

"The Comte de Tournay is welcome to behold an end of the ambitions of the Vaufontaines." He looked towards Philip with an exulting pride. "Monsieur le Comte is quite right," he added, turning to his council--"he may always claim the privileges of a relative of the Bercys; but the hospitality goes not beyond my house and my presence, and monsieur le comte will understand my meaning."

At that moment Detricand caught the eye of Damour the Intendant, and he understood perfectly. This man, the innkeeper had told him, was known to be a Revolutionary, and he felt he was in imminent danger.

He came nearer, however, bowing to all present, and, making no reply to the Duke save a simple, "I thank your Highness," took a place near the council-table.

The short ceremony of signing the deeds immediately followed. A few formal questions were asked of Philip, to which he briefly replied, and afterwards he made the oath of allegiance to the Duke, with his hand upon the ancient sword of the d'Avranches. These preliminaries ended, the Duke was just stooping to put his pen to the paper for signature, when the Intendant, as much to annoy Philip as still to stay the proceedings against the coming of Fouche's men, said:

"It would appear that one question has been omitted in the formalities of this Court." He paused dramatically. He was only aiming a random shot; he would make the most of it.

The Duke looked up perturbed, and said sharply: "What is that--what is that, monsieur?"

"A form, monsieur le duc, a mere form. Monsieur"--he bowed towards Philip politely--"monsieur is not already married? There is no--" He

paused again.

For an instant there was absolute stillness. Philip had felt his heart give one great thump of terror: Did the Intendant know anything? Did Detricand know anything.

Standing rigid for a moment, his pen poised, the Duke looked sharply at the Intendant and then still more sharply at Philip. The progress of that look had granted Philip an instant's time to recover his composure. He was conscious that the Comtesse Chantavoine had given a little start, and then had become quite still and calm. Now her eyes were intently fixed upon him.

He had, however, been too often in physical danger to lose his nerve at this moment. The instant was big with peril; it was the turning point of his life, and he felt it. His eyes dropped towards the spot of ink at the point of the pen the Duke held. It fascinated him, it was destiny.

He took a step nearer to the table, and, drawing himself up, looked his princely interlocutor steadily in the eyes.

"Of course there is no marriage--no woman?" asked the Duke a little hoarsely, his eyes fastened on Philip's. With steady voice Philip replied: "Of course, monsieur le duc."

There was another stillness. Some one sighed heavily. It was the Comtesse Chantavoine.

The next instant the Duke stooped, and wrote his signature three times hurriedly upon the deeds.

A moment afterwards, Detricand was in the street, making towards "The Golden Crown." As he hurried on he heard the galloping of horses ahead of him. Suddenly some one plucked him by the arm from a doorway.

"Quick--within!" said a voice. It was that of the Duke's porter, Frange Pergot. Without hesitation or a word, Detricand did as he was bid, and the door clanged to behind him.

"Fouche's men are coming down the street; spies have betrayed you," whispered Pergot. "Follow me. I will hide you till night, and then you must away."

Pergot had spoken the truth. But Detricand was safely hidden, and Fouche's men came too late to capture the Vendean chief or to forbid those formal acts which made Philip d'Avranche a prince.

Once again at Saumur, a week later, Detricand wrote a long letter to Carterette Mattingley, in Jersey, in which he set forth these strange events at Bercy, and asked certain questions concerning Guida.

CHAPTER XXIV

Since the day of his secret marriage with Guida, Philip had been carried along in the gale of naval preparation and incidents of war as a leaf is borne onward by a storm--no looking back, to-morrow always the goal. But as a wounded traveller nursing carefully his hurt seeks shelter from the scorching sun and the dank air, and travels by little stages lest he never come at all to friendly hostel, so Guida made her way slowly through the months of winter and of spring.

In the past, it had been February to Guida because the yellow Lenten lilies grew on all the sheltered cotils; March because the periwinkle and the lords-and-ladies came; May when the cliffs were a blaze of golden gorse and the perfume thereof made all the land sweet as a honeycomb.

Then came the other months, with hawthorn trees and hedges all in blow; the honeysuckle gladdening the doorways, the lilac in bloomy thickets; the ox-eyed daisy of Whitsuntide; the yellow rose of St. Brelade that lies down in the sand and stands up in the hedges; the "mergots" which, like good soldiers, are first in the field and last out of it; the unscented dog-violets, orchises and celandines; the osier beds, the ivy on every barn; the purple thrift in masses on the cliff; the sea-thistle in its glaucous green--"the laughter of the fields whose laugh was gold." And all was summer.

Came a time thereafter, when the children of the poor gathered blackberries for preserves and home made wine; when the wild stock flowered in St. Ouen’s Bay; when the bracken fern was gathered from every cotil, and dried for apple-storing, for bedding for the cherished cow, for back-rests for the veilles, and seats round the winter fire; when peaches, apricots, and nectarines made the walls sumptuous red and gold; when the wild plum and crab-apple flourished in secluded roadways, and the tamarisk dropped its brown pods upon the earth. And all this was autumn.

At last, when the birds of passage swept aloft, snipe and teal and barnacle geese, and the rains began; when the green lizard with its turquoise-blue throat vanished; when the Jersey crapaud was heard croaking no longer in the valleys and the ponds; and the cows were well blanketed--then winter had come again.

Such was the association of seasons in Guida’s mind until one day of a certain year, when for a few hours a man had called her his wife, and then had sailed away. There was no log that might thereafter record the days and weeks unwinding the coils of an endless chain into that sea whither Philip had gone.

Letters she had had, two letters, one in January, one in March. How many times, when a Channel-packet came in, did she go to the doorway and watch for old Mere Rossignol, making the rounds with her han basket, chanting the names of those for whom she had letters; and how many times did she go back to the kitchen, choking down a sob!

The first letter from Philip was at once a blessing and a blow; it was a reassurance and it was a misery. It spoke of bread, as it were, yet offered a stone. It eloquently, passionately told of his love; but it also told, with a torturing ease, that the Araminta was commissioned with sealed orders, and he did not know when he should see her nor when he should be able to write again. War had been declared against France, and they might not touch a port nor have chance to send a letter by a homeward vessel for weeks, and maybe months. This was painful, of course, but it was fate, it was his profession, and it could not be helped. Of course--she must understand--he would write constantly, telling her, as through a kind of diary, what he was doing every day, and then when the chance came the big budget should go to her.

A pain came to Guida's heart as she read the flowing tale of his buoyant love. Had she been the man and he the woman, she could never have written so smoothly of "fate," and "profession," nor told of this separation with so complaisant a sorrow. With her the words would have been wrenched forth from her heart, scarred into the paper with the bitterness of a spirit tried beyond enduring.

With what enthusiasm did Philip, immediately after his heart-breaking news, write of what the war might do for him; what avenues of advancement it might open up, what splendid chances it would offer for success in his career! Did he mean that to comfort her, she asked herself. Did he mean it to divert her from the pain of the separation, to give her something to hope for? She read the letter over and over again--yet no, she could not, though her heart was so willing, find that meaning in it. It was all Philip, Philip full of hope, purpose, prowess, ambition. Did he think--did he think that that could ease the pain, could lighten the dark day settling down on her? Could he imagine that anything might compensate for his absence in the coming months, in this year of all years in her life? His lengthened absence might be inevitable, it might be fate, but could he not see the bitter cruelty of it? He had said that he would be back with her again in two months; and now--ah, did he not know!

As the weeks came and went again she felt that indeed he did not know--or care, maybe.

Some natures cling to beliefs long after conviction has been shattered. These are they of the limited imagination, the loyal, the pertinacious, and the affectionate, the single-hearted children of habit; blind where they do not wish to see, stubborn where their inclinations lie, unamenable to reason, wholly held by legitimate obligations.

But Guida was not of these. Her brain and imagination were as strong as her affections. Her incurable honesty was the deepest thing in her; she did not know even how to deceive herself. As her experience deepened under the influence of a sorrow which still was joy, and a joy that still was sorrow, her vision became acute and piercing. Her mind was like some kaleidoscope. Pictures of things, little and big, which had happened to her in her life, flashed by her inner vision in furious procession. It

was as if, in the photographic machinery of the brain, some shutter had slipped from its place, and a hundred orderless and ungoverned pictures, loosed from natural restraint, rushed by.

Five months had gone since Philip had left her: two months since she had received his second letter, months of complexity of feeling; of tremulousness of discovery; of hungry eagerness for news of the war; of sudden little outbursts of temper in her household life--a new thing in her experience; of passionate touches of tenderness towards her grandfather; of occasional biting comments in the conversations between the Sieur and the Chevalier, causing both gentlemen to look at each other in silent amaze; of as marked lapses into listless disregard of any talk going on around her.

She had been used often to sit still, doing nothing, in a sort of physical content, as the Sieur and his visitors talked; now her hands were always busy, knitting, sewing, or spinning, the steady gaze upon the work showing that her thoughts were far away. Though the Chevalier and her grandfather vaguely noted these changes, they as vaguely set them down to her growing womanhood. In any case, they held it was not for them to comment upon a woman or upon a woman's ways. And a girl like Guida was an incomprehensible being, with an orbit and a system all her own; whose sayings and doings were as little to be reduced to their understandings as the vagaries of any star in the Milky Way or the currents in St. Michael's Basin.

One evening she sat before the fire thinking of Philip. Her grandfather had retired earlier than usual. Biribi lay asleep on the veille. There was no sound save the ticking of the clock on the mantel above her head, the dog's slow breathing, the snapping of the log on the fire, and a soft rush of heat up the chimney. The words of Philip's letters, from which she had extracted every atom of tenderness they held, were always in her ears. At last one phrase kept repeating itself to her like some plaintive refrain, torturing in its mournful suggestion. It was this: "But you see, beloved, though I am absent from you I shall have such splendid chances to get on. There's no limit to what this war may do for me."

Suddenly Guida realised how different was her love from Philip's, how different her place in his life from his place in her life. She reasoned with herself, because she knew that a man's life was work in the world, and that work and ambition were in his bones and in his blood, had been carried down to him through centuries of industrious, ambitious generations of men: that men were one race and women were another. A man was bound by the conditions governing the profession by which he earned his bread and butter and played his part in the world, while striving to reach the seats of honour in high places. He must either live by the law, fulfil to the letter his daily duties in the business of life, or drop out of the race; while a woman, in the presence of man's immoderate ambition, with bitterness and tears, must learn to pray, "O Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law."

Suddenly the whole thing resolved itself in Guida's mind, and her

thinking came to a full stop. She understood now what was the right and what the wrong; and, child as she was in years, woman in thought and experience, yielding to the impulse of the moment, she buried her face in her hands and burst into tears.

"O Philip, Philip, Philip," she sobbed aloud, "it was not right of you to marry me; it was wicked of you to leave me!" Then in her mind she carried on the impeachment and reproach. If he had married her openly and left her at once, it would have been hard to bear, but in the circumstances it might have been right. If he had married her secretly and left her at the altar, so keeping the vow he had made her when she promised to become his wife, that might have been pardonable. But to marry her as he did, and then, breaking his solemn pledge, leave her--it was not right in her eyes; and if not right in the eyes of her who loved him, in whose would it be right?

To these definitions she had come at last.

It is an eventful moment, a crucial ordeal for a woman, when she forces herself to see the naked truth concerning the man she has loved, yet the man who has wronged her. She is born anew in that moment: it may be to love on, to blind herself, and condone and defend, so lowering her own moral tone; or to congeal in heart, become keener in intellect, scornful and bitter with her own sex and merciless towards the other, indifferent to blame and careless of praise, intolerant, judging all the world by her own experience, incredulous of any true thing. Or again she may become stronger, sadder, wiser; condoning nothing, minimising nothing, deceiving herself in nothing, and still never forgiving at least one thing--the destruction of an innocent faith and a noble credulity; seeing clearly the whole wrong; with a strong intelligence measuring perfectly the iniquity; but out of a largeness of nature and by virtue of a high sense of duty, devoting her days to the salvation of a man’s honour, to the betterment of one weak or wicked nature.

Of these last would have been Guida.

"O Philip, Philip, you have been wicked to me!" she sobbed.

Her tears fell upon the stone hearth, and the fire dried them. Every teardrop was one girlish feeling and emotion gone, one bright fancy, one tender hope vanished. She was no longer a girl. There were troubles and dangers ahead of her, but she must now face them dry-eyed and alone.

In his second letter Philip had told her to announce the marriage, and said that he would write to her grandfather explaining all, and also to the Rev. Lorenzo Dow. She had waited and watched for that letter to her grandfather, but it had not come. As for Mr. Dow, he was a prisoner with the French; and he had never given her the marriage certificate.

There was yet another factor in the affair. While the island was agog over Mr. Dow’s misfortune, there had been a bold robbery at St. Michael’s Rectory of the strong-box containing the communion plate, the parish taxes for the year, and--what was of great moment to at least one person

--the parish register of deaths, baptisms, and marriages. Thus it was that now no human being in Jersey could vouch that Guida had been married.

Yet these things troubled her little. How easily could Philip set all right! If he would but come back--that at first was her only thought; for what matter a ring, or any proof or proclamation without Philip!

It did not occur to her at first that all these things were needed to save her from shame in the eyes of the world. If she had thought of them apprehensively, she would have said to herself, how easy to set all right by simply announcing the marriage! And indeed she would have done so when war was declared and Philip received his new command, but that she had wished the announcement to come from him. Well, that would come in any case when his letter to her grandfather arrived. No doubt it had missed the packet by which hers came, she thought.

But another packet and yet another arrived; and still there was no letter from Philip for the Sieur de Mauprat. Winter had come, and spring had gone, and now summer was at hand. Haymaking was beginning, the wild strawberries were reddening among the clover, and in her garden, apples had followed the buds on the trees beneath which Philip had told his fateful tale of love.

At last a third letter arrived, but it brought little joy to her heart. It was extravagant in terms of affection, but somehow it fell short of the true thing, for its ardour was that of a mind preoccupied, and underneath all ran a current of inherent selfishness. It delighted in the activity of his life, it was full of hope, of promise of happiness for them both in the future, but it had no solicitude for Guida in the present. It chilled her heart--so warm but a short season ago--that Philip to whom she had once ascribed strength, tenderness, profound thoughtfulness, should concern himself so little in the details of her life. For the most part, his letters seemed those of an ardent lover who knew his duty and did it gladly, but with a self-conscious and flowing eloquence, costing but small strain of feeling.

In this letter he was curious to know what the people in Jersey said about their marriage. He had written to Lorenzo Dow and her grandfather, he said, but had heard afterwards that the vessel carrying the letters had been taken by a French privateer; and so they had not arrived in Jersey. But of course she had told her grandfather and all the island of the ceremony performed at St. Michael's. He was sending her fifty pounds, his first contribution to their home; and, the war over, a pretty new home she certainly should have. He would write to her grandfather again, though this day there was no time to do so.

Guida realised now that she must announce the marriage at once. But what proofs of it had she? There was the ring Philip had given her, inscribed with their names; but she was sophisticated enough to know that this would not be adequate evidence in the eyes of her Jersey neighbours. The marriage register of St. Michael's, with its record, was stolen, and that proof was gone. Lastly, there were Philip's letters; but no--a thousand

times no!--she would not show Philip's letters to any human being; even the thought of it hurt her delicacy, her self-respect. Her heart burned with fresh bitterness to think that there had been a secret marriage. How hard it was at this distance of time to tell the world the tale, and to be forced to prove it by Philip's letters. No, no, in spite of all, she could not do it--not yet. She would still wait the arrival of his letter to her grandfather. If it did not come soon, then she must be brave and tell her story.

She went to the Vier Marchi less now. Also fewer folk stood gossiping with her grandfather in the Place du Vier Prison, or by the well at the front door--so far he had not wondered why. To be sure, Maitresse Aimable came oftener; but, since that notable day at Sark, Guida had resolutely avoided reference, however oblique, to Philip and herself. In her dark days the one tenderly watchful eye upon her was that of the egregiously fat old woman called the "Femme de Ballast," whose thick tongue clave to the roof of her mouth, whose outer attractions were so meagre that even her husband's chief sign of affection was to pull her great toe, passing her bed of a morning to light the fire.

Carterette Mattingley also came, but another friend who had watched over Guida for years before Philip appeared in the Place du Vier Prison never entered her doorway now. Only once or twice since that day on the Ecrehos, so fateful to them both, had Guida seen Ranulph. He had withdrawn to St. Aubin's Bay, where his trade of ship-building was carried on, and having fitted up a small cottage, lived a secluded life with his father there. Neither of them appeared often in St. Heliers, and they were seldom or never seen in the Vier Marchi.

Carterette saw Ranulph little oftener than did Guida, but she knew what he was doing, being anxious to know, and every one's business being every one else's business in Jersey. In the same way Ranulph knew of Guida. What Carterette was doing Ranulph was not concerned to know, and so knew little; and Guida knew and thought little of how Ranulph fared: which was part of the selfishness of love.

But one day Carterette received a letter from France which excited her greatly, and sent her off hot-foot to Guida. In the same hour Ranulph heard a piece of hateful gossip which made him fell to the ground the man who told him, and sent him with white face, and sick, yet indignant heart, to the cottage in the Place du Vier Prison.

CHAPTER XXV

Guida was sitting on the veille reading an old London paper she had bought of the mate of the packet from Southampton. One page contained an account of the execution of Louis XVI; another reported the fight between the English thirty-six gun frigate Araminta and the French Niobe. The engagement had been desperate, the valiant Araminta having been fought, not alone against odds as to her enemy, but against the irresistible

perils of a coast upon which the Admiralty charts gave cruelly imperfect information. To the Admiralty we owed the fact, the journal urged, that the Araminta was now at the bottom of the sea, and its young commander confined in a French fortress, his brave and distinguished services lost to the country. Nor had the government yet sought to lessen the injury by arranging a cartel for the release of the unfortunate commander.

The Araminta! To Guida the letters of the word seemed to stand out from the paper like shining hieroglyphs on a misty grey curtain. The rest of the page was resolved into a filmy floating substance, no more tangible than the ashy skeleton on which writing still lives when the paper itself has been eaten by flame, and the flame swallowed by the air.

Araminta--this was all her eyes saw, that familiar name in the flaring handwriting of the Genius of Life, who had scrawled her destiny in that one word.

Slowly the monstrous ciphers faded from the grey hemisphere of space, and she saw again the newspaper in her trembling fingers, the kitchen into which the sunlight streamed from the open window, the dog Biribi basking in the doorway. That living quiet which descends upon a house when the midday meal and work are done came suddenly home to her, in contrast to the turmoil in her mind and being.

So that was why Philip had not written to her! While her heart was daily growing more bitter against him, he had been fighting his vessel against great odds, and at last had been shipwrecked and carried off a prisoner. A strange new understanding took possession of her. Her life suddenly widened. She realised all at once how the eyes of the whole world might be fixed upon a single ship, a few cannon, and some scores of men. The general of a great army leading tens of thousands into the clash of battle--that had been always within her comprehension; but this was almost miraculous, this sudden projection of one ship and her commander upon the canvas of fame. Philip had left her, unknown save to a few. With the nations turned to see, he had made a gallant and splendid fight, and now he was a prisoner in a French fortress.

This then was why her grandfather had received no letter from him concerning the marriage. Well, now she must speak for herself; she must announce it. Must she show Philip's letters?--No, no, she could not.... Suddenly a new suggestion came to her: there was one remaining proof. Since no banns had been published, Philip must have obtained a license from the Dean of the island, and he would have a record of it. All she had to do now was to get a copy of this record--but no, a license to marry was no proof of marriage; it was but evidence of intention.

Still, she would go to the Dean this very moment.

It was not right that she should wait longer: indeed, in waiting so long she had already done great wrong to herself--and to Philip perhaps.

She rose from the veille with a sense of relief. No more of this secrecy, making her innocence seem guilt; no more painful dreams of

punishment for some intangible crime; no starting if she heard a sudden footstep; no more hurried walk through the streets, looking neither to right nor to left; no more inward struggles wearing away her life.

To-morrow--to-morrow--no, this very night, her grandfather and one other, even Maitresse Aimable, should know all; and she should sleep quietly--oh, so quietly to-night!

Looking into a mirror on the wall--it had been a gift from her grandfather--she smiled at herself. Why, how foolish of her it had been to feel so much and to imagine terrible things! Her eyes were shining now, and her hair, catching the sunshine from the window, glistened like burnished copper. She turned to see how it shone on the temple and the side of her head. Philip had praised her hair. Her look lingered for a moment placidly on herself-then she started suddenly. A wave of feeling, a shiver, passed through her, her brow gathered, she flushed deeply.

Turning away from the mirror, she went and sat down again on the edge of the veille. Her mind had changed. She would go to the Dean's--but not till it was dark. She suddenly thought it strange that the Dean had never said anything about the license. Why, again, perhaps he had. How should she know what gossip was going on in the town! But no, she was quick to feel, and if there had been gossip she would have felt it in the manner of her neighbours. Besides, gossip as to a license to marry was all on the right side. She sighed--she had sighed so often of late--to think what a tangle it all was, of how it would be smoothed out tomorrow, of what--

There was a click of the garden-gate, a footstep on the walk, a half-growl from Biribi, and the face of Carterette Mattingley appeared in the kitchen doorway. Seeing Guida seated on the veille, she came in quickly, her dancing dark eyes heralding great news.

"Don't get up, ma couzaine," she said, "please no. Sit just there, and I'll sit beside you. Ah, but I have the most wonderfuls!"

Carterette was out of breath. She had hurried here from her home. As she said herself, her two feet weren't in one shoe on the way, and that with her news made her quiver with excitement.

At first, bursting with mystery, she could do no more than sit and look in Guida's face. Carterette was quick of instinct in her way, but yet she had not seen any marked change in her friend during the past few months. She had been so busy thinking of her own particular secret that she was not observant of others. At times she met Ranulph, and then she was uplifted, to be at once cast down again; for she saw that his old cheerfulness was gone, that a sombreness had settled on him. She flattered herself, however, that she could lighten his gravity if she had the right and the good opportunity; the more so that he no longer visited the cottage in the Place du Vier Prison.

This drew her closer to Guida also, for, in truth, Carterette had no loftiness of nature. Like most people, she was selfish enough to hold a

person a little dearer for not standing in her own especial light. Long ago she had shrewdly guessed that Guida's interest lay elsewhere than with Ranulph, and a few months back she had fastened upon Philip as the object of her favour. That seemed no weighty matter, for many sailors had made love to Carterette in her time, and knowing it was here to-day and away to-morrow with them, her heart had remained untouched. Why then should she think Guida would take the officer seriously where she herself held the sailor lightly? But at the same time she felt sure that what concerned Philip must interest Guida, she herself always cared to hear the fate of an old admirer, and this was what had brought her to the cottage to-day.

"Guess who's wrote me a letter?" she asked of Guida, who had taken up some sewing, and was now industriously regarding the stitches.

At Carterette's question, Guida looked up and said with a smile, "Some one you like, I see."

Carterette laughed gaily. "Ba su, I should think I did--in a way. But what's his name? Come, guess, Ma'm'selle Dignity."

"Eh ben, the fairy godmother," answered Guida, trying not to show an interest she felt all too keenly; for nowadays it seemed to her that all news should be about Philip. Besides, she was gaining time and preparing herself for--she knew not what.

"O my grief!" responded the brown-eyed elf, kicking off a red slipper, and thrusting her foot into it again, "never a fairy godmother had I, unless it's old Manon Moignard the witch:

> "'Sas, son, bileton,
> My grand'methe a-fishing has gone:
> She'll gather the fins to scrape my jowl,
> And ride back home on a barnyard fowl!'

"Nannin, ma'm'selle, 'tis plain to be seen you can't guess what a cornfield grows besides red poppies." Laughing in sheer delight at the mystery she was making, she broke off again into a whimsical nursery rhyme:

> "'Coquelicot, j'ai mal au de
> Coquelicot, qu'est qui l'a fait?
> Coquelicot, ch'tai mon valet.'"

She kicked off the red slipper again. Flying half-way across the room, it alighted on the table, and a little mud from the heel dropped on the clean scoured surface. With a little moue of mockery, she got slowly up and tiptoed across the floor, like a child afraid of being scolded. Gathering the dust carefully, and looking demurely askance at Guida the while, she tiptoed over again to the fireplace and threw it into the chimney.

"Naughty Carterette," she said at herself with admiring reproach, as she

looked in Guida’s mirror, and added, glancing with farcical approval round the room, "and it all shines like peacock’s feather, too!"

Guida longed to snatch the letter from Carterette’s hand and read it, but she only said calmly, though the words fluttered in her throat:

"You’re as gay as a chaffinch, Garcon Carterette." Garcon Carterette! Instantly Carterette sobered down. No one save Ranulph ever called her Garcon Carterette. Guida used Ranulph’s name for Carterette, knowing that it would change the madcap’s mood. Carterette, to hide a sudden flush, stooped and slowly put on her slipper. Then she came back to the veille, and sat down again beside Guida, saying as she did so:

"Yes, I’m gay as a chaffinch--me."

She unfolded the letter slowly, and Guida stopped sewing, but mechanically began to prick the linen lying on her knee with the point of the needle.

"Well," said Carterette deliberately, "this letter’s from a pend’loque of a fellow--at least, we used to call him that--though if you come to think, he was always polite as mended porringer. Often he hadn’t two sous to rub against each other. And--and not enough buttons for his clothes."

Guida smiled. She guessed whom Carterette meant. "Has Monsieur Detricand more buttons now?" she asked with a little whimsical lift of the eyebrows.

"Ah bidemme, yes, and gold too, all over him--like that!" She made a quick sweeping gesture which would seem to make Detricand a very spangle of buttons. "Come, what do you think--he’s a general now.

"A general!" Instantly Guida thought of Philip and a kind of envy shot into her heart that this idler Detricand should mount so high in a few months--a man whose past had held nothing to warrant such success. "A general--where?" she asked.

"In the Vendee army, fighting for the new King of France--you know the rebels cut off the last King’s head."

At another time Guida’s heart would have throbbed with elation, for the romance of that Vendee union of aristocrat and peasant fired her imagination; but she only said in the tongue of the people: "Ma fuifre, yes, I know!"

Carterette was delighted to thus dole out her news, and get due reward of astonishment. "And he’s another name," she added. "At least it’s not another, he always had it, but he didn’t call himself by it. Pardi, he’s more than the Chevalier; he’s the Comte Detricand de Tournay--ah, then, believe me if you choose, there it is!"

She pointed to the signature of the letter, and with a gush of eloquence

explained how it all was about Detricand the vaurien and Detricand the Comte de Tournay.

"Good riddance to Monsieur Savary dit Detricand, and good welcome to the Comte de Tournay," answered Guida, trying hard to humour Carterette, that she should sooner hear the news yet withheld. "And what follows after?"

Carterette was half sorry that her great moment had come. She wished she could have linked out the suspense longer. But she let herself be comforted by the anticipated effect of her "wonderfuls."

"I'll tell you what comes after--ah, but see then what a news I have for you! You know that Monsieur d'Avranche--well, what do you think has come to him?"

Guida felt as if a monstrous hand had her heart in its grasp, crushing it. Presentiment seized her. Carterette was busy running over the pages of the letter, and did not notice her colourless face. She had no thought that Guida had any vital interest in Philip, and ruthlessly, though unconsciously, she began to torture the young wife as few are tortured in this world.

She read aloud Detricand's description of his visit to the Castle of Bercy, and of the meeting with Philip. "'See what comes of a name!'" wrote Detricand. "'Here was a poor prisoner whose ancestor, hundreds of years ago, may or mayn't have been a relative of the d'Avranches of Clermont, when a disappointed duke, with an eye open for heirs, takes a fancy to the good-looking face of the poor prisoner, and voila! you have him whisked off to a palace, fed on milk and honey, and adopted into the family. Then a pedigree is nicely grown on a summer day, and this fine young Jersey adventurer is found to be a green branch from the old root; and there's a great blare of trumpets, and the States of the duchy are called together to make this English officer a prince--and that's the Thousand and One Nights in Arabia, Ma'm'selle Carterette.'"

Guida was sitting rigid and still. In the slight pause Carterette made, a hundred confused torturing thoughts swam through her mind and presently floated into the succeeding sentences of the letter:

"'As for me, I'm like Rabot's mare, I haven't time to laugh at my own foolishness. I'm either up to my knees in grass or clay fighting Revolutionists, or I'm riding hard day and night till I'm round-backed like a wood-louse, to make up for all the good time I so badly lost in your little island. You wouldn't have expected that, my friend with the tongue that stings, would you? But then, Ma'm'selle of the red slippers, one is never butted save by a dishorned cow--as your father used to say.'"

Carterette paused again, saying in an aside: "That is M'sieu' all over, all so gay. But who knows? For he says, too, that the other day a-fighting Fontenay, five thousand of his men come across a cavalry as they run to take the guns that eat them up like cabbages, and they drop on their knees, and he drops with them, and they all pray to God to help

them, while the cannon balls whiz-whiz over their heads. And God did hear them, for they fell down flat when the guns was fired and the cannon balls never touched 'em."

During this interlude, Guida, sick with anxiety, could scarcely sit still. She began sewing again, though her fingers trembled so she could hardly make a stitch. But Carterette, the little egoist, did not notice her agitation; her own flurry dimmed her sight.

She began reading again. The first few words had little or no significance for Guida, but presently she was held as by the fascination of a serpent.

"'And Ma'm'selle Carterette, what do you think this young captain, now Prince Philip d'Avranche, heir to the title of Bercy--what do you think he is next to do? Even to marry a countess of great family the old Duke has chosen for him; so that the name of d'Avranche may not die out in the land. And that is the way that love begins. . . . Wherefore, I want you to write and tell me--'"

What he wanted Carterette to tell him Guida never heard, though it concerned herself, for she gave a moan like a dumb animal in agony, and sat rigid and blanched, the needle she had been using embedded in her finger to the bone, but not a motion, not a sign of animation in face or figure.

All at once, some conception of the truth burst upon the affrighted Carterette. The real truth she imagined as little as had Detricand.

But now when she saw the blanched face, the filmy eyes and stark look, the finger pierced by the needle, she knew that a human heart had been pierced too, with a pain worse than death--truly it was worse, for she had seen death, and she had never seen anything like this in its dire misery and horror. She caught the needle quickly from the finger, wrapped her kerchief round the wound, threw away the sewing from Guida's lap, and running an arm about her waist, made as if to lay a hot cheek against the cold brow of her friend. Suddenly, however, with a new and painful knowledge piercing her intelligence, and a face as white and scared as Guida's own, she ran to the dresser, caught up a hanap, and brought some water. Guida still sat as though life had fled, and the body, arrested in its activity, would presently collapse.

Carterette, with all her seeming lightsomeness, had sense and self-possession. She tenderly put the water to Guida's lips, with comforting words, though her own brain was in a whirl, and dark forebodings flashed through her mind.

"Ah, man gui, man pethe!" she said in the homely patois. "There, drink, drink, dear, dear couzaine." Guida's lips opened, and she drank slowly, putting her hand to her heart with a gesture of pain. Carterette put down the hanap and caught her hands. "Come, come, these cold hands--pergui, but we must stop that! They are so cold." She rubbed them hard. "The poor child of heaven--what has come over you? Speak to me . . .

ah, but see, everything will come all right by and by! God is good. Nothing's as bad as what it seems. There was never a grey wind but there's a greyer. Nanningia, take it not so to heart, my couzaine; thou shalt have love enough in the world.... Ah, grand doux d'la vie, but I could kill him!" she added under her breath, and she rubbed Guida's hands still, and looked frankly, generously into her eyes.

Yet, try as she would in that supreme moment, Carterette could not feel all she once felt concerning Guida. There is something humiliating in even an undeserved injury, something which, to the human eye, lessens the worthiness of its victim. To this hour Carterette had looked upon her friend as a being far above her own companionship. All in a moment, in this new office of comforter the relative status was altered. The plane on which Guida had moved was lowered. Pity, while it deepened Carterette's tenderness, lessened the gap between them.

Perhaps something of this passed through Guida's mind, and the deep pride and courage of her nature came to her assistance. She withdrew her hands and mechanically smoothed back her hair, then, as Carterette sat watching her, folded up the sewing and put it in the work-basket hanging on the wall.

There was something unnatural in her governance of herself now. She seemed as if doing things in a dream, but she did them accurately and with apparent purpose. She looked at the clock, then went to the fire to light it, for it was almost time to get her grandfather's tea. She did not seem conscious of the presence of Carterette, who still sat on the veille, not knowing quite what to do. At last, as the flame flashed up in the chimney, she came over to her friend, and said:

"Carterette, I am going to the Dean's. Will you run and ask Maitresse Aimable to come here to me soon?" Her voice had the steadiness of despair--that steadiness coming to those upon whose nerves has fallen a great numbness, upon whose sensibilities has settled a cloud that stills them as the thick mist stills the ripples on the waters of a fen.

All the glamour of Guida's youth had dropped away. She had deemed life good, and behold, it was not good; she had thought her dayspring was on high, and happiness had burnt into darkness like quick-consuming flax. But all was strangely quiet in her heart and mind. Nothing more that she feared could happen to her; the worst had fallen, and now there came down on her the impermeable calm of the doomed.

Carterette was awed by her face, and saying that she would go at once to Maitresse Aimable, she started towards the door, but as quickly stopped and came back to Guida. With none of the impulse that usually marked her actions, she put her arms round Guida's neck and kissed her, saying with a subdued intensity:

"I'd go through fire and water for you. I want to help you every way I can--me."

Guida did not say a word, but she kissed the hot cheek of the smuggler-

pirate's daughter, as in dying one might kiss the face of a friend seen with filmy eyes.

When she had gone Guida drew herself up with a shiver. She was conscious that new senses and instincts were born in her, or were now first awakened to life. They were not yet under control, but she felt them, and in so far as she had power to think, she used them.

Leaving the house and stepping into the Place du Vier Prison, she walked quietly and steadily up the Rue d'Driere. She did not notice that people she met glanced at her curiously, and turned to look after her as she hurried on.

CHAPTER XXVI

It had been a hot, oppressive day, but when, a half-hour later, Guida hastened back from a fruitless visit to the house of the Dean, who was absent in England, a vast black cloud had drawn up from the south-east, dropping a curtain of darkness upon the town. As she neared the doorway of the cottage, a few heavy drops began to fall, and, in spite of her bitter trouble, she quickened her footsteps, fearing that her grandfather had come back, to find the house empty and no light or supper ready.

M. de Mauprat had preceded her by not more than five minutes. His footsteps across the Place du Vier Prison had been unsteady, his head bowed, though more than once he raised it with a sort of effort, as it were in indignation or defiance. He muttered to himself as he opened the door, and he paused in the hall-way as though hesitating to go forward. After a moment he made a piteous gesture of his hand towards the kitchen, and whispered to himself in a kind of reassurance. Then he entered the room and stood still. All was dark save for the glimmer of the fire.

"Guida! Guida!" he said in a shaking, muffled voice. There was no answer. He put by his hat and stick in the corner, and felt his way to the great chair-he seemed to have lost his sight. Finding the familiar, worn arm of the chair, he seated himself with a heavy sigh. His lips moved, and he shook his head now and then, as though in protest against some unspoken thought.

Presently he brought his clinched hand down heavily on the table, and said aloud:

"They lie--they lie! The Connetable lies! Their tongues shall be cut out. . . . Ah, my little, little child! . . . The Connetable dared--he dared--to tell me this evil gossip--of the little one--of my Guida!"

He laughed contemptuously, but it was a crackling, dry laugh, painful in its cheerlessness. He drew his snuff-box from his pocket, opened it, and slowly taking a pinch, raised it towards his nose, but the hand paused

half-way, as though a new thought arrested it.

In the pause there came the sound of the front door opening, and then footsteps in the hall.

The pinch of snuff fell from the fingers of the old man on to the white stuff of his short-clothes, but as Guida entered the room and stood still a moment, he did not stir in his seat. The thundercloud had come still lower and the room was dark, the coals in the fireplace being now covered with grey ashes.

"Grandpethe! Grandpethe!" Guida said.

He did not answer. His heart was fluttering, his tongue clove to the roof of his mouth, dry and thick. Now he should know the truth, now he should be sure that they had lied about his little Guida, those slanderers of the Vier Marchi. Yet, too, he had a strange, depressing fear, at variance with his loving faith and belief that in Guida there was no wrong: such belief as has the strong swimmer that he can reach the shore through wave and tide; yet also with strange foreboding, prelude to the cramp that makes powerless, defying youth, strength, and skill. He could not have spoken if it had been to save his own life--or hers.

Getting no answer to her words, Guida went first to the hearth and stirred the fire, the old man sitting rigid in his chair and regarding her with fixed, watchful eyes. Then she found two candles and lighted them, placing them on the mantel, and turning to the crasset hanging by its osier rings from a beam, slowly lighted it. Turning round, she was full in the light of the candles and the shooting flames of the fire.

De Mauprat's eyes had followed her every motion, unconscious of his presence as she was. This--this was not the Guida he had known! This was not his grandchild, this woman with the pale, cold face, and dark, unhappy eyes; this was not the laughing girl who but yesterday was a babe at his knee. This was not--

The truth, which had yet been before his blinded eyes how long! burst upon him. The shock of it snapped the filmy thread of being. As the escaping soul found its wings, spread them, and rose from that dun morass called Life, the Sieur de Mauprat, giving a long, deep sigh, fell back in his great arm-chair dead, and the silver snuff-box rattled to the floor.

Guida turned round with a sharp cry. Running to him, she lifted up the head that lay over on his shoulder. She felt his pulse, she called to him. Opening his waistcoat, she put her ear to his heart; but it was still--still.

A mist, a blackness, came over her own eyes, and without a cry or a word, she slid to the floor unconscious, as the black thunderstorm broke upon the Place du Vier Prison.

The rain was like a curtain let down between the prying, clattering world without and the strange peace within: the old man in his perfect sleep;

the young, misused wife in that passing oblivion borrowed from death and as tender and compassionate while it lasts.

As though with merciful indulgence, Fate permitted no one to enter upon the dark scene save a woman in whom was a deep motherhood which had never nourished a child, and to whom this silence and this sorrow gave no terrors. Silence was her constant companion, and for sorrow she had been granted the touch that assuages the sharpness of pain and the love called neighbourly kindness. Maitresse Aimable came.

Unto her it was given to minister here. As the night went by, and the offices had been done for the dead, she took her place by the bedside of the young wife, who lay staring into space, tearless and still, the life consuming away within her.

In the front room of the cottage, his head buried in his hands, Ranulph Delagarde sat watching beside the body of the Sieur de Mauprat.

CHAPTER XXVII

In the Rue d'Driere, the undertaker and his head apprentice were right merry. But why should they not be? People had to die, quoth the undertaker, and when dead they must be buried. Burying was a trade, and wherefore should not one--discreetly--be cheerful at one's trade? In undertaking there were many miles to trudge with coffins in a week, and the fixed, sad, sympathetic look long custom had stereotyped was wearisome to the face as a cast of plaster-of-paris. Moreover, the undertaker was master of ceremonies at the house of bereavement as well. He not only arranged the funeral, he sent out the invitations to the "friends of deceased, who are requested to return to the house of the mourners after the obsequies for refreshment." All the preparations for this feast were made by the undertaker--Master of Burials he chose to be called.

Once, after a busy six months, in which a fever had carried off many a Jersiais, the Master of Burials had given a picnic to his apprentices, workmen, and their families. At this buoyant function he had raised his glass and with playful plaintiveness proposed: "The day we celebrate!"

He was in a no less blithesome mood this day. The head apprentice was reading aloud the accounts for the burials of the month, while the master checked off the items, nodding approval, commenting, correcting or condemning with strange expletives.

"Don't gabble, gabble next one slowlee!" said the Master of Burials, as the second account was laid aside, duly approved. "Eh ben, now let's hear the next--who is it?"

"That Josue Anquetil," answered the apprentice. The Master of Burials rubbed his hands together with a creepy sort of glee. "Ah, that was a

clever piece of work! Too little of a length and a width for the box, but let us be thankful--it might have been too short, and it wasn't."

"No danger of that, pardingue!" broke in the apprentice. "The first it belonged to was a foot longer than Josue--he."

"But I made the most of Josue," continued the Master. "The mouth was crooked, but he was clean, clean--I shaved him just in time. And he had good hair for combing to a peaceful look, and he was light to carry--O my good! Go on, what has Josue the centenier to say for himself?"

With a drawling dull indifference, the lank, hatchet-faced servitor of the master servitor of the grave read off the items:

The Relict of Josue Anquetil, Centenier, in account with
Etienne Mahye, Master of Burials.

Item:	Livres.	Sols.	Farth.
Paid to Gentlemen of Vingtaine, who carried him to his grave	4	4	0
Ditto to me, Etienne Mahye, for proper gloves of silk and cotton	1	0	0
Ditto to me, E. M., for laying of him out and all that appertains	0	7	0
Ditto to me, E. M., for coffin	4	0	0
Ditto to me, E. M., for divers	0	4	0

The Master of Burials interrupted. "Bat'dlagoule, you've forgot blacking for coffin!"

The apprentice made the correction without deigning reply, and then went on

	Livres.	Sols.	Farth.
Ditto to me, E. M., for black for blacking coffin	0	3	0
Ditto to me, E. M., paid out for supper after obs'quies	3	2	0
Ditto to me, E. M., paid out for wine (3 pots and 1 pt. at a shilling) for ditto	2	5	6
Ditto to me, E. M., paid out for oil and candle	0	7	0
Ditto to me, E. M., given to the poor, as fitting station of deceased	4	0	0

The apprentice stopped. "That's all," he said.

There was a furious leer on the face of the Master of Burials. So, after all his care, apprentices would never learn to make mistakes on his side.

"O my grief, always on the side of the corpse, that can thank nobody for naught!" was his snarling comment.

"What about those turnips from Denise Gareau, numskull?" he grunted, in a voice between a sneer and a snort.

The apprentice was unmoved. He sniffed, rubbed his nose with a forefinger, laboriously wrote for a moment, and then added:

Ditto to Madame Denise Gareau for turnips
for supper after obs'quies ..... 10 sols

"Saperlote, leave out the Madame, calf-lugs--, you!"

The apprentice did not move a finger. Obstinacy sat enthroned on him. In a rage, the Master made a snatch at a metal flower-wreath to throw at him. "Shan't! She's my aunt. I knows my duties to my aunt--me," said the apprentice stolidly.

The Master burst out in a laugh of scorn. "Gaderabotin, here's family pride for you! I'll go stick dandelines in my old sow's ear--respe d'la compagnie."

The apprentice was still calm. "If you want to flourish yourself, don't mind me," said he, and picking up the next account, he began reading:

> Mademoiselle Landresse, in the matter of the Burial of
> the Sieur de Mauprat, to Etienne Mahye, &c. Item--

The first words read by the apprentice had stilled the breaking storm of the Master's anger. It dissolved in a fragrant dew of proud reminiscence, profit, and scandal.

He himself had no open prejudices. He was an official of the public--or so he counted himself--and he very shrewdly knew his duty in that walk of life to which it had pleased Heaven to call him. The greater the notoriety of the death, the more in evidence was the Master and all his belongings. Death with honour was an advantage to him; death with disaster a boon; death with scandal was a godsend. It brought tears of gratitude to his eyes when the death and the scandal were in high places. These were the only real tears he ever shed. His heart was in his head, and the head thought solely of Etienne Mahye. Though he wore an air of sorrow and sympathy in public, he had no more feeling than a hangman. His sympathy seemed to say to the living, "I wonder how soon you'll come into my hands," and to the dead, "What a pity you can only die once--and second-hand coffins so hard to get!"

> Item: paid to me, Etienne Mahye,

droned the voice of the apprentice,

> for rosewood coffin--

"O my good," interrupted the Master of Burials with a barren chuckle, and rubbing his hands with glee, "O my good, that was a day in a lifetime! I've done fine work in my time, but upon that day--not a cloud above, no dust beneath, a flowing tide, and a calm sea. The Royal Court, too, caught on a sudden marching in their robes, turns to and joins the cortegee, and the little birds a-tweeting-tweeting, and two parsons at the grave. Pardingue, the Lord was--with me that day, and--"

The apprentice laughed--a dry, mirthless laugh of disbelief and ridicule. "Ba su, master, the Lord was watching you. There was two silver bits inside that coffin, on Sieur's eyes."

"Bigre!" The Master was pale with rage. His lips drew back, disclosing long dark teeth and sickly gums, in a grimace of fury. He reached out to seize a hammer lying at his hand, but the apprentice said quickly:

"Sapri--that's the cholera hammer!"

The Master of Burials dropped the hammer as though it were at white heat, and eyed it with scared scrutiny. This hammer had been used in nailing down the coffins of six cholera patients who had died in one house at Rozel Bay a year before. The Master would not himself go near the place, so this apprentice had gone, on a promise from the Royal Court that he should have for himself--this he demanded as reward--free lodging in two small upper rooms of the Cohue Royale, just under the bell which said to the world, "Chicane--chicane! Chicane--chicane!"

This he asked, and this he got, and he alone of all Jersey went out to bury three people who had died of cholera; and then to watch three others die, to bury them scarce cold, and come back, with a leer of satisfaction, to claim his price. At first people were inclined to make a hero of him, but that only made him grin the more, and at last the island reluctantly decided that he had done the work solely for fee and reward.

The hammer used in nailing the coffins, he had carried through the town like an emblem of terror and death, and henceforth he only, in the shop of the Master, touched it.

"It won't hurt you if you leave it alone," said the apprentice grimly to the Master of Burials. "But, if you go bothering, I'll put it in your bed, and it'll do after to nail down your coffin."

Then he went on reading with a malicious calmness, as though the matter were the dullest trifle:

Item: one dozen pairs of gloves for mourners.

"Par made, that's one way of putting it!" commented the apprentice, "for what mourners was there but Ma'm'selle herself, and she quiet as a mice, and not a teardrop, and all the island necks end to end for look at her, and you, master, whispering to her: 'The Lord is the Giver and Taker,' and the Femme de Ballast t'other side, saying 'My dee-ar, my dee-ar, bear

thee up, bear thee up--thee.'"

"And she looking so steady in front of her, as if never was shame about her--and her there soon to be; and no ring of gold upon her hand, and all the world staring!" broke in the Master, who, having edged away from the cholera hammer, was launched upon a theme that stirred his very soul. "All the world staring, and good reason," he added.

"And she scarce winking, eh?" said the apprentice. "True that--her eyes didn't feel the cold," said the Master of Burials with a leer, for to his sight as to that of others, only as boldness had been Guida's bitter courage, the blank, despairing gaze, coming from eyes that turn their agony inward.

The apprentice took up the account again, and prepared to read it. The Master, however, had been roused to a genial theme. "Poor fallen child of Nature!" said he. "For what is birth or what is looks of virtue like a summer flower! It is to be brought down by hand of man." He was warmed to his text. Habit had long made him so much hypocrite, that he was sentimentalist and hard materialist in one. "Some pend'loque has brought her beauty to this pass, but she must suffer--and also his time will come, the sulphur, the torment, the worm that dieth not--and no Abraham for parched tongue--misery me! They that meet in sin here shall meet hereafter in burning fiery furnace."

The cackle of the apprentice rose above the whining voice. "Murder, too --don't forget the murder, master. The Connetable told the old Sieur de Mauprat what people were blabbing, and in half-hour dead he is--he."

"Et ben, the Sieur's blood it is upon their heads," continued the Master of Burials; "it will rise up from the ground--"

The apprentice interrupted. "A good thing if the Sieur himself doesn't rise, for you'd get naught for coffin or obs'quies. It was you tells the Connetable what folks babbled, and the Connetable tells the Sieur, and the Sieur it kills him dead. So if he rised, he'd not pay you for murdering him--no, bidemme! And 'tis a gobbly mouthful--this," he added, holding up the bill.

The undertaker's lips smacked softly, as though in truth he were waiting for the mouthful. Rubbing his hands, and drawing his lean leg up till it touched his nose, he looked over it with avid eyes, and said: "How much-- don't read the items, but come to total debit--how much she pays me?"

Ma'm'selle Landresse, debtor in all for one hundred and twenty livres, eleven sols and two farthings.

Shan't you make it one hundred and twenty-one livres?" added the apprentice.

"God forbid, the odd sols and farthings are mine--no more!" returned the Master of Burials. "Also they look exact; but the courage it needs to be honest! O my grief, if--"

"'Sh!" said the apprentice, pointing, and the Master of Burials, turning, saw Guida pass the window. With a hungry instinct for the morbid they stole to the doorway and looked down the Rue d'Driere after her. The Master was sympathetic, for had he not in his fingers at that moment a bill for a hundred and twenty livres odd? The way the apprentice craned his neck, and tightened the forehead over his large, protuberant eyes, showed his intense curiosity, but the face was implacable. It was like that of some strong fate, superior to all influences of sorrow, shame, or death. Presently he laughed--a crackling cackle like new-lighted kindling wood; nothing could have been more inhuman in sound. What in particular aroused this arid mirth probably he himself did not know. Maybe it was a native cruelty which had a sort of sardonic pleasure in the miseries of the world. Or was it only the perception, sometimes given to the dullest mind, of the futility of goodness, the futility of all? This perhaps, since the apprentice shared with Dormy Jamais his rooms at the top of the Cohue Royale; and there must have been some natural bond of kindness between the blank, sardonic undertaker's apprentice and the poor beganne, who now officially rang the bell for the meetings of the Royal Court.

The dry cackle of the apprentice as he looked after Guida roused a mockery of indignation in the Master. "Sacre matin, a back-hander on the jaw'd do you good, slubberdegullion--you! Ah, get go scrub the coffin blacking from your jowl!" he rasped out with furious contempt.

The apprentice seemed not to hear, but kept on looking after Guida, a pitiless leer on his face. "Dame, lucky for her the Sieur died before he had chance to change his will. She'd have got ni fiche ni bran from him."

"Support d'en haut, if you don't stop that I'll give you a coffin before your time, keg of nails--you. Sorrow and prayer at the throne of grace that she may have a contrite heart"--he clutched the funeral bill tighter in his fingers--"is what we must feel for her. The day the Sieur died and it all came out, I wept. Bedtime come I had to sop my eyes with elder-water. The day o' the burial mine eyes were so sore a-draining I had to put a rotten sweet apple on 'em over-night--me."

"Ah bah, she doesn't need rosemary wash for her hair!" said the apprentice admiringly, looking down the street after Guida as she turned into the Rue d'Egypte.

Perhaps it was a momentary sympathy for beauty in distress which made the Master say, as he backed from the doorway with stealthy step:

"Gatd'en'ale, 'tis well she has enough to live on, and to provide for what's to come!"

But if it was a note of humanity in the voice it passed quickly, for presently, as he examined the bill for the funeral of the Sieur de Mauprat, he said shrilly:

"Achocre, you've left out the extra satin for his pillow--you."

"There wasn't any extra satin," drawled the apprentice.

With a snarl the Master of Burials seized a pen and wrote in the account:

Item: To extra satin for pillow, three livres.

CHAPTER XXVIII

Guida's once blithe, rose-coloured face was pale as ivory, the mouth had a look of deep sadness, and the step was slow; but the eye was clear and steady, and her hair, brushed under the black crape of the bonnet as smoothly as its nature would admit, gave to the broad brow a setting of rare attraction and sombre nobility. It was not a face that knew inward shame, but it carried a look that showed knowledge of life's cruelties and a bitter sensitiveness to pain. Above all else it was fearless, and it had no touch of the consciousness or the consequences of sin; it was purity itself.

It alone should have proclaimed abroad her innocence, though she said no word in testimony. To most people, however, her dauntless sincerity only added to her crime and to the scandalous mystery. Yet her manner awed some, while her silence held most back. The few who came to offer sympathy, with curiousness in their eyes and as much inhumanity as pity in their hearts, were turned back gently but firmly, more than once with proud resentment.

So it chanced that soon only Maitresse Aimable came--she who asked no questions, desired no secrets--and Dormy Jamais.

Dormy had of late haunted the precincts of the Place du Vier Prison, and was the only person besides Maitresse Aimable whom Guida welcomed. His tireless feet went clac-clac past her doorway, or halted by it, or entered in when it pleased him. He was more a watch-dog than Biribi; he fetched and carried; he was silent and sleepless--always sleepless. It was as if some past misfortune had opened his eyes to the awful bitterness of life, and they had never closed again.

The Chevalier had not been with her, for on the afternoon of the very day her grandfather died, he had gone a secret voyage to St. Malo, to meet the old solicitor of his family. He knew nothing of his friend's death or of Guida's trouble. As for Carterette, Guida would not let her come --for her own sake.

Nor did Maitre Ranulph visit her after the funeral of the Sieur de Mauprat. The horror of the thing had struck him dumb, and his mind was one confused mass of conflicting thoughts. There--there were the terrifying facts before him; yet, with an obstinacy peculiar to him, he still went on believing in her goodness and in her truth. Of the man

who had injured her he had no doubt, and his course was clear, in the hour when he and Philip d'Avranche should meet. Meanwhile, from a spirit of delicacy, avoiding the Place du Vier Prison, he visited Maitresse Aimable, and from day to day learned all that happened to Guida. As of old, without her knowledge, he did many things for her through the same Maitresse Aimable. And it quickly came to be known in the island that any one who spoke ill of Guida in his presence did so at no little risk. At first there had been those who marked him as the wrongdoer, but somehow that did not suit with the case, for it was clear he loved Guida now as he had always done; and this the world knew, as it had known that he would have married her all too gladly. Presently Detricand and Philip were the only names mentioned, but at last, as by common consent, Philip was settled upon, for such evidence as there was pointed that way. The gossips set about to recall all that had happened when Philip was in Jersey last. Here one came forward with a tittle of truth, and there another with tattle of falsehood, and at last as wild a story was fabricated as might be heard in a long day.

But in bitterness Guida kept her own counsel.

This day when she passed the undertaker's shop she had gone to visit the grave of her grandfather. He had died without knowing the truth, and her heart was hardened against him who had brought misery upon her. Reaching the cottage in the Place du Vier Prison now, she took from a drawer the letter Philip had written her on the day he first met the Comtesse Chantavoine. She had received it a week ago. She read it through slowly, shuddering a little once or twice. When she had finished, she drew paper to her and began a reply.

The first crisis of her life was passed. She had met the shock of utter disillusion; her own perfect honesty now fathomed the black dishonesty of the man she had loved. Death had come with sorrow and unmerited shame. But an innate greatness, a deep courage supported her. Out of her wrongs and miseries now she made a path for her future, and in that path Philip's foot should never be set. She had thought and thought, and had come to her decision. In one month she had grown years older in mind. Sorrow gave her knowledge, it threw her back on her native strength and goodness. Rising above mere personal wrongs she grew to a larger sense of womanhood, to a true understanding of her position and its needs. She loved no longer, but Philip was her husband by the law, and even as she had told him her whole mind and heart in the days of their courtship and marriage, she would tell him her whole mind and heart now. Once more, to satisfy the bond, to give full reasons for what she was about to do, she would open her soul to her husband, and then no more! In all she wrote she kept but two things back, her grandfather's death--and one other. These matters belonged to herself alone.

> No, Philip d'Avranche, [she wrote], your message came too late. All that you might have said and done should have been said and done long ago, in that past which I believe in no more. I will not ask you why you acted as you did towards me. Words can alter nothing now. Once I thought you true, and this letter you send would have me still believe so. Do you then think so ill of my intelligence?

In the light of the past it may be you have reason, for you know that I once believed in you! Think of it--believed in you!

How bad a man are you! In spite of all your promises; in spite of the surrender of honest heart and life to you; in spite of truth and every call of honour, you denied me--dared to deny me, at the very time you wrote this letter.

For the hopes and honours of this world, you set aside, first by secrecy, and then by falsehood, the helpless girl to whom you once swore undying love. You, who knew the open book of her heart, you threw it in the dust. "Of course there is no wife?" the Duc de Bercy said to you before the States of Bercy. "Of course," you answered. You told your lie without pity.

Were you blind that you did not see the consequences? Or did you not feel the horror of your falsehood?--to play shuttlecock with a woman's life, with the soul of your wife; for that is what your conduct means. Did you not realise it, or were you so wicked that you did not care? For I know that before you wrote me this letter, and afterwards when you had been made prince, and heir to the duchy, the Comtesse Chantavoine was openly named by the Duc de Bercy for your wife.

Now read the truth. I understand all now. I am no longer the thoughtless, believing girl whom you drew from her simple life to give her so cruel a fate. Yesterday I was a child, to-day----Oh, above all else, do you think I can ever forgive you for having killed the faith, the joy of life that was in me! You have spoiled for me for ever my rightful share of the joyous and the good. My heart is sixty though my body is not twenty. How dared you rob me of all that was my birthright, of all that was my life, and give me nothing--nothing in return!

Do you remember how I begged you not to make me marry you; but you urged me, and because I loved you and trusted you, I did? how I entreated you not to make me marry you secretly, but you insisted, and loving you, I did? how you promised you would leave me at the altar and not see me till you came again to claim me openly for your wife, and you broke that sacred promise? Do you remember--my husband!

Do you remember that night in the garden when the wind came moaning up from the sea? Do you remember how you took me in your arms, and even while I listened to your tender and assuring words, in that moment--ah, the hurt and the wrong and the shame of it! Afterwards in the strange confusion, in my blind helplessness I tried to say, "But he loved me," and I tried to forgive you. Perhaps in time I might have made myself believe I did; for then I did not know you as you are--and were; but understanding all now I feel that in that hour I really ceased to love you; and when at last I knew you had denied me, love was buried for ever.

Your worst torment is to come, mine has already been with me. When my miseries first fell upon me, I thought that I must die. Why should I live on--why should I not die? The sea was near, and it buries deep. I thought of all the people that live on the great earth, and I said to myself that the soul of one poor girl could not count, that it could concern no one but myself. It was clear to me --I must die and end all.

But there came to me a voice in the night which said: "Is thy life thine own to give or to destroy?" It was clearer than my own thinking. It told my heart that death by one's own hand meant shame; and I saw then that to find rest I must drag unwilling feet over the good name and memory of my dead loved ones. Then I remembered my mother. If you had remembered her perhaps you would have guarded the gift of my love and not have trampled it under your feet--I remembered my mother, and so I live still.

I must go on alone, with naught of what makes life bearable; you will keep climbing higher by your vanity, your strength, and your deceit. But yet I know however high you climb you will never find peace. You will remember me, and your spirit will seek in vain for rest. You will not exist for me, you will not be even a memory; but even against your will I shall always be part of you: of your brain, of your heart, of your soul--the thought of me your torment in your greatest hour. Your passion and your cowardice have lost me all; and God will punish you, be sure of that.

There is little more to say. If it lies in my power I shall never see you again while I live. And you will not wish it. Yes, in spite of your eloquent letter lying here beside me, you do not wish it, and it shall not be. I am not your wife save by the law; and little have you cared for law! Little, too, would the law help you in this now; for which you will rejoice. For the ease of your mind I hasten to tell you why.

First let me inform you that none in this land knows me to be your wife. Your letter to my grandfather never reached him, and to this hour I have held my peace. The clergyman who married us is a prisoner among the French, and the strong-box which held the register of St. Michael's Church was stolen. The one other witness, Mr. Shoreham, your lieutenant--as you tell me--went down with the Araminta. So you are safe in your denial of me. For me, I would endure all the tortures of the world rather than call you husband ever again. I am firmly set to live my own life, in my own way, with what strength God gives. At last I see beyond the Hedge.

Your course is clear. You cannot turn back now. You have gone too far. Your new honours and titles were got at the last by a falsehood. To acknowledge it would be ruin, for all the world knows that Captain Philip d'Avranche of the King's navy is now the adopted son of the Duc de Bercy. Surely the house of Bercy has cause for joy, with an imbecile for the first in succession and a traitor for the second!

I return the fifty pounds you sent me--you will not question why ....And so all ends. This is a last farewell between us.

Do you remember what you said to me on the Ecrehos? "If ever I deceive you, may I die a black, dishonourable death, abandoned and alone. I should deserve that if ever I deceived you, Guida."

Will you ever think of that, in your vain glory hereafter?

GUIDA LANDRESSE DE LANDRESSE.

IN JERSEY FIVE YEARS LATER

CHAPTER XXIX

On a map the Isle of Jersey has the shape and form of a tiger on the prowl.

The fore-claws of this tiger are the lacerating pinnacles of the Corbiere and the impaling rocks of Portelet Bay and Noirmont; the hind-claws are the devastating diorite reefs of La Motte and the Banc des Violets. The head and neck, terrible and beautiful, are stretched out towards the west, as it were to scan the wild waste and jungle of the Atlantic seas. The nose is L'Etacq, the forehead Grosnez, the ear Plemont, the mouth the dark cavern by L'Etacq, and the teeth are the serried ledges of the Foret de la Brequette. At a discreet distance from the head and the tail hover the jackals of La Manche: the Paternosters, the Dirouilles, and the Ecrehos, themselves destroying where they may, or filching the remains of the tiger's feast of shipwreck and ruin. In truth, the sleek beast, with its feet planted in fearsome rocks and tides, and its ravening head set to defy the onslaught of the main, might, but for its ensnaring beauty, seem some monstrous foot-pad of the deep.

To this day the tiger's head is the lonely part of Jersey; a hundred years ago it was as distant from the Vier Marchi as is Penzance from Covent Garden. It would almost seem as if the people of Jersey, like the hangers-on of the king of the jungle, care not to approach too near the devourer's head. Even now there is but a dwelling here and there upon the lofty plateau, and none at all near the dark and menacing headland. But as if the ancient Royal Court was determined to prove its sovereignty even over the tiger's head, it stretched out its arms from the Vier Marchi to the bare neck of the beast, putting upon it a belt of defensive war; at the nape, a martello tower and barracks; underneath, two other martello towers like the teeth of a buckle.

The rest of the island was bristling with armament. Tall platforms were erected at almost speaking distance from each other, where sentinels kept watch for French frigates or privateers. Redoubts and towers were within

musket-shot of each other, with watch-houses between, and at intervals every able-bodied man in the country was obliged to leave his trade to act as sentinel, or go into camp or barracks with the militia for months at a time. British cruisers sailed the Channel: now a squadron under Barrington, again under Bridport, hovered upon the coast, hoping that a French fleet might venture near.

But little of this was to be seen in the western limits of the parish of St. Ouen's. Plemont, Grosnez, L'Etacq, all that giant headland could well take care of itself--the precipitous cliffs were their own defence. A watch-house here and there sufficed. No one lived at L'Etacq, no one at Grosnez; they were too bleak, too distant and solitary. There were no houses, no huts.

If you had approached Plemont from Vinchelez-le-Haut, making for the sea, you would have said that it also had no habitation. But when at last you came to a hillock near Plemont point, looking to find nothing but sky and sea and distant islands, suddenly at your very feet you saw a small stone dwelling. Its door faced the west, looking towards the Isles of Guernsey and Sark. Fronting the north was a window like an eye, ever watching the tireless Paternosters. To the east was another tiny window like a deep loop-hole or embrasure set towards the Dirouilles and the Ecrehos.

The hut had but one room, of moderate size, with a vast chimney. Between the chimney and the western wall was a veille, which was both lounge and bed. The eastern side was given over to a few well-polished kitchen utensils, a churn, and a bread-trough. The floor was of mother earth alone, but a strip of handmade carpet was laid down before the fireplace, and there was another at the opposite end. There were also a table, a spinning-wheel, and a shelf of books.

It was not the hut of a fisherman, though upon the wall opposite the books there hung fishing-tackle, nets, and cords, while outside, on staples driven in the jutting chimney, were some lobster-pots. Upon two shelves were arranged a carpenter's and a cooper's tools, polished and in good order. And yet you would have said that neither a cooper nor a carpenter kept them in use. Everywhere there were signs of man's handicraft as well as of woman's work, but upon all was the touch of a woman. Moreover, apart from the tools there was no sign of a man's presence in the hut. There was no coat hanging behind the door, no sabots for the fields or oilskins for the sands, no pipe laid upon a ledge, no fisherman's needle holding a calendar to the wall. Whatever was the trade of the occupant, the tastes were above those of the ordinary dweller in the land. That was to be seen in a print of Raphael's "Madonna and Child" taking the place of the usual sampler upon the walls of Jersey homes; in the old clock nicely bestowed between a narrow cupboard and the tool shelves; in a few pieces of rare old china and a gold-handled sword hanging above a huge, well-carved oak chair. The chair relieved the room of anything like commonness, and somehow was in sympathy with the simple surroundings, making for dignity and sweet quiet. It was clear that only a woman could have arranged so perfectly this room and all therein. It was also clear that no man lived here.

Looking in at the doorway of this hut on a certain autumn day of the year 1797, the first thing to strike your attention was a dog lying asleep on the hearth. Then a suit of child's clothes on a chair before the fire of vraic would have caught the eye. The only thing to distinguish this particular child's dress from that of a thousand others in the island was the fineness of the material. Every thread of it had been delicately and firmly knitted, till it was like perfect soft blue cloth, relieved by a little red silk ribbon at the collar.

The hut contained as well a child's chair, just so high that when placed by the windows commanding the Paternosters its occupant might see the waves, like panthers, beating white paws against the ragged granite pinnacles; the currents writhing below at the foot of the cliffs, or at half-tide rushing up to cover the sands of the Greve aux Langons, and like animals in pain, howling through the caverns in the cliffs; the great nor'wester of November come battering the rocks, shrieking to the witches who boiled their caldrons by the ruins of Grosnez Castle that the hunt of the seas was up.

Just high enough was the little chair that of a certain day in the year its owner might look out and see mystic fires burning round the Paternosters, and lighting up the sea with awful radiance. Scarce a rock to be seen from the hut but had some legend like this: the burning Russian ship at the Paternosters, the fleet of boats with tall prows and long oars drifting upon the Dirouilles and going down to the cry of the Crusaders' Dahindahin! the Roche des Femmes at the Ecrehos, where still you may hear the cries of women in terror of the engulfing sea.

On this particular day, if you had entered the hut, no one would have welcomed you; but had you tired of waiting, and followed the indentations of the coast for a mile or more by a deep bay under tall cliffs, you would have seen a woman and a child coming quickly up the sands. Slung upon the woman's shoulders was a small fisherman's basket. The child ran before, eager to climb the hill and take the homeward path.

A man above was watching them. He had ridden along the cliff, had seen the woman in her boat making for the shore, had tethered his horse in the quarries near by, and now awaited her. He chuckled as she came on, for he had ready a surprise for her. To make it more complete he hid himself behind some boulders, and as she reached the top sprang out with an ugly grinning.

The woman looked at him calmly and waited for him to speak. There was no fear on her face, not even surprise; nothing but steady inquiry and quiet self-possession. With an air of bluster the man said:

"Aha, my lady, I'm nearer than you thought--me!" The child drew in to its mother's side and clasped her hand. There was no fear in the little fellow's look, however; he had something of the same self-possession as the woman, and his eyes were like hers, clear, unwavering, and with a frankness that consumed you. They were wells of sincerity; open-eyed, you would have called the child, wanting a more subtle description.

"I’m not to be fooled-me! Come now, let’s have the count," said the man, as he whipped a greasy leather-covered book from his pocket. "Sapristi, I’m waiting. Stay yourself!" he added roughly as she moved on, and his greyish-yellow face had an evil joy at thought of the brutal work in hand.

"Who are you?" she asked, but taking her time to speak.

"Dame! you know who I am."

"I know what you are," she answered quietly.

He did not quite grasp her meaning, but the tone sounded contemptuous, and that sorted little with his self-importance.

"I’m the Seigneur’s bailiff--that’s who I am. Gad’rabotin, don’t you put on airs with me! I’m for the tribute, so off with the bag and let’s see your catch."

"I have never yet paid tribute to the seigneur of the manor."

"Well, you’ll begin now. I’m the new bailiff, and if you don’t pay your tale, up you come to the court of the fief to-morrow."

She looked him clearly in the eyes. "If I were a man, I should not pay the tribute, and I should go to the court of the fief to-morrow, but being a woman--"

She clasped the hand of the child tightly to her for an instant, then with a sigh she took the basket from her shoulders and, opening it, added:

"But being a woman, the fish I caught in the sea that belongs to God and to all men I must divide with the Seigneur whose bailiff spies on poor fisher-folk."

The man growled an oath and made a motion as though he would catch her by the shoulder in anger, but the look in her eyes stopped him. Counting out the fish, and giving him three out of the eight she had caught, she said:

"It matters not so much to me, but there are others poorer than I, they suffer."

With a leer the fellow stooped, and, taking up the fish, put them in the pockets of his queminzolle, all slimy from the sea as they were.

"Ba su, you haven’t got much to take care of, have you? It don’t take much to feed two mouths--not so much as it does three, Ma’m’selle."

Before he had ended, the woman, without reply to the insult, took the child by the hand and moved along her homeward path towards Plemont.

"A bi'tot, good-bye!" the bailiff laughed brutally. Standing with his legs apart and his hands fastened on the fish in the pockets of his long queminzolle, he called after her in sneering comment: "Ma fistre, your pride didn't fall--ba su!" Then he turned on his heel.

"Eh ben, here's mackerel for supper," he added as he mounted his horse.

The woman was Guida Landresse, the child was her child, and they lived in the little house upon the cliff at Plemont. They were hastening thither now.

CHAPTER XXX

A visitor was awaiting Guida and the child: a man who, first knocking at the door, then looking in and seeing the room empty, save for the dog lying asleep by the fire, had turned slowly away, and going to the cliff edge, looked out over the sea. His movements were deliberate, his body moved slowly; the whole appearance was of great strength and nervous power. The face was preoccupied, the eyes were watchful, dark, penetrating. They seemed not only to watch but to weigh, to meditate, even to listen--as it were, to do the duty of all the senses at once. In them worked the whole forces of his nature; they were crucibles wherein every thought and emotion were fused. The jaw was set and strong, yet it was not hard. The face contradicted itself. While not gloomy it had lines like scars telling of past wounds. It was not despairing, it was not morbid, and it was not resentful; it had the look of one both credulous and indomitable. Belief was stamped upon it; not expectation or ambition, but faith and fidelity. You would have said he was a man of one set idea, though the head had a breadth sorting little with narrowness of purpose. The body was too healthy to belong to a fanatic, too powerful to be that of a dreamer alone, too firm for other than a man of action.

Several times he turned to look towards the house and up the pathway leading from the hillock to the doorway. Though he waited long he did not seem impatient; patience was part of him, and not the least part. At last he sat down on a boulder between the house and the shore, and scarcely moved, as minute after minute passed, and then an hour and more, and no one came. Presently there was a soft footstep beside him, and he turned. A dog's nose thrust itself into his hand.

"Biribi, Biribi!" he said, patting its head with his big hand. "Watching and waiting, eh, old Biribi?" The dog looked into his eyes as if he knew what was said, and would speak--or, indeed, was speaking in his own language. "That's the way of life, Biribi--watching and waiting, and watching--always watching."

Suddenly the dog caught its head away from his hand, gave a short joyful bark, and ran slowly up the hillock.

"Guida and the child," the man said aloud, moving towards the house--"Guida and the child!"

He saw her and the little one before they saw him. Presently the child said: "See, maman," and pointed. Guida started. A swift flush passed over her face, then she smiled and made a step forward to meet her visitor.

"Maitre Ranulph--Ranulph!" she said, holding out her hand. "It's a long time since we met."

"A year," he answered simply, "just a year." He looked down at the child, then stooped, caught him up in his arms and said: "He's grown. Es-tu gentiment?" he added to the child--"es-tu gentiment, m'sieu'?"

The child did not quite understand. "Please?" it said in true Jersey fashion--at which the mother was troubled.

"O Guilbert, is that what you should say?" she asked. The child looked up quaintly at her, and with the same whimsical smile which Guida had given to another so many years ago, he looked at Ranulph and said: "Pardon, monsieur."

"Coum est qu'on etes, m'sieu'?" said Ranulph in another patois greeting.

Guida shook her head reprovingly. The child glanced swiftly at his mother as though asking permission to reply as he wished, then back at Ranulph, and was about to speak, when Guida said: "I have not taught him the Jersey patois, Ranulph; only English and French."

Her eyes met his clearly, meaningly. Her look said to him as plainly as words, The child's destiny is not here in Jersey. But as if he knew that in this she was blinding herself, and that no one can escape the influences of surroundings, he held the child back from him, and said with a smile: "Coum est qu'on vos portest?"

Now the child with elfish sense of the situation replied in Jersey English: "Naicely, thenk you."

"You see," said Ranulph to Guida, "there are things in us stronger than we are. The wind, the sea, and people we live with, they make us sing their song one way or another. It's in our bones."

A look of pain passed over Guida's face, and she did not reply to his remark, but turned almost abruptly to the doorway, saying, with just the slightest hesitation: "You will come in?"

There was no hesitation on his part. "Oui-gia!" he said, and stepped inside.

She hastily hung up the child's cap and her own, and as she gathered in the soft, waving hair, Ranulph noticed how the years had only burnished it more deeply and strengthened the beauty of the head. She had made the

gesture unconsciously, but catching the look in his eye a sudden thrill of anxiety ran through her. Recovering herself, however, and with an air of bright friendliness, she laid a hand upon the great arm-chair, above which hung the ancient sword of her ancestor, the Comte Guilbert Mauprat de Chambery, and said: "Sit here, Ranulph."

Seating himself he gave a heavy sigh--one of those passing breaths of content which come to the hardest lives now and then: as though the Spirit of Life itself, in ironical apology for human existence, gives moments of respite from which hope is born again. Not for over four long years had Ranulph sat thus quietly in the presence of Guida. At first, when Maitresse Aimable had told him that Guida was leaving the Place du Vier Prison to live in this lonely place with her newborn child, he had gone to entreat her to remain; but Maitresse Aimable had been present then, and all that he could say--all that he might speak out of his friendship, out of the old love, now deep pity and sorrow--was of no avail. It had been borne in upon him then that she was not morbid, but that her mind had a sane, fixed purpose which she was intent to fulfil. It was as though she had made some strange covenant with a little helpless life, with a little face that was all her face; and that covenant she would keep.

So he had left her, and so to do her service had been granted elsewhere. The Chevalier, with perfect wisdom and nobility, insisted on being to Guida what he had always been, accepting what was as though it had always been, and speaking as naturally of her and the child as though there had always been a Guida and the child. Thus it was that he counted himself her protector, though he sat far away in the upper room of Elie Mattingley's house in the Rue d'Egypte, thinking his own thoughts, biding the time when she should come back to the world, and mystery be over, and happiness come once more; hoping only that he might live to see it.

Under his directions, Jean Touzel had removed the few things that Guida took with her to Plemont; and instructed by him, Elie Mattingley sold her furniture. Thus Guida had settled at Plemont, and there over four years of her life were passed.

"Your father--how is he?" she asked presently. "Feeble," replied Ranulph; "he goes abroad but little now."

"It was said the Royal Court was to make him a gift, in remembrance of the Battle of Jersey." Ranulph turned his head away from her to the child, and beckoned him over. The child came instantly.

As Ranulph lifted him on his knee he answered Guida: "My father did not take it."

"Then they said you were to be connetable--the grand monsieur. "She smiled at him in a friendly way.

"They said wrong," replied Ranulph.

"Most people would be glad of it," rejoined Guida. "My mother used to

say you would be Bailly one day."

"Who knows--perhaps I might have been!"

She looked at him half sadly, half curiously. "You--you haven't any ambitions now, Maitre Ranulph?" It suddenly struck her that perhaps she was responsible for the maiming of this man's life--for clearly it was maimed. More than once she had thought of it, but it came home to her to-day with force. Years ago Ranulph Delagarde had been spoken of as one who might do great things, even to becoming Bailly. In the eyes of a Jerseyman to be Bailly was to be great, with jurats sitting in a row on either side of him and more important than any judge in the Kingdom. Looking back now Guida realised that Ranulph had never been the same since that day on the Ecrehos when his father had returned and Philip had told his wild tale of love.

A great bitterness suddenly welled up in her. Without intention, without blame, she had brought suffering upon others. The untoward happenings of her life had killed her grandfather, had bowed and aged the old Chevalier, had forced her to reject the friendship of Carterette Mattingley, for the girl's own sake; had made the heart of one fat old woman heavy within her; and, it would seem, had taken hope and ambition from the life of this man before her. Love in itself is but a bitter pleasure; when it is given to the unworthy it becomes a torture--and so far as Ranulph and the world knew she was wholly unworthy. Of late she had sometimes wondered if, after all, she had had the right to do as she had done in accepting the public shame, and in not proclaiming the truth: if to act for one's own heart, feelings, and life alone, no matter how perfect the honesty, is not a sort of noble cruelty, or cruel nobility; an egotism which obeys but its own commandments, finding its own straight and narrow path by first disbarring the feelings and lives of others. Had she done what was best for the child? Misgiving upon this point made her heart ache bitterly. Was life then but a series of trist condonings at the best, of humiliating compromises at the worst?

She repeated her question to Ranulph now. "You haven't ambition any longer?"

"I'm busy building ships," he answered evasively. "I build good ships, they tell me, and I am strong and healthy. As for being connetable, I'd rather help prisoners free than hale them before the Royal Court. For somehow when you get at the bottom of most crimes--the small ones leastways--you find they weren't quite meant. I expect--I expect," he added gravely, "that half the crimes oughtn't to be punished at all; for it's queer that things which hurt most can't be punished by law."

"Perhaps it evens up in the long end," answered Guida, turning away from him to the fire, and feeling her heart beat faster as she saw how the child nestled in Ranulph's arms--her child which had no father. "You see," she added, "if some are punished who oughtn't to be, there are others who ought to be that aren't, and the worst of it is, we care so little for real justice that we often wouldn't punish if we could. I have come to feel that. Sometimes if you do exactly what's right, you

hurt some one you don’t wish to hurt, and if you don’t do exactly what’s right, perhaps that some one else hurts you. So, often, we would rather be hurt than hurt."

With the last words she turned from the fire and involuntarily faced him. Their eyes met. In hers were only the pity of life, the sadness, the cruelty of misfortune, and friendliness for him. In his eyes was purpose definite, strong.

He went over and put the child in its high chair. Then coming a little nearer to Guida, he said:

"There’s only one thing in life that really hurts--playing false."

Her heart suddenly stopped beating. What was Ranulph going to say? After all these years was he going to speak of Philip? But she did not reply according to her thought.

"Have people played false in your life--ever?" she asked.

"If you’ll listen to me I’ll tell you how," he answered. "Wait, wait," she said in trepidation. "It--it has nothing to do with me?"

He shook his head. "It has only to do with my father and myself. When I’ve told you, then you must say whether you will have anything to do with it, or with me.... You remember," he continued, without waiting for her to speak, "you remember that day upon the Ecrehos--five years ago? Well, that day I had made up my mind to tell you in so many words what I hoped you had always known, Guida. I didn’t--why? Not because of another man--no, no, I don’t mean to hurt you, but I must tell you the truth now--not because of another man, for I should have bided my chance with him."

"Ranulph, Ranulph," she broke in, "you must not speak of this now! Do you not see it hurts me? It is not like you. It is not right of you--"

A sudden emotion seized him, and his voice shook. "Not right! You should know that I’d never say one word to hurt you, or do one thing to wrong you. But I must speak to-day-I must tell you everything. I’ve thought of it for four long years, and I know now that what I mean to do is right."

She sat down in the great arm-chair. A sudden weakness came upon her: she was being brought face to face with days of which she had never allowed herself to think, for she lived always in the future now.

"Go on," she said helplessly. "What have you to say, Ranulph?"

"I will tell you why I didn’t speak of my love to you that day we went to the Ecrehos. My father came back that day."

"Yes, yes," she said; "of course you had to think of him."

"Yes, I had to think of him, but not in the way you mean. Be patient a little while," he added.

Then in a few words he told her the whole story of his father's treachery and crime, from the night before the Battle of Jersey up to their meeting again upon the Ecrehos.

Guida was amazed and moved. Her heart filled with pity. "Ranulph--poor Ranulph!" she said, half rising in her seat.

"No, no--wait," he rejoined. "Sit where you are till I tell you all. Guida, you don't know what a life it has been for me these four years. I used to be able to look every man in the face without caring whether he liked me or hated me, for then I had never lied, I had never done a mean thing to any man; I had never deceived--nannin-gia, never! But when my father came back, then I had to play a false game. He had lied, and to save him I either had to hold my peace or tell his story. Speaking was lying or being silent was lying. Mind you, I'm not complaining, I'm not saying it because I want any pity. No, I'm saying it because it's the truth, and I want you to know the truth. You understand what it means to feel right in your own mind--if you feel that way, the rest of life is easy. Eh ben, what a thing it is to get up in the morning, build your fire, make your breakfast, and sit down facing a man whose whole life's a lie, and that man your own father! Some morning perhaps you forget, and you go out into the sun, and it all seems good; and you take your tools and go to work, and the sea comes washing up the shingle, and you think that the shir-r-r-r of the water on the pebbles and the singing of the saw and the clang of the hammer are the best music in the world. But all at once you remember--and then you work harder, not because you love work now for its own sake, but because it uses up your misery and makes you tired; and being tired you can sleep, and in sleep you can forget. Yet nearly all the time you're awake it fairly kills you, for you feel some one always at your elbow whispering, 'you'll never be happy again, you'll never be happy again!' And when you tell the truth about anything, that some one at your elbow laughs and says: 'Nobody believes--your whole life's a lie!' And if the worst man you know passes you by, that some one at your elbow says: 'You can wear a mask, but you're no better than he, no better, no--'"

While Ranulph spoke Guida's face showed a pity and a kindness as deep as the sorrow which had deepened her nature. She shook her head once or twice as though to say, Surely, what suffering! and now this seemed to strike Ranulph, to convict him of selfishness, for he suddenly stopped. His face cleared, and, smiling with a little of his old-time cheerfulness, he said:

"Yet one gets used to it and works on because one knows it will all come right sometime. I'm of the kind that waits."

She looked up at him with her old wide-eyed steadfastness and replied: "You are a good man, Ranulph." He stood gazing at her a moment without remark, then he said:

"No, ba su, no! but it's like you to say I am." Then he added suddenly: "I've told you the whole truth about myself and about my father. He did a bad thing, and I've stood by him. At first, I nursed my troubles and my shame. I used to think I couldn't live it out, that I had no right to any happiness. But I've changed my mind about that-oui-gia! As I hammered away at my ships month in month out, year in year out, the truth came home to me at last. What right had I to sit down and brood over my miseries? I didn't love my father, but I've done wrong for him, and I've stuck to him. Well, I did love--and I do love--some one else, and I should only be doing right to tell her, and to ask her to let me stand with her against the world."

He was looking down at her with all his story in his face. She put out her hand quickly as if in protest and said:

"Ranulph--ah no, Ranulph--"

"But yes, Guida," he replied with stubborn tenderness, "it is you I mean --it is you I've always meant. You have always been a hundred times more to me than my father, but I let you fight your fight alone. I've waked up now to my mistake. But I tell you true that though I love you better than anything in the world, if things had gone well with you I'd never have come to you. I never came, because of my father, and I'd never have come because you are too far above me always--too fine, too noble for me. I only come now because we're both apart from the world and lonely beyond telling; because we need each other. I have just one thing to say: that we two should stand together. There's none ever can be so near as those that have had hard troubles, that have had bitter wrongs. And when there's love too, what can break the bond! You and I are apart from the world, a black loneliness no one understands. Let us be lonely no longer. Let us live our lives together. What shall we care for the rest of the world if we know we mean to do good and no wrong? So I've come to ask you to let me care for you and the child, to ask you to make my home your home. My father hasn't long to live, and when he is gone we could leave this island for ever. Will you come, Guida?"

She had never taken her eyes from his face, and as his story grew her face lighted with emotion, the glow of a moment's content, of a fleeting joy. In spite of all, this man loved her, he wanted to marry her--in spite of all. Glad to know that such men lived--and with how dark memories contrasting with this bright experience-she said to him once again: "You are a good man, Ranulph."

Coming near to her, he said in a voice husky with feeling: "Will you be my wife, Guida?"

She stood up, one hand resting on the arm of the great chair, the other half held out in pitying deprecation.

"No, Ranulph, no; I can never, never be your wife--never in this world."

For an instant he looked at her dumfounded, then turned away to the fireplace slowly and heavily. "I suppose it was too much to hope for,"

he said bitterly. He realised now how much she was above him, even in her sorrow and shame.

"You forget," she answered quietly, and her hand went out suddenly to the soft curls of the child, "you forget what the world says about me."

There was a kind of fierceness in his look as he turned to her again.

"Me--I have always forgotten--everything," he answered. "Have you thought that for all these years I've believed one word? Secours d'la vie, of what use is faith, what use to trust, if you thought I believed! I do not know the truth, for you have not told me; but I do know, as I know I have a heart in me--I do know that there never was any wrong in you. It is you who forget," he added quickly--"it is you who forget. I tried to tell you all this before; three years ago I tried to tell you. You stopped me, you would not listen. Perhaps you've thought I did not know what has happened to you every week, almost every day of your life? A hundred times I have walked here and you haven't seen me--when you were asleep, when you were fishing, when you were working like a man in the fields and the garden; you who ought to be cared for by a man, working like a slave at man's work. But, no, no, you have not thought well of me, or you would have known that every day I cared, every day I watched, and waited, and hoped--and believed!"

She came to him slowly where he stood, his great frame trembling with his passion and the hurt she had given him, and laying her hand upon his arm, she said:

"Your faith was a blind one, Ro. I was either a girl who--who deserved nothing of the world, or I was a wife. I had no husband, had I? Then I must have been a girl who deserved nothing of the world, or of you. Your faith was blind, Ranulph, you see it was blind."

"What I know is this," he repeated with dogged persistence--"what I know is this: that whatever was wrong, there was no wrong in you. My life a hundred times on that!"

She smiled at him, the brightest smile that had been on her face these years past, and she answered softly: "'I did not think there was so great faith--no, not in Israel!'" Then the happiness passed from her lips to her eyes. "Your faith has made me happy, Ro--I am selfish, you see. Your love in itself could not make me happy, for I have no right to listen, because--"

She paused. It seemed too hard to say: the door of her heart enclosing her secret opened so slowly, so slowly. A struggle was going on in her. Every feeling, every force of her nature was alive. Once, twice, thrice she tried to speak and could not. At last with bursting heart and eyes swimming with tears she said solemnly:

"I can never marry you, Ranulph, and I have no right to listen to your words of love, because--because I am a wife."

Then she gave a great sigh of relief; like some penitent who has for a lifetime hidden a sin or a sorrow and suddenly finds the joy of a confessional which relieves the sick heart, takes away the hand of loneliness that clamps it, and gives it freedom again; lifting the poor slave from the rack of secrecy, the cruelest inquisition of life and time. She repeated the words once more, a little louder, a little clearer. She had vindicated herself to God, now she vindicated herself to man--though to but one.

"I can never marry you; because I am a wife," she said again. There was a slight pause, and then the final word was said: "I am the wife of Philip d'Avranche."

Ranulph did not speak. He stood still and rigid, looking with eyes that scarcely saw.

"I had not intended telling any one until the time should come"--once more her hand reached out and tremblingly stroked the head of the child --"but your faith has forced it from me. I couldn't let you go from me now, ignorant of the truth, you whose trust is beyond telling. Ranulph, I want you to know that I am at least no worse than you thought me."

The look in his face was one of triumph, mingled with despair, hatred, and purpose--hatred of Philip d'Avranche, and purpose concerning him. He gloried now in knowing that Guida might take her place among the honest women of this world,--as the world terms honesty,--but he had received the death-blow to his every hope. He had lost her altogether, he who had watched and waited; who had served and followed, in season and out of season; who had been the faithful friend, keeping his eye fixed only upon her happiness; who had given all; who had poured out his heart like water, and his life like wine before her.

At first he only grasped the fact that Philip d'Avranche was the husband of the woman he loved, and that she had been abandoned. Then sudden remembrance stunned him: Philip d'Avranche, Duc de Bercy, had another wife. He remembered--it had been burned into his brain the day he saw it first in the Gazette de Jersey--that he had married the Comtesse Chantavoine, niece of the Marquis Grandjon-Larisse, upon the very day, and but an hour before, the old Duc de Bercy suddenly died. It flashed across his mind now what he had felt then. He had always believed that Philip had wronged Guida; and long ago he would have gone in search of him--gone to try the strength of his arm against this cowardly marauder, as he held him--but his father's ill-health had kept him where he was, and Philip was at sea upon the nation's business. So the years had gone on until now.

His brain soon cleared. All that he had ever thought upon the matter now crystallised itself into the very truth of the affair. Philip had married Guida secretly; but his new future had opened up to him all at once, and he had married again--a crime, but a crime which in high places sometimes goes unpunished. How monstrous it was that such vile wickedness should be delivered against this woman before him, in whom beauty, goodness, power were commingled! She was the real Princess

Philip d’Avranche, and this child of hers--now he understood why she allowed Guilbert to speak no patois.

They scarcely knew how long they stood silent, she with her hand stroking the child’s golden hair, he white and dazed, looking, looking at her and the child, as the thing resolved itself to him. At last, in a voice which neither he nor she could quite recognise as his own, he said:

"Of course you live now only for Guilbert."

How she thanked him in her heart for the things he had left unsaid, those things which clear-eyed and great-minded folk, high or humble, always understand. There was no selfish lamenting, no reproaches, none of the futile banalities of the lover who fails to see that it is no crime for a woman not to love him. The thing he had said was the thing she most cared to hear.

"Only for that, Ranulph," she answered.

"When will you claim the child’s rights?"

She shook her head sadly. "I do not know," she answered with hesitation. "I will tell you all about it."

Then she told him of the lost register of St. Michael’s, and about the Reverend Lorenzo Dow, but she said nothing as to why she had kept silence. She felt that, man though he was, he might divine something of the truth. In any case he knew that Philip had deserted her.

After a moment he said: "I’ll find Mr. Dow if he is alive, and the register too. Then the boy shall have his rights."

"No, Ranulph," she answered firmly, "it shall be in my own time. I must keep the child with me. I know not when I shall speak; I am biding my day. Once I thought I never should speak, but then I did not see all, did not wholly see my duty towards Guilbert. It is so hard to find what is wise and just."

"When the proofs are found your child shall have his rights," he said with grim insistence.

"I would never let him go from me," she answered, and, leaning over, she impulsively clasped the little Guilbert in her arms.

"There’ll be no need for Guilbert to go from you," he rejoined, "for when your rights come to you, Philip d’Avranche will not be living."

"Will not be living!" she said in amazement. She did not understand.

"I mean to kill him," he answered sternly.

She started, and the light of anger leaped into her eyes. "You mean to kill Philip d’Avranche--you, Maitre Ranulph Delagarde!" she exclaimed.

"Whom has he wronged? Myself and my child only--his wife and his child. Men have been killed for lesser wrongs, but the right to kill does not belong to you. You speak of killing Philip d'Avranche, and yet you dare to say you are my friend!"

In that moment Ranulph learned more than he had ever guessed of life's subtle distinctions and the workings of a woman's mind; and he knew that she was right. Her father, her grandfather, might have killed Philip d'Avranche--any one but himself, he the man who had but now declared his love for her. Clearly his selfishness had blinded him. Right was on his side, but not the formal codes by which men live. He could not avenge Guida's wrongs upon her husband, for all men knew that he himself had loved her for years.

"Forgive me," he said in a low tone. Then a new thought came to him. "Do you think your not speaking all these years was best for the child?" he asked.

Her lips trembled. "Oh, that thought," she said, "that thought has made me unhappy so often! It comes to me at night as I lie sleepless, and I wonder if my child will grow up and turn against me one day. Yet I did what I thought was right, Ranulph, I did the only thing I could do. I would rather have died than--"

She stopped short. No, not even to this man who knew all could she speak her whole mind; but sometimes the thought came to her with horrifying acuteness: was it possible that she ought to have sunk her own disillusions, misery, and contempt of Philip d'Avranche, for the child's sake? She shuddered even now as the reflection of that possibility came to her--to live with Philip d'Avranche!

Of late she had felt that a crisis was near. She had had premonitions that her fate, good or bad, was closing in upon her; that these days in this lonely spot with her child, with her love for it and its love for her, were numbered; that dreams must soon give way for action, and this devoted peace would be broken, she knew not how.

Stooping, she kissed the little fellow upon the forehead and the eyes, and his two hands came up and clasped both her cheeks.

"Tu m'aimes, maman?" the child asked. She had taught him the pretty question.

"Comme la vie, comme la vie!" she answered with a half sob, and caught up the little one to her bosom. Now she looked towards the window. Ranulph followed her look, and saw that the shades of night were falling.

"I have far to walk," he said; "I must be going." As he held out his hand to Guida the child leaned over and touched him on the shoulder. "What is your name, man?" he asked.

He smiled, and, taking the warm little hand in his own, he said: "My name is Ranulph, little gentleman. Ranulph's my name, but you shall call me

Ro."

"Good-night, Ro, man," the child answered with a mischievous smile.

The scene brought up another such scene in Guida's life so many years ago. Instinctively she drew back with the child, a look of pain crossing her face. But Ranulph did not see; he was going. At the doorway he turned and said:

"You know you can trust me. Good-bye."

ETEXT EDITOR'S BOOKMARKS:

Being tired you can sleep, and in sleep you can forget
Cling to beliefs long after conviction has been shattered
Futility of goodness, the futility of all
Her voice had the steadiness of despair
Joy of a confessional which relieves the sick heart
Often, we would rather be hurt than hurt
Queer that things which hurt most can't be punished by law
Rack of secrecy, the cruelest inquisition of life
Sardonic pleasure in the miseries of the world
Sympathy, with curiousness in their eyes and as much inhumanity
Thanked him in her heart for the things he had left unsaid
There is something humiliating in even an undeserved injury
There was never a grey wind but there's a greyer
Uses up your misery and makes you tired (Work)
We care so little for real justice

even years after the official publication date.

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