THE TOILERS OF THE SEA

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Victor Hugo

VICTOR HUGO

THE TOILERS OF THE SEA

A new translation by James Hogarth

Introduction by Graham Robb

Notes by James Hogarth

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I dedicate this book to the rock of hospitality and liberty,
that corner of old Norman soil where dwells
that noble little people of the sea;
to the island of Guernsey, austere and yet gentle,
my present asylum, my future tomb.
V. H.

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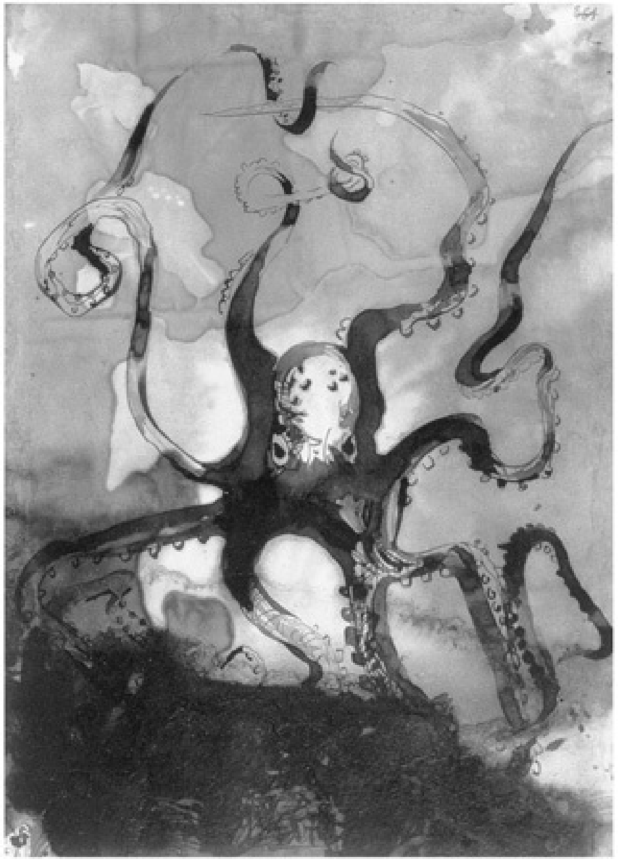
PREFACE

Religion, society, nature: such are the three struggles in which man is engaged. These three struggles are, at the same time, his three needs. He must believe: hence the temple. He must create: hence the city. He must live: hence the plow and the ship. But these three solutions contain within them three wars. The mysterious difficulty of life springs from all three. Man is confronted with obstacles in the form of superstition, in the form of prejudice, and in the form of the elements. A triple ananke[1] weighs upon us: the ananke of dogmas, the ananke of laws, the *ananke* of things. In *Notre-Dame de Paris* the author denounced the first of these; in *Les Misérables* he drew attention to the second; in this book he points to the third.

With these three fatalities that envelop man is mingled the fatality within him, the supreme *ananke,* the human heart.

Hauteville House, March 1866.



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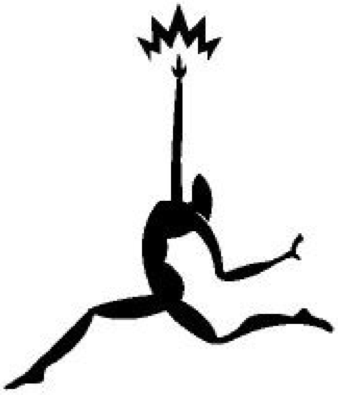


INTRODUCTION

Graham Robb

Most eminent writers learn to protect their reputations. They capitalize on success at the risk of being accused of self-parody, avoid ridicule at the risk of becoming tedious, and appear humble in the face of public acclaim. Victor Hugo (1802–85) destroyed his own reputation so many times and with such spectacular disregard for the consequences that he seemed to have several lives to spare.

After the fall of Napoleon I in 1815, the boy poet had been the angelic voice of the restored monarchy, “the hope of the muses of the fatherland.” Ten years later, Victor Hugo was the *enfant terrible* of French Romanticism, the author of a play, *Hernani,* which filled the Comédie Française with long-haired hooligans, and a novel, *Notre-Dame de Paris,* which appeared to celebrate the victory of the 1830 Revolution. In the 1840s, he was elected to the conservative Académie Française and made a peer of the realm. The idol of the young Romantics had become respectable. As one of his former disciples put it, “What was the point of going to all the trouble of becoming Victor Hugo?”

The collapse of the monarchy in 1848 heralded a new succession of Hugos. There was the Hugo who fought on the barricades in Paris, the political exile who broadcast to his international audience from an island in the English Channel, the visionary poet, the defender of the *misérables,* the national hero who helped to found the Third Republic. The 2 million people who attended his funeral in 1885 were a fair reflection of his encyclopedic career: anarchists, feminists, war veterans, civil servants, politicians, and prostitutes. Every layer of society was represented.

This mass outbreak of Hugophilia was seen by some as evidence of the poet’s hypocrisy: his continual changes of tack were attributed to cynical opportunism. Hugo’s refusal to separate morality from politics had always had an inflammatory effect on his contemporaries. Before and after his death, he was insulted and admired more than any other writer: “sublime cretin” (Dumas fils); “as stupid as the Himalayas” (Leconte de Lisle); “Victor Hugo was a madman who thought he was Victor Hugo” (Jean Cocteau). Hugo might have retorted with the words he quoted in *William Shakespeare* (1864): “Remember the advice that, in Aeschylus, the Ocean gives to Prometheus: ‘To appear mad is the secret of the sage.’ ”

Now, in 2002, the bicentenary of Hugo’s birth is being celebrated in France. The face that appears on television and on newsstands is the white-bearded sage of the Third Republic, the politically correct Father Christmas figure who used to stare down from classroom walls at children who were forced to memorize his poems. At Hugo’s funeral, armed policemen confiscated the banners of socialist clubs. At his bicentenary, the boisterous rabble of his writing is being drowned out by official platitudes.

This neutralization of France’s greatest writer is significant. Hugo was always the voice of his nation’s bad conscience. His parents had stood on opposite sides of the great chasm in French history: the monarchy and the republic. His father was an important general in Napoleon’s army in Spain. His mother, meanwhile, joined a conspiracy to depose Napoleon. For Hugo, to take one side or the other was to betray a part of his own past.

Hugo may have practiced autobiography as a form of fiction, but he grew up in a country that obsessively rewrote its own history. He saw Napoleon twice defeated and the monarchy twice restored in less than two years. In 1848 and 1871, he saw the government of which he was a member massacre hundreds of its own citizens. These traumatic events were also personal catastrophes. They showed that it was possible to follow the dictates of one’s conscience and yet not be on the side of Good. Above all, they revealed the terrible truth that human battles are acted out on a background of unfathomable darkness: “The solitudes of the ocean are melancholy: tumult and silence combined. What happens there no longer concerns the human race.”

The powerful, strangely insecure language of Hugo’s magnificent novel *The Toilers of the Sea*, with its sporadic omniscience, its startling images slowly hammered into unexpected truths, its relentless questions and baffling answers, is the sound of a forensic hand forcing doors, lifting lids, unearthing ghastly secrets. Baudelaire claimed that “nations have great men only in spite of themselves,” but they also have the great men they deserve. Victor Hugo, the secular god of official celebrations and poet laureate of the tourist industry, is also the Victor Hugo who wrote *The Toilers of the Sea* and other half-forgotten works of genius—the nervous voice of a nation whose modern history is crowded with ghosts: the Dreyfus Affair, the Vichy government and the deportation of Jews, the Algerian war, and, more recently, the rise of the National Front. As Hugo wrote, “Some crayfish souls are forever scuttling backward into the darkness.”

When Hugo wrote *The Toilers of the Sea,* a chasm lay between him and his home country. In December 1851, Louis-Napoleon (later, Napoleon III) dissolved Parliament, bribed the army, and conducted a coup d’état. Hugo hid in Paris for several days, trying to stir up a revolt. Eventually, he fled from Paris on the night train to Brussels disguised as a worker. He spent the next nineteen years in exile, most of them in the Channel Islands, first on Jersey and then on Guernsey. His polemical works—*Napoléon le Petit* and *Châtiments*—were smuggled off the island and inspired revolutionary movements throughout the world.

Even in exile, the supposedly monolithic Hugo changed as often as the weather in the English Channel. He was a lyric poet in *Les Contemplations* (1856), an epic poet in *La Légende des Siècles* (1859), a social reformer in *Les Misérables* (1862). All these works were rooted in his earlier life, but *Les Travailleurs de la Mer* (1866) was conceived and written entirely in the Channel Islands. It showed, triumphantly, that Hugo’s imagination had thrived on banishment and defeat.

A key to the workings of this imagination can be found in the extraordinary séances conducted in the first years of Hugo’s exile on Jersey. The practice of enlisting the spirits of the dead in after-dinner conversation had been introduced to the exiles as a parlor game, but the mind of Victor Hugo turned it into a terrifying series of metaphysical visions.

The Hugos and some of their fellow exiles sat in a darkened drawing room, with the sea wind rattling the windows, and were astonished to find themselves talking to Hugo’s first daughter, Léopoldine, who had drowned on her honeymoon nine years before. For the next eighteen months, until one of the participants went mad, the table tapped out its mystic words: one tap for an *a*, two for a *b*, and so on. Once transcribed, these messages—from Homer, Socrates, Jesus, Joan of Arc, and many others—all sounded remarkably like

Victor Hugo.

One of the stars of these séances was a moody, irascible Ocean, which appeared in the spring of 1854, twelve years before it reappeared in *The Toilers of the Sea*. The Ocean wanted to dictate a piece of music and listed its musical needs:

> Give me the falling of rivers into seas, cataracts, waterspouts, the vomitings of the world's enormous breast, that which lions roar, that which elephants trumpet in their trunks [. . .] what mastodons snort in the entrails of the Earth, and then say to me, "Here is your orchestra."

Hugo politely offered a piano. But, as the Ocean pointed out, a piano could never express the synaesthetic dialogue of sounds, sights, and scents. "The piano I need would not fit into your house. It has only two keys, one white and one black, day and night; the day full of birds, the night full of souls." Hugo then suggested using Mozart as a go-between: "Mozart would be better," agreed the Ocean. "I myself am unintelligible."

> HUGO: "Could you ask Mozart to come this evening at nine o'clock?"
>
> THE OCEAN: "I shall have the message conveyed to him by the Twilight."

These ghostly conversations are often used to show that Hugo was insanely gullible. He seemed to believe that this flotsam of his unconscious mind had come from beyond the grave. He showed no surprise when the spirit of Shakespeare told him, "The English language is inferior to French," nor when he heard himself described by "Civilization" as "the great bird that sings of great dawns."

Hugo himself knew that, if published, these séance texts would be greeted with "an immense guffaw." His credulity was a deliberate ploy. By suspending his disbelief, he was summoning up the wild-eyed, holy sense of horror that kept the channels open between the writing hand and the deep unconscious.

The séance texts were a kind of rehearsal for his novel. Hugo was talking to his characters, conducting interviews with his own imagination. In *The Toilers of the Sea*, the tidal-wave syntax that sweeps up small details until the horizons of the page are filled with a single mighty metaphor, the thudding epigrams and crashing contrasts, the sudden silences and bathetic plunges were an attempt to provide the Ocean with its orchestra.

Hugo wrote his novel—originally titled L'Abîme ("The Abyss" or "The Deep") —between June 1864 and April 1865. The harrowing process of revision took almost as long. The novel was eventually published in March 1866. The introduction, "L'Archipel de la Manche," which is still the best general guide to the Channel Islands, was omitted. It did not appear until the 1883 edition.

Visitors to Guernsey today can not only talk to Hugo's ocean, they can also explore the house where the novel was written. From the street, Hauteville House, on the hill above St. Peter Port, appears to be a normal Georgian town house. Inside, it looks like a homemade Gothic cathedral. Hugo filled it with his own carvings and paintings and objects picked up on the beach or discovered in old barns. From the primeval gloom of the entrance hall to the blinding light of the "lookout" on the roof, Hauteville House is a model of Hugo's cosmogony, a seven-story poem in bricks and mortar.

It was in the "lookout" that he wrote his novel, standing up, battered by the wind, with a view of the harbor below and the thin gray line of the French coast. A glass panel in the floor allowed him to peer down through the layers of his domestic universe like a medieval god.

The intimate and grandiose architecture of the house is perceptible in *The Toilers of the Sea.* Huge blocks of text are coordinated as if they were parts of a giant sentence. The structure is littered with bizarre linguistic artifacts, picked up on beachcombing expeditions through manuals and dictionaries. And, like the house itself, the novel can be explored on several levels.

The ship that runs aground is the ship of State, piloted by a greedy hypocrite (Clubin or Napoleon III), and redeemed by a lone hero (Gilliatt or Victor Hugo). The title of the novel—literally, "*Workers* of the Sea"—has a socialist nuance. Technical progress and honest toil will triumph over the old feudal systems. But this was also part of a greater struggle. Gilliatt's task, like that of any engineer, is to conquer gravity and thus, in Hugo's symbolic view, the dumb weight of original sin.

At the center of the novel, the two towers of the Douvres, with the ship lodged between them, are one of Hugo's giant monograms, like the *H* of the guillotine in *Ninety-Three* or the *H* of the twin towers of Notre-Dame. This vertiginous structure is the concrete form of Hugo's mental discipline, around which the other allegories are entwined: the self-destructive nature of love, the civilizing mission of the lone hero, and his metaphysical fear of the void, embodied in that half-imagined, ungraspable creature, the *pieuvre*, "one of those embryos of terrible things that the dreamer glimpses confusedly through the window of night."

The Toilers of the Sea was a huge popular success, which says much about changes in reading habits. "Nineteenth-century novel" was not yet synonymous with dainty drawing-rooms and etiquette, although, even in 1866, a novel about an illiterate sailor and "the silent inclemency of phenomena going about their own business" was considered somewhat eccentric.

Five editions hurtled off the presses in the first three months. French critics were predictably frosty. In France, to insult the exiled Victor Hugo was to show allegiance to the régime of Napoleon III. One pedant published a brochure titled *A Badly Mistreated Mollusc, or* M. Victor Hugo's Notion of Octopus Physiology. Critics, said Hugo, are people who look at the sun and complain about its spots. A noble exception was Alexandre Dumas, who threw a *pieuvre*-tasting party in honor of the novel. Most writers remained silent. Like the Dreyfus Affair, the exile of Victor Hugo is one of the great moral touchstones in French history.

An English translation appeared almost immediately. Unfortunately, it sanitized the text. Gone were the underwater pebbles resembling the heads of green-haired babies, the evocation of springtime as the wet dream of the universe, and, of course, the nightmarish anatomy of the *pieuvre* with its single orifice.

British critics chortled at Hugo's extraordinary attempts at English. Captain Clubin was greeted with a hearty "Good-bye, Captain." A "cliff " in Scotland was called "*la Première des Quatre*" (the Firth of Forth), and the bagpipes turned into a "bug-pipe." Hugo was sensitive to reviews and found these comments strangely discourteous. He had dedicated his novel to the people of Guernsey and even gave the first word to England: "*La Christmas de 182 . . . fut remarquable à Guernesey.*" As Robert Louis Stevenson pointed out, these blunders were part of Hugo's weird charm. In fact, his fondness for the craggy consonants of Anglo-Saxon, the mad desolation of Celtic myth, and the swirling hallucinations of fog and forest give his Channel Island novels—*The Toilers of* *the Sea*, *The Laughing Man*, and *Ninety-Three*—a curious Britishness reminiscent of J.R.R. Tolkien and Mervyn Peake.

Hugo's so-called faults did nothing to harm the book's success. Eight English editions were published in the first six years. Later, a sixpenny edition brought the novel to a vast audience. *The Toilers of the Sea* remained a bestseller until long after Hugo's death. In 1900, some 3,250 copies were being sold every year in Britain.

Since then, Hugo's vast oeuvre has effectively been whittled down to a few hundred pages. *The Hunchback of Notre-Dame* and *Les Misérables* are now the only visible peaks of a literary continent that comprises seven novels, eighteen volumes of poetry, twenty-one plays, a small museum of paintings and drawings, and approximately 3 million words of history, criticism, travel writing, philosophy, and coded diaries.

Hugo would not have been surprised by this submersion of his work. All his novels end with images of erasure and decay. He knew that even masterpieces fall into disrepair and are eventually engulfed by incomprehensibility.

But in *The Toilers of the Sea*, it is still possible to experience the great outdoors of an inexhaustible imagination. This is not a novel for tidy minds who like to read classic fiction in their Sunday best. As the genteel reviewer of *Fraser's Magazine* remarked in 1866, after reading "A Word on the Secret Cooperation of the Elements," Hugo seems intent on "troubling us, offending us, buffeting us in the face; we come out of this chapter in a dishevelled unseemly condition."

GRAHAM ROBB's many books include Victor Hugo: A Biography, which won the 1997 Whitbread Biography Award. He has also written major biographies of Balzac and, most recently, Rimbaud.

THE ARCHIPELAGO OF THE CHANNEL

I

ANCIENT CATACLYSMS

The Atlantic wears away our coasts. The pressure of the current from the Pole deforms our western cliffs. This wall that shields us from the sea is being undermined from Saint-Valery-sur-Somme to Ingouville; huge blocks of rock tumble down, the sea churns clouds of boulders, our harbors are silted up with sand and shingle, the mouths of our rivers are barred. Every day a stretch of Norman soil is torn away and disappears under the waves.

This tremendous activity, which has now slowed down, has had terrible consequences. It has been contained only by that immense spur of land we know as Finistère. The power of the flow of water from the Pole and the violence of the erosion it causes can be judged from the hollow it has carved out between Cherbourg and Brest. The formation of this gulf in the Channel at the expense of French soil goes back before historical times; but the last decisive act of aggression by the ocean against our coasts can be exactly dated. In 709, sixty years before Charlemagne came to the throne, a storm detached Jersey from France. The highest points of other territories submerged in earlier times are still, like Jersey, visible. These points emerging from the water are islands. They form what is called the Norman archipelago. This is now occupied by a laborious human anthill. The industry of the sea, which created ruin, has been succeeded by the industry of man, which has made a people.

II

GUERNSEY

Granite to the south, sand to the north; here sheer rock faces, there dunes. An inclined plane of meadowland with rolling hills and ridges of rock; as a fringe to this green carpet, wrinkled into folds, the foam of the ocean; along the coast, low-built fortifications; at intervals, towers pierced by loopholes; lining the low beaches, a massive breastwork intersected by battlements and staircases, invaded by sand and attacked by the waves, the only besiegers to be feared; windmills dismasted by storms, some of them—at the Vale, Ville-au-Roi, St. Peter Port, Torteval—still turning; in the cliffs, anchorages; in the dunes, sheep and cattle; the shepherds' and cattle herds' dogs questing and working; the little carts of the tradesmen of the town galloping along the hollow ways; often black houses, tarred on the west side for protection from the rain; cocks and hens, dung heaps; everywhere cyclopean walls; the walls of the old harbor, now unfortunately destroyed, were a fine sight, with their shapeless blocks of stone, their massive posts, and their heavy chains; farmhouses set amid trees; fields enclosed by waist-high drystone walls, forming a bizarre checkerboard pattern on the low-lying land; here and there a rampart built around a thistle, granite cottages, huts looking like casemates, little houses capable of withstanding a cannonball; occasionally, in the wildest parts of the country, a small new building topped by a bell—a school; two or three streams flowing through the meadows; elms and oaks; a lily found only here, the Guernsey lily; in the main plowing season, plows drawn by eight horses; in front of the houses, large haystacks on circular stone bases; expanses of prickly furze; here and there gardens in the old French style with clipped yew trees, carefully shaped box hedges and stone vases, mingled with orchards and kitchen gardens; carefully cultivated flowers in countryfolk's gardens; rhododendrons among potatoes; everywhere seaweed laid out on the grass, primrose-colored; in the church yards no crosses, but slabs of stone standing erect, seeming in the moonlight like white ladies; ten Gothic bell towers on the horizon; old churches, new dogmas; Protestant worship housed in Catholic architecture; scattered about in the sand and on the promontories, the somber Celtic enigma in its various forms—menhirs, peulvens, long stones, fairy stones, rocking stones, sounding stones, galleries, cromlechs, dolmens, fairies' houses; remains of the past of all kinds; after the druids the priests; after the priests the rectors; memories of falls from heaven; on one point Lucifer, at the castle of the Archangel Michael; on another, Icart Point, Icarus; almost as many flowers in winter as in summer. This is Guernsey.

III

GUERNSEY (CONTINUED)

Fertile land, rich, strong. No better pasturage. The wheat is celebrated; the cows are illustrious. The heifers grazing the pastures of St. Peter-in-the-Wood are the equals of the famed sheep of the Confolens plateau. The masterpieces produced by the plow and pastureland of Guernsey win medals at agricultural shows in France and England.

Agriculture benefits from well-organized public services, and an excellent network of communications gives life to the whole island. The roads are very good. Lying on the ground at the junction of two roads is a slab of stone bearing a cross. The earliest known bailiff of Guernsey, recorded in 1284, the first on the list, Gaultier de la Salle, was hanged for various acts of iniquity, and this cross, known as the Bailiff ’s Cross, marks the spot where he knelt and prayed for the last time. In the island’s bays and creeks the sea is enlivened by the multicolored, sugarloaf-shaped mooring buoys, checked red and white, half black and half yellow, variegated in green, blue, and orange in lozenge, mottled and marble patterns, which float just under the water. Here and there can be heard the monotonous chant of a team hauling some vessel, heaving on the towrope. Like the fishermen, the farmworkers look content with their lot; so, too, do the gardeners. The soil, saturated with rock dust, is powerful; the fertilizer, which consists of sand and wrack, adds salt to the granite. Hence the extraordinary vitality and richness of the vegetation—magnolias, myrtles, daphnes, rose laurels, blue hydrangeas; the fuchsias are overabundant; there are arcades of three-leaved verbenas; there are walls of geraniums; oranges and lemons flourish in the open; there are no grapes, which ripen only under glass but when grown in greenhouses are excellent; camellias grow into trees; aloe flowers can be seen in gardens, growing taller than a house. Nothing can be more opulent and prodigal than this vegetation that masks and ornaments the trim fronts of villas and cottages.

Attractive on one side, Guernsey is terrible on the other. The west coast of the island, exposed to winds from the open sea, has been devastated. This is a region of coastal reefs, squalls, careening coves, patched-up boats, fallow land, heath, poor hovels, a few low, shivering hamlets, lean sheep and cattle, short salty grass, and a general air of harsh poverty. Lihou is a small barren island just off the coast that is accessible at low tide. It is covered with scrub and rabbit burrows. The rabbits of Lihou know the time of day, emerging from their holes only at high tide and setting man at defiance. Their friend the ocean isolates them. Fraternal relations of this kind are found throughout nature.

If you dig down into the alluvial soil of Vazon Bay you come upon trees. Here, under a mysterious layer of sand, there was once a forest.

The fishermen so harshly treated by this wind-beaten west coast make skillful pilots. The sea around the Channel Islands is peculiar. Cancale Bay, not far away, is the spot in the world where the tides rise highest.

IV

THE GRASS

The grass of Guernsey is the same grass as anywhere else, though a little richer: a meadow on Guernsey is almost like a lawn in Cuges or Gémenos.[2] You find fescues and tufted hair-grasses, as in any other grass, together with common star-grass and floating manna grass; mountain brome, with spindle-shaped spikelets; the phalaris of the Canaries; agrostis, which yields a green dye; rye grass; yellow lupin; Yorkshire fog, which has a woolly stem; fragrant vernal grass; quaking grass; the rain daisy; wild garlic, which has such a sweet flower but such an acrid smell; timothy grass; foxtail, with an ear in the shape of a club; needle grass, which is used for making baskets; and lyme grass, which is useful for stabilizing shifting sands. Is this all? By no means: there are also cocksfoot, whose flowers grow in clusters; panic millet; and even, according to local agricultural experts, bluestem grass. There are the bastard hawkweed, with leaves like the dandelion, which marks the time of day, and the sow thistle of Siberia, which foretells the weather. All these are grasses, but this mixture of grasses is not to be found everywhere: it is peculiar to the archipelago. It requires granite for its subsoil and the ocean to water it.

Now imagine a thousand insects crawling through the grass and flying above it, some hideous, others charming; under the grass longicorns, longinases, weevils, ants engaged in milking aphids, their milch cows, dribbling grasshoppers, ladybirds, click beetles; on the grass and in the air dragonflies, ichneumons, wasps, golden rose-beetles, bumblebees, lace-winged flies, red-bellied gold wasps, the noisy hoverflies—and you will have some idea of the reverie-inducing spectacle that the Jerbourg ridge or Fermain Bay, around midday in June, offers an entomologist who is something of a dreamer or a poet who is something of a naturalist.

Suddenly, under this sweet green grass, you will notice a small square slab of stone inscribed with the letters *WD,* which stand for War Department. This is fair and proper. It is right that civilization should show itself here: otherwise the place would be wild. Go to the banks of the Rhine and seek out the most isolated corners of the landscape. At some points it is so majestic that it seems pontifical: God, surely, must be more present here than elsewhere.

Penetrate into the remote fastnesses where the mountains offer the greatest solitude and the forests the greatest silence; choose, let us say, Andernach and its surroundings; visit the obscure and impassive Laacher See, so unknown that it is almost mysterious. No tranquillity can be found more august than this; universal life is here in all its religious serenity; no disturbances; everywhere the profound order of nature’s great disorder; walk with a softened heart in this wilderness; it is as voluptuous as spring and as melancholy as autumn; wander about at random; leave behind you the ruined abbey, lose yourself in the moving peace of the ravines, amid the song of birds and the rustle of leaves; drink fresh spring water in your cupped hand; walk, meditate, forget. You come upon a cottage at the corner of a hamlet buried under the trees; it is green, fragrant, and charming, clad in ivy and flowers, full of children and laughter. You draw nearer, and on the corner of the cottage, which is bathed in a brilliant alternation of shadow and sunlight, on an old stone in the old wall, below the name of the hamlet, Niederbreisig, you read 22. LANDW. BATAILLON 2. COMP.

You thought you were in a village: you find that you are in a regiment. Such is the nature of man.

V

THE PERILS OF THE SEA

An overfall[3] extends along the whole of the west coast of Guernsey, which has been skillfully dissected by the waves. At night, on rocky points with a sinister reputation, strange lights—seen, it is said, by prowlers along the shore—warn or deceive. These same prowlers, bold and credulous characters, distinguish under the water the legendary sea cucumber, that infernal marine nettle that will set a man’s hand on fire if he touches it. Some local names, for example, Tinttajeu (from Welsh Tin-Tagel), point to the presence of the Devil. As Eustace (the name of Wace) says in the old lines—

Then surged the sea,
The waves ’gan swell and stir,
The skies grew black, and black the clouds.
And soon the sea was all aroused.

The Channel is as unsubdued today as it was in the time of Tewdrig, Umbrafel, Amon Dhû, the Black, and the knight Emyr Lhydau,[4] who sought refuge on the island of Groix, near Quimperlé. In these parts the ocean puts on *coups de théâtre* of which man must beware. This, for example, which is one of the commonest caprices of the winds in the Channel Islands: a storm blows in from the southeast; then there is a period of dead calm; you breathe again; this sometimes lasts for an hour; suddenly the hurricane, which had died down in the southeast, returns from the northwest; whereas previously it took you in the rear, it now reverses direction and takes you head on. If you are not a former pilot and an old sailor, and if you have not been careful to change your tack when the wind changed direction, it is all over with you: the vessel goes to pieces and sinks. Ribeyrolles,[5] who died in Brazil, jotted down from time to time during his stay on Guernsey a personal diary of the events of the day, a page from which we have in front of us:

1st January: New Year gifts. Storm. A ship coming from Portrieux was lost *yesterday on the Esplanade.*

2nd: Three-master lost in Rocquaine Bay. It hailed from America. Seven men dead. Twenty-one saved.

3rd: The packet did not arrive.

4th: The storm continues.

14th: Rain. Landslide, which killed one man.

15th: Stormy weather. The Fawn could not sail.

22nd: Sudden squall. Five wrecks on the west coast.

24th: The storm persists. Shipwrecks on all sides.

There is hardly ever any respite in this corner of the ocean. Hence the seagull shrieks, echoing down the centuries in this never-ending squall, uttered by the uneasy old poet Lhy-ouar’h-henn, that Jeremiah of the sea. But bad weather is not the greatest peril for navigation in the archipelago: the squall is violent, but violence is a warning sign. You return to harbor, or you head into the wind, taking care to set the center of effort of the sails as low as possible. If the wind blows strong you brail up everything, and you may still come through. The greatest perils in these waters are the invisible perils, which are always present; and the finer the weather the more they are to be dreaded.

In such situations special methods of working the ship are necessary. The seamen of western Guernsey excel in such maneuvers, which can be called preventive. No one has studied so carefully as they the three dangers of a calm sea, the *singe*, the *anuble,* and the *derruble.* The *singe* or *swinge* is the current; the *anuble* (“dark place”) is the shoals; the *derruble* (pronounced *terrible*) is the whirlpool, the navel, the funnel formed by underwater rocks, the well beneath the sea.

VI

THE ROCKS

In the archipelago of the Channel the coasts are almost everywhere wild. These islands have charming interiors but a stern and uninviting approach. Since the Channel is a kind of Mediterranean, the waves are short and violent and the tide has a lapping movement. Hence the bizarre battering to which the cliffs are subjected and the deep erosion of the coasts. Skirting these coasts, you pass through a series of mirages. At every turn the rocks try to deceive you. Where do these illusions come from? From the granite. It is very strange. You see huge stone toads, which have no doubt come out of the water to breathe. Giant nuns hasten on their way, heading for the horizon; the petrified folds of their veils have the form of the fleeing wind. Kings with Plutonian crowns meditate on massive thrones, ever under attack by the breakers. Nameless creatures buried in the rock stretch out their arms, showing the fingers of their open hands. All this is the formless coast. Draw nearer, and there is nothing there. Stone can sometimes disappear like this. Here there is a fortress, there a crudely shaped temple, elsewhere a chaos of dilapidated houses and dismantled walls: all the ruins of a deserted city. But there is no city there, no temple, no fortress—only the cliffs. As you draw closer or move farther away, as you drift off or turn back, the coast falls to pieces. No kaleidoscope is quicker to disintegrate. The view breaks apart and re-forms; perspective plays its tricks. This block of rock is a tripod; then it is a lion; then it is an angel and unfolds its wings; then it is a seated figure reading a book. Nothing changes form so quickly as clouds, except perhaps rocks.

These forms call up the idea of grandeur, not of beauty. Far from it: they are sometimes unhealthy and hideous. The rocks have swellings and tumors and cysts and bruises and growths and warts. Mountains are the humps on the earth’s surface. Madame de Staël, hearing Chateaubriand, [6] who had rather high shoulders, speaking slightingly of the Alps, called it the “jealousy of the hunchback.” The grand lines and great majesties of nature, the level of the seas, the silhouette of the mountains, the somber shades of the forests, the blue of the sky are affected by some huge and mysterious dislocation mingled with their harmony. Beauty has its lines; deformity has, too. There is a smile; there is also a distorted grin. Disintegration has the same effects on rocks as on clouds. *This* one floats and decomposes; *that* one is stable and incoherent. The creation retains something of the anguish of chaos. Splendors bear scars. An element of ugliness, which may sometimes be dazzling, mingles with the most magnificent things, seeming to protest against order. There is something of a grimace in the cloud. There is a celestial grotesquerie. All lines are broken in waves, in foliage and in rocks, in which strange parodies can be glimpsed. In them shapelessness predominates. No single outline is correct. Grand? Yes. Pure? No. Examine the clouds: all kinds of faces can be seen in them, all kinds of resemblances, all kinds of figures; but you will look in vain for a Greek profile. You will find Caliban, not Venus; you will never see the Parthenon. But sometimes, at nightfall, a great table of shadow, resting on jambs of cloud and surrounded by blocks of mist, will figure forth in the livid crepuscular sky an immense and monstrous cromlech.

VII

LAND AND SEA MINGLED

The farmhouses of Guernsey are monumental. Some of them have, lining the road, a length of wall like a stage set with a carriage gate and a pedestrians' gate side by side. In the jambs and arches time has carved out deep crevices in which tortula moss nestles, ripening its spores, and where it is not unusual to find bats sleeping. The hamlets under the trees are decrepit but full of life. The cottages seem as old as cathedrals. In the wall of a stone hovel on the Les Hubies road is a recess containing the stump of a small column and the date 1405. Another, near Balmoral, displays on its façade, like the peasant houses of Ernani and Astigarraga,[7] a coat of arms carved in the stone. At every step you will come across farmhouses displaying windows with lozenged panes, staircase turrets, and archivolts in the style of the Renaissance. Not a doorway but has its granite mounting-block. Other little houses have once been boats; the hull of a boat, turned upside down and perched on posts and cross-beams, forms a roof. A vessel with its keel uppermost is a church; with the vaulting downward it is a ship; the recipient of prayer, reversed, tames the sea. In the arid parishes of western Guernsey the communal well with its little dome of white stonework set amid the untilled land has almost the appearance of an Arab marabout.[8] A perforated beam, with a stone for pivot, closes the entrance to a field enclosed by hedges; there are certain marks by which you can distinguish the hurdles on which hobgoblins and auxcriniers [9] ride at night.

All over the slopes of the ravines are ferns, bindweed, wild roses, red-berried holly, hawthorn, pink thorn, danewort, privet, and the long pleated thongs known as Henry IV's collarettes. Amid all this vegetation there multiplies and prospers a species of willow herb that produces nuts much favored by donkeys—a preference expressed by the botanists, with great elegance and decency, in the term Onagriaceae. Everywhere there are thickets, arbors, all kinds of wild plants, expanses of green in which a winged world twitters and warbles, closely watched by a creeping world; blackbirds, linnets, robins, jays; the goldfinch of the Ardennes hurries on its way at full speed; flocks of starlings maneuver in spirals; elsewhere are greenfinches, goldfinches, the Picardy jackdaw, the red-footed crow. Here and there a grass snake.

Little waterfalls, their water carried in channels of worm-eaten wood from which water escapes in drops, drive mills that can be heard turning under the boughs. In some farmyards there can still be seen a cider press and the old circle hollowed out of stone in which the apples were crushed. The cattle drink from troughs like sarcophagi: some Celtic king may have rotted in this granite casket in which the Juno-eyed cow is now drinking. Tree-creepers and wagtails, with friendly familiarity, come down and steal the hens' grain. Along the shore everything is tawny. The wind wears down the grass that is burned up by the sun. Some of the churches are caparisoned in ivy, which reaches up to the belfry. Here and there in the empty heathland an outcrop of rock is crowned by a cottage. Boats, laid up on the beach for lack of a harbor, are buttressed by large boulders. The sails seen on the horizon are ocher or salmon yellow rather than white. On the side exposed to rain and wind the trees have a fur of lichen; and the very stones seem to take their precautions, covering themselves with a skin of dense and solid moss. There are murmurings, whisperings, the rustling of branches; seabirds fly swiftly past, some of them with a silver fish in their beak; there are an abundance of butterflies, varying in color according to season, and all kinds of tumults deep in the sounding rocks. Grazing horses gallop across the untilled land; they roll on the ground, leap about, stop short, offer their manes to be tossed by the wind and watch the waves as they roll in, one after the other, perpetually.

In May the old buildings in the countryside and on the coast are covered in wallflowers, and in June in lilacs. In the dunes the old batteries are crumbling. The countryfolk benefit from the disuse of the cannon, and the fishermen's nets are hung out to dry on the embrasures. Within the four walls of the dismantled blockhouse a wandering donkey or a tethered goat browses on thrift and blue thistles. Half-naked children play, laughing; on the roadways can be seen the patterns they have drawn for their games of hopscotch. In the evening the setting sun, radiantly horizontal, lights up the return of the heifers in the hollow ways as they linger to crop the hedges on either side, causing the dog to bark. The wild capes on the west coast sink down into the sea in an undulating line; on them are a few shivering tamarinds. As twilight falls the cyclopean walls, with the last daylight passing between their stones, form long crests of black lacework along the summit of the hills. The sound of the wind, heard in these solitudes, gives a feeling of extraordinary remoteness.

VIII

ST. PETER PORT

St. Peter Port, capital of Guernsey, was originally built of houses of carved wood brought from Saint-Malo. A handsome stone house of the sixteenth century still stands in the Grand'Rue. St. Peter Port is a free port. The town is built on the slopes of a charming huddle of valleys and hills clustered around the Old Harbor as if they had been thrust there by the hand of a giant. The ravines form the streets, with flights of steps providing shortcuts. The excellent Anglo-Norman carriages gallop up and down the steep streets. In the main square the market women, sitting out in the open, are exposed to the winter showers, while a few paces away is a bronze statue of a prince. [10] A foot of water falls on Jersey every year, ten and a half inches on Guernsey. The fish merchants are better off than the sellers of farm produce: the fish market, a large covered hall, has marble tables with magnificent displays of fish, for the fishermen of Guernsey frequently bring in miraculous drafts. There is no public library, but there is a Mechanics' Institution and Literary Society. There is a college.

The town builds as many churches as it can, and when they are built they must be approved by the Lords of the Council. It is not unusual to see carts passing through the streets of the town carrying arched wooden windows presented by some carpenter to some church. There is a courthouse. The judges, in purple robes, give their judgments in open court. Last century butchers could not sell a pound of beef or mutton until the magistrates had chosen their meat.

There are many private chapels in protest against the official churches. Go into one of these chapels, and you will hear a countryman expounding to others the doctrines of Nestorianism (that is, the difference between the Mother of Christ and the Mother of God) or teaching that the Father is power, while the Son is only a limited power—which is very much like the heresy of Abelard. There are large numbers of Irish Catholics, who are not noted for their patience, so that theological discussions are sometimes punctuated by orthodox fisticuffs.

Sunday is, by law, a day of stagnation. Everything is permitted, except drinking a glass of beer, on Sunday. If you felt thirsty on the “blessed Sabbath day” you would scandalize worthy Amos Chick, who is licensed to sell ale and cider in the High Street. The law on Sunday observance permits singing, but without drinking. Except when praying people do not say “My God”: they say instead “My Good”—the word *good* replacing God. A young French assistant teacher in a boarding school who picked up her scissors with the exclamation “Ah mon Dieu!” was dismissed for “swearing.” People here are more biblical than evangelical.

There is a theater. The entrance is a doorway in a deserted street giving access to a corridor. The interior is rather in the style of architecture adopted for haylofts. Satan lives here in very modest style and is poorly lodged. Opposite the theater is the prison, another lodging of the same individual. On the hill to the north, in Castle Carey (a solecism: the right form is Carey Castle), there is a valuable collection of pictures, mainly Spanish. If it were publicly owned it would be a museum. In some aristocratic houses there are curious specimens of the Dutch painted tiles with which Tsar Peter’s chimneypiece at Saardam is faced and of those magnificent tile paintings known in Portugal as *azulejos*, products of the high art of tin-glazed earthenware that has recently been revived, finer than before, thanks to initiators like Dr. Lasalle, manufactories like the one at Premières, [11] and pottery painters like Deck and Devers.

The Chaussée d’Antin of Jersey is Rouge-Bouillon; the Faubourg Saint-Germain[12] of Guernsey is Les Rohais. Here there are many handsome streets, finely laid out and intersected by gardens. St. Peter Port has as many trees as roofs, more nests than houses, and more sounds of birds than of carriages. Les Rohais has the grand patrician aspect of the fashionable quarters of London and is white and clean. But cross a ravine, pass over Mill Street, continue through a narrow gap between two tall buildings, and climb a narrow and interminable flight of steps with tortuous bends and loose paving, and you find yourself in a bedouin town: hovels, potholes, streets with broken paving, burned-out gable ends, ruined houses, empty rooms without doors or windows in which grass grows, beams traversing the street, piles of rubble blocking the way, here and there a shack that is still inhabited, naked small boys, pale-faced women: you might think yourself in Zaatcha. [13] In St. Peter Port a watchmaker is a montrier; an auctioneer is an *encanteur;* a housepainter is a *picturier;* a building worker is a *plâtrier;* a foot doctor is a *chiropodiste;* a cook is a *couque;* to knock at the door is to *taper à l'hû.* Mrs. Pescott is *agente de douanes et fournisseure de navires* (customs agent and ship's chandler). A barber told his customers of the death of Wellington in these words: *Le com*mandant des soudards [14] est mort. Women go from door to door selling trifling wares bought in bazaars and markets: this is called *chiner.* The chineuses, who are very poor, are lucky if they earn a few doubles[15] in a day. A remark by one *chineuse* is significant: "You know, I've done well: I've set aside seven sous this week." A friend of mine, encountering another *chineuse,* gave her five francs, whereupon she said: "Thank you, sir: now I'll be able to buy wholesale."

In June the yachts begin to arrive, and the bay is filled with pleasure craft, most of them schooner-rigged, with some steam yachts. Some yachts may well cost their owner a hundred thousand francs a month. Cricket prospers, while boxing declines. Temperance societies are active; and, it must be said, they perform a useful function. They hold processions, carrying banners in an almost masonic display that softens the hearts even of the innkeepers. Barmaids can be heard saying, as they serve customers overfond of drink: "Have a glass, not a bottle."

The population is healthy, handsome, and well-behaved. The town prison is very often empty. At Christmas the jailer, if he has prisoners, gives them a small family banquet. The local architecture has its peculiarities, of which it is tenacious. The town of St. Peter Port is faithful to the queen, to the Bible, and to sash windows. In summer the men bathe naked. Swimming trunks are an indecency: they attract attention. Mothers excel in dressing their children: it is pretty to see the variety of toilettes they so skillfully devise for the little ones. Children go about alone in the streets, showing a sweet and touching confidence. Small children take the babies. In the matter of fashion Guernsey copies Paris, though not always: sometimes vivid reds or harsh blues reveal the English alliance. Nevertheless we have heard a local dress-maker, advising a fashionable Guernsey lady, say: "I think a ladylike and genteel color is best."

Guernsey is renowned for the work of its ship's carpenters: the Careening Hard is lined with ships under repair. Vessels are hauled ashore to the sound of a flute. The flute player, say the master carpenters, is a better worker than the workmen. St. Peter Port has a Pollet[16] like Dieppe and a Strand like London. A respectable gentleman would not be seen in the street with a book or a portfolio under his arm, but he will go to the market on Saturday carrying a basket. A visit by a royal personage provided a pretext for erecting a tower.[17] The dead are buried within the town. College Street runs past two cemeteries, one on either side. Built into a wall is a tomb of 1610. L'Hyvreuse is a little square planted with grass and trees that can stand comparison with the most beautiful gardens in Paris's Champs-Élysées, with the additional bonus of the sea. In the windows of the elegant shopping mall known as the Arcades can be seen advertisements such as this: "On sale here, the perfume recommended by the 6th Artillery Regiment."

The town is traversed in every direction by drays laden with barrels of beer and sacks of coal. A stroller about town can read a variety of other notices: "A fine bull to be hired out here, as in the past."—"Highest prices given for rags, lead, glass and bones."—"For sale, new kidney potatoes of the finest quality."—"For sale, pea stakes, some tons of oats for chaff, a complete set of English-style doors for a drawing room and a fat pig. Mon Plaisir farm, St. James's."—"For sale, good hay, recently threshed, yellow carrots by the hundred, and a good French syringe. Apply to the Moulin de l'Échelle, St. Andrew's."—"It is forbidden to dress fish or deposit refuse."—"For sale, a she-ass in milk." And so on, and so on.

IX

JERSEY, ALDERNEY, SARK

The Channel Islands are fragments of France that have fallen into the sea and been picked up by England. Hence their complex nationality. The people of Jersey and Guernsey are certainly not English against their will, but they are also French without knowing it. If they do know it, they make a point of forgetting it. Some indication of this is given by the French they speak. The archipelago consists of four islands— two large ones, Jersey and Guernsey, and two small ones, Alderney and Sark—together with various islets: Ortach, the Casquets, Herm, Jethou, and so on. The names of the islets and reefs in this old Gaul frequently contain the term *hou*. Alderney has Burhou, Sark has Brecqhou, Guernsey has Lihou and Jethou, Jersey has Les Écrehou, Granville has Le Pirhou. There are La Hougue Point, La Hougue Bie, La Hougue des Pommiers, the Houmets, *etc.* There are the island of Chousey, the Chouas reef, *etc.* This remarkable radical of the primitive language of the region, *hou*, is found everywhere: in the words *houle* (entrance to a rabbit's burrow), *huée* (booing), *hure* (promontory), *hourque* (a Dutch cargo vessel), *houre* (an old word for scaffold), *houx* (holly), *houperon* (shark), *hurlement* (howling), *hulotte* (brown owl), and chouette (screech owl), from which is derived Chouan,[18] etc.; and it can be detected in two words that express the indefinite, *unda* and *unde*. It is also found in two words expressing doubt, ou and où.[19]

Sark is half the size of Alderney, Alderney is a quarter the size of Guernsey, and Guernsey is two-thirds the size of Jersey. The whole of the island of Jersey is exactly the same size as the city of London. It would take twenty-seven hundred Jerseys to make up the area of France. According to the calculations of Charassin, an excellent practical agronomist, France, if it were as well cultivated as Jersey, could feed a population of 270 million—the whole of Europe. Of the four islands Sark, the smallest, is the most beautiful; Jersey, the largest, is the prettiest; and Guernsey, both wild and smiling, has the qualities of both. Sark has a silver mine that is not worked because it yields so little. Jersey has fifty-six thousand inhabitants, Guernsey thirty thousand, Alderney forty-five hundred, Sark six hundred, Lihou one. The distance between these islands, between

Alderney and Guernsey and between Guernsey and Jersey, is the stride of a seven-league boot. The arm of the sea between Guernsey and Herm is called the Little Russel, that between Herm and Sark the Great Russel. The nearest point in France is Cape Flamanville. On Guernsey you can hear the cannon of Cherbourg; in Cherbourg you can hear the thunder of Guernsey. The storms in the archipelago of the Channel, as we have said, are terrible. Archipelagos are abodes of the winds. Between the various islands there is a corridor that acts as a bellows—a law that is bad for the sea and good for the land. The wind carries away miasmas and brings about shipwrecks. This law applies to the Channel Islands as it does to other archipelagos. Cholera has spared Jersey and Guernsey; but there was such a violent epidemic on Guernsey in the Middle Ages that the bailiff burned the archives to destroy the plague. In France these islands are generally known as the English islands, in England as the Norman islands. The Channel Islands coin their own money, though only coppers. A Roman road, which can still be seen, ran between Coutances in Normandy and Jersey. As we have seen, Jersey was detached from France by the ocean in 709, when twelve parishes were engulfed. There are families living today in Normandy that still have the lordship of these parishes. Their divine right is now under water: such is sometimes the fate of divine rights.

X

HISTORY, LEGEND, RELIGION

The original six parishes of Guernsey belonged to a single seigneur, Néel, viscount of Cotentin, who was defeated in the Battle of the Dunes in 1047. At that time, according to Dumaresq, there was a volcano in the Channel Islands. The date of the twelve parishes of Jersey is inscribed in the Black Book of Coutances Cathedral. The seigneur of Briquebec had the style of baron of Guernsey. Alderney was a fief held by Henri l'Artisan. Jersey was ruled by two thieves, Caesar and Rollo.[20] Haro [21] is an appeal to the duke ("Ha! Rollo!"); or perhaps it comes from the Saxon *haran,* to cry. The cry *haro* was repeated three times, kneeling on the highway, and all work ceased in the area until justice had been done. Before Rollo, duke of the Normans, the archipelago had been ruled by Solomon, king of the Bretons. As a result there is much of Normandy in Jersey and much of Brittany in Guernsey. On these islands nature reflects history: Jersey has more meadowland, Guernsey more rocks; Jersey is greener, Guernsey harsher. The islands were covered with noble mansions. The earl of Essex left a ruin on Alderney, Essex Castle. Jersey has Mont Orgueil; Guernsey has Castle Cornet. Castle Cornet stands on a rock that was once a holm, that is, a helmet. The same metaphor is found in the Casquets (*casques* = helmets). Castle Cornet was besieged by the Picard pirate Eustache, Mont Orgueil by Du Guesclin[22]; fortresses, like women, boast of their besiegers when they are illustrious. In the fifteenth century a pope declared Jersey and Guernsey neutral. He was thinking of war, not of schism. Calvinism, preached on Jersey by Pierre Morice and on Guernsey by Nicolas Baudouin, arrived in the Norman archipelago in 1563. Calvin's doctrines have prospered there, as have Luther's, though nowadays much troubled by Wesleyanism, an offshoot of Protestantism that now contains the future of England. Churches abound in the archipelago. It is worth considering them in detail. Everywhere there are Protestant churches; Catholicism has been left behind. Any given area on Jersey or Guernsey has more chapels than any area of the same size in Spain or Italy. Methodists proper, Primitive Methodists, other Methodist sects, Independent Methodists, Baptists, Presbyterians, Millenarians, Quakers, Bible Christians, Plymouth Brethren, Non-Sectarians, etc.; add also the episcopal Anglican church and the papist Roman church. On Jersey there is a Mormon chapel.

In St. George’s Fountain, at Le Câtel, girls see the image of their future husband. Another spring, in St. Andrew’s, I think, compels liars who have been unfortunate enough to drink from it to tell the truth. If a woman scrapes a stone in a dolmen, mixes the resultant powder, known as *pérelle,* into water, and drinks it, she is sure to have sturdy children. The wall of a church can be scraped with similar success. In every bay there lives an elf who, if a child gives him a cake, will in due course, according to sex, give the little girl a dowry when she reaches marriageable age and the boy, when he becomes a man, a fully rigged boat. There are two giants: the giant Longis, father of Gayoffe, father of Bolivorax, father of Pantagruel,[23] and the giant Bodu, who has now been transformed into a black dog, having been punished by the fairies for his dalliance with a princess. This black dog, Bodu, competes in old wives’ tales with a white dog, who is Gaultier de la Salle, the bailiff who was hanged. Connoisseurs of phantoms have all sorts of varieties to study in the Channel Islands: *drées* are not the same as *alleurs; alleurs* are not the same as *auxcriniers; auxcriniers* are not the same as *cucuches.* In these parts anyone encountering a black hen at nightfall feels some apprehension.

In certain parishes there has been something of a return to Catholicism. At present crosses are beginning to grow on the tips of church spires. It is a sign of Puseyism.[24] The organ is now heard in churches, and even in chapels, which would have aroused John Knox’s indignation. Saintly persons now abound; some of them possess to a very remarkable degree a horror of “miscreants.” In many people this horror seems innate. Protestantism excels, no less than Catholicism, in promoting it. A woman of the highest society in London is famous for her ability to faint in houses where there is a copy of Dr. Colenso’s book.[25] She enters a house and cries: “The book is here!” and then swoons. A search is carried out and the book is found. This is a very valuable kind of faculty.

Orthodox Bibles are distinguished by their spelling of Satan without a capital, “satan.” They are quite right.

Speaking of Satan, they hate Voltaire. The word *Voltaire,* it seems, is one of the pronunciations of the name of Satan. When it is a question of Voltaire all dissidences are forgotten; Mormon and Anglican views coincide; there is general agreement in anger; and all sects are united in hatred. The anathema directed against Voltaire is the point of intersection of all varieties of Protestantism. It is a remarkable fact that Catholicism detests Voltaire and Protestantism execrates him. Geneva outbids Rome. There is a crescendo in malediction. Calas, Sirven, and so many eloquent pages against the dragonnades count for nothing.[26]

Voltaire denied a dogma: that is enough. He defended Protestants but he wounded Protestantism; and the Protestants pursue him with a very orthodox ingratitude. A man who had occasion to speak in public in St. Helier to gain support for a good cause was warned that if he mentioned Voltaire in his speech[27] the collection would be a failure. So long as the past has breath enough to make itself heard, Voltaire will be rejected. Listen to all these voices: he has neither genius nor talent nor wit. In his old age he was insulted; after his death he is proscribed. He is eternally “discussed”: in this his glory consists. Is it possible to speak of Voltaire calmly and with justice? When a man dominates an age and incarnates progress, he cannot expect criticism: only hatred.

XI

OLD HAUNTS AND OLD SAINTS

The Cyclades form a circle; the archipelago of the Channel forms a triangle. When you look at a map, which is a bird's-eye view for man, the Channel Islands, a triangular segment of sea, are bounded by three culminating points: Alderney to the north, Guernsey to the west, and Jersey to the south. Each of these three mother islands has around it what might be called its chickens, a series of islets. Alderney has Burhou, Ortach, and the Casquets; Guernsey has Herm, Jethou, and Lihou; Jersey has on the side facing France the semicircle of St. Aubin's Bay, toward which the two groups, scattered but distinct, of the Grelets and the Minquiers seem to be hastening, like two swarms of bees heading for the doorway of the hive, in the blue of the water, which, like the sky, is azure. In the center of the archipelago is Sark, with its associated Brecqhou and Goat Island, which provides a link between Guernsey and Jersey. The comparison between the Cyclades and the Channel Islands would certainly have struck the mystical and mythical school that, under the Restoration, was centered on de Maistre by way of d'Eckstein[28] and would have served it as a symbol: the rounded archipelago of Hellas (*ore rotundo,* harmonious in style), the archipelago of the Channel sharp, bristling, aggressive, angular; the one in the image of harmony, the other of dispute. It is not for nothing that one is Greek and the other Norman.

Once, in prehistoric times, these islands in the Channel were wild. The first islanders were probably some of those primitive men of whom specimens were found at Moulin-Quignon,[29] who belonged to the race with receding jaws. For half the year they lived on fish and shellfish, for the other half on what they could pick up from wrecks. Pillaging their coasts was their main resource. They recognized only two seasons in the year, the fishing season and the shipwreck season, just as the Greenlanders call summer the "reindeer hunt" and winter the "seal hunt." All these islands, which later became Norman, were expanses of thistles and brambles, wild beasts' dens and pirates' lairs. An old local chronicler refers, energetically, to "rat traps" and "pirate traps." The Romans came, and probably brought about only a moderate advance toward probity: they crucified the pirates and celebrated the Furrinalia, the rogues' festival. This festival is still celebrated in some of our villages on July 25 and in our towns throughout the year.

Jersey, Sark, and Guernsey were formerly called Ange, Sarge, and Bissarge; Alderney is Redana, or perhaps Thanet. There is a legend that on Rat Island, *insula rattorum,* the promiscuity of male rabbits and female rats gave rise to the guinea pig.

According to Furetière,[30] abbot of Chalivoy, who reproached La Fontaine with being ignorant of the difference between *bois en grume* (hewn timber with its bark on) and *bois marmenteau* (ornamental timber), it was a long time before France noticed the existence of Alderney off its coasts. And indeed Alderney plays only an imperceptible part in the history of Normandy. Rabelais, however, knew the Norman archipelago; he names Herm and Sark, which he calls Cercq. "I assure you that this land is the same that I have formerly seen, the islands of Cercq and Herm, between Brittany and England" (edition of 1558, Lyons, p. 423).

The Casquets are a redoubtable place for shipwrecks. Two hundred years ago the English ran a trade in the fishing up of cannon there. One of these cannon, covered with oysters and mussels, is now in the museum in Valognes.[31] Herm is an eremos.[32] Saint Tugdual, a friend of Saint Sampson, prayed on Herm, just as Saint Magloire (Maglorius) prayed on Sark. There were hermits' haloes on all these rocky points. Helier prayed on Jersey and Marculf amid the rocks of Calvados. This was the time when the hermit Eparchius was becoming Saint Cybard in the caverns of Angoulême and when the anchorite Crescentius, in the depths of the forests around Trier, caused a temple of Diana to fall down by staring fixedly at it for five years. It was on Sark, which was his sanctuary, his *ionad naomh,* that Magloire composed the hymn for All Saints, later rewritten by Santeuil, *Coelo quos eadem gloria consecrat.* It was from there, too, that he threw stones at the Saxons, whose raiding fleets twice disturbed his prayers. The archipelago was also somewhat troubled at this period by the amwarydour, the chieftain of the Celtic settlement. From time to time Magloire crossed the water to consult with the mactierne (vassal prince) of Guernsey, Nivou, who was a prophet. One day Magloire, after performing a miracle, made a vow never to eat fish again. In addition, in order to promote good behavior among the dogs and preserve the monks from guilty thoughts, he banished bitches from the island of Sark—a law that still subsists. Saint Magloire performed other services for the archipelago. He went to Jersey to bring to their senses the people of the island, who had the bad habit on Christmas Day of changing themselves into all kinds of animals in honor of Mithras. Saint Magloire put an end to this misbehavior. In the reign of Nominoe, a feudatory of Charles the Bold, his relics were stolen by the monks of Lehon-lès-Dinan. All these facts are proved by the Bollandists, the "Acta Sancti Marculphi," etc., and Abbé Trigan's "Ecclesiastical History." Victricius of Rouen, a friend of Martin of Tours, had his cave on Sark, which in the eleventh century was a dependency of the abbey of Montebourg. Nowadays Sark is a fief immobilized between forty tenants.

XII

RANDOM MEMORIES

In the Middle Ages poor people and poor money went together. One created the other. The poor improvised the sou. Rags and farthings were brothers: so much so that the former sometimes invented the latter. It was a bizarre kind of right, tacitly permitted. There are still traces of this on Guernsey. A quarter of a century ago anyone who had need of a double[33] tore a copper button off his jacket; the buttons from soldiers' uniforms were current coin; a scrap metal merchant would cut out pennies from an old cauldron. This coinage circulated freely.

The first steamship to be seen on Guernsey, on its way to somewhere else, gave the idea of having one on the island. It was called the *Medina* and had a burden of around a hundred tons. It called in at St. Peter Port on June 10, 1823. A regular service of steamers to and from England, by Southampton and Portsmouth, started only much later. The service was run by two small steamships, the *Ariadne* and the *Beresford*. Viscount Beresford was then governor of the islands.

Isolation has a long memory, and an island is a form of isolation. Hence the tenacity of memory in islanders. Traditions continue interminably. It is impossible to break a thread stretching backward through the night as far as the eye can reach. People remember everything—a boat that passed that way, a shower of hail, a fish they caught, and, still more understandably, their forebears. Islands are much given to genealogies.

A word in passing about genealogies. We shall have more to say about them. Family trees are venerated in the archipelago. They are much regarded even for cows—more usefully, perhaps, than for people. A countryman will refer to "my ancestors."

When Monsieur Pasquier was made a duke, Monsieur Royer-Collard [34] said to him: "It won't do you any harm." It is the same with genealogies: they do no harm to anyone.

Tattooing is the earliest form of heraldry. The innocence of the savage points toward the pride of nobility. And the Channel Islands are innocent, very innocent, and savage, to a certain degree. In these sea-borne territories, where a kind of saltiness preserves everything, even vanities, people have a firm faith in their own antiquity. In a way this is respectable and touching. It leads to impressive claims. If these claims are made in the presence of a skeptical Frenchman he smiles; if he is polite as well as skeptical he bows. One day (May 26, 1865) I had two visitors, a Jersey man and an Englishman, both perfect gentlemen. The Jersey man said: “My name is Larbalestier.” Seeing that this did not sufficiently impress me, he added: “I am a Larbalestier, of a family that went on the Crusades.” The Englishman said: “My name is Brunswill. I am descended from William the Conqueror.” I asked them: “Do you know a Guernsey man, Mr. Overend, who is descended from Rollo?”

There is a Granite Club in St. Sampson. Its members are stone breakers, who wear a blue rosette in their buttonhole on May 31. May is also the cricket season.

The Channel Islands are remarkable for their impassiveness. A matter that stirs passions in England seems to pass unnoticed here. The author of this book happened one day to commit a barbarism in the English language, which he did all the more readily because he knows no English. Deceived by false information given by a misprint in a pocket dictionary, he wrote “bugpipe” instead of “bagpipe.” A *u* instead of an *a!* It was an enormity. “Bug” and not “bag”: it was almost as bad as “shibboleth” instead of “sibboleth.” Once upon a time England burned people at the stake for that. This time Albion contented itself with raising its hands to heaven. How can a man who knows no English make a mistake in English? The newspapers made this scandal headline news. Bugpipe! There was a kind of uprising throughout Great Britain; but, strange to say, Guernsey remained calm.[35]

Two varieties of traditional French farmhouse are to be seen on Guernsey. On the east side it is the Norman type, on the west side the Breton. The Norman farm has more architecture, the Breton farm more trees. The Norman farm stores its crops in a barn; the Breton farm, more primitive, shelters its crops under a thatched roof borne on rugged columns that are almost cyclopean in aspect—

shapeless cylinders of undressed stones bonded with Portland cement. From these farms women, some still wearing the old Guernsey headdress, set out for the town with their baskets of vegetables and fruit on a *quériot,* a donkey cart. When a market woman earns her first money of the day she spits on it before putting it in her pocket. Evidently this brings luck.

These good countryfolk of the islands have all the old prickliness of the Normans. It is difficult to strike the right note in dealing with them. Walking out one winter day when it was raining, an acquaintance of ours noticed an old woman in rags, almost barefoot. He went up to her and slipped a coin in her hand. She turned around proudly, dropped the money to the ground, and said: "What do you take me for? I am not poor. I keep a servant." If you make the opposite mistake you are no better received. A countryman takes such politeness as an offense. The same acquaintance once addressed a countryman, asking: "Are you not Mess Leburay?" The man frowned, saying: "I am Pierre Leburay. I am not entitled to be called Mess."[36]

Ivy abounds, clothing rocks and house walls with magnificence. It clings to any dead branch and covers it completely, so that there are never any dead trees; the ivy takes the trunk and branches of a tree and puts leaves on them. Bales of hay are unknown: instead you will see in the fields mounds of fodder as tall as houses. These are cut up like a loaf of bread, and you will be brought a lump of hay to meet the needs of your cowshed or stable. Here and there, even quite far inland, amid fruit and apple orchards, you will see the carcasses of fishing boats under construction. The fisherman tills his fields, the farmer is also a fisherman: the same man is a peasant of the land and a peasant of the sea.

In certain types of fishery the fisherman drops his net into the sea and anchors it on the bottom, with cork floats supporting it on the surface, and leaves it. If a ship passes that way during the night it cuts the net, which drifts away and is lost. This is a heavy loss, for a net may cost as much as two or three thousand francs. Mackerel are caught in a net with meshes too wide for their head and too small for their body; the fish, unable to move forward, try to back out and are caught by the gills. Mullet are caught with the trammel, a French type of net with triple meshes, which work together to trap the fish. Sand eels are caught with a hoop net, half meshed and half solid, which acts as both a net and a bag.

Small ponds vary the pattern of the farms in western Guernsey, particularly in low-lying areas. Close by are the bays in which, scattered about on the turf, the fishermen’s boats—the *Julia, Piety,* the *Seagull,* and so on—are beached, supported by four blocks of wood. Gulls and ducks perch fraternally on the sides of the boats, the ducks coming from the ponds and the gulls from the ocean. Here and there along the coast rocky promontories sometimes retain the sand brought in by the tide, forming a kind of basin in which the residues left by the sea accumulate; at first it is only an alluvial deposit, then it is an islet, then grass grows on it and it becomes an island. The owners of the land bordering the shore claim, in spite of latent contradiction by the government, that these formations belong to them. Monsieur Henry Marquand was good enough to sell me one of them. It is a pretty little island with rocks and grass. I paid three francs for it.

To prevent the haystacks from being carried away by the wind, chains from boats are laid over them. In the fields on the west coast, where hurricanes have freedom of action, the trees are on the defensive, bending down in unnatural attitudes, like athletes. There are no flowers in the gardens of the west, and the ingenious proprietors make good the lack with plaster statues. The yew trees in the gardens of cottages, clipped low and widening toward the foot, are like round tables, of a convenient shape for dogs to scratch their backs on. The walls are topped by lines of large round boulders.

Sometimes, on the deserted shore, there is a tower occupied by a soldier and his wife and children. These coastal towers are called Martello towers after their inventor. The tower provides comfortable accommodation for the soldier’s family. The casemate serves as a bedroom; the wife does her cooking and her laundry; the cradle is next to the cannon, and the embrasure forms an alcove; from the distance smoke can be seen emerging peaceably from the top section of the tower, which has become a kitchen. In the Norman isles the main concern of domestic servants, who are seen perpetually kneeling in front of the house door, is to keep the doorstep white—an activity that wears away a lot of sandstone. The same fashion is found in Holland: on the day when the sheets are as white as the steps of the staircase a great progress will have been achieved.

The archipelago has an abundance of plants that are excellent for medicinal purposes or for cooking, though they are rather disdained by the inhabitants. They are surprised to see the French eating salads of dandelions, lambs’ lettuce, and what they call *sarcle,* which they say is “as bitter as gall.” It is necessary to beware of a large, squat species of mushroom found on salt meadowland known as a toadstool. All over the island, even outside cottages, you will see flagstaffs; for it is a great satisfaction to an Englishman to deck his house with a flag.

Laid out on the short turf of the untilled land to dry in the wind and sun are black cakes of peat cut from the local bog. The large fields of communal grazing at L'Ancresse have gates that half-naked children will open for you for a penny. Poor children have free schools, officially known as ragged schools. Such harsh terms are quite acceptable to the English. On some steamships you will see a notice beside the helmsman: “Do not speak to this man.” In France we would say: “Please do not speak to the helmsman.” If you are curious to see the gulf that separates a “man” from a “gentleman,” you must go to England. In this respect the Channel Islands are England.

Any manual work makes you a “man.” The duc de Caumont-La Force, an émigré who worked as a bookbinder, had become a “man.” Vicomtesse ***, who had sought refuge on Jersey, suffered the poverty of exile and swept out her own room. The old woman from whom she rented the room, a Mrs. Lamb, used to say: “She looks after herself; she does all her own work, whatever has to be done. She's not a lady; she's a woman.”

Ribeyrolles[37] used to work in his garden, wearing a smock. “He's but a portioner,” said the neighbors. One of the Hungarian exiles, Colonel Katona, performed for General Mezzaros all the services that an aidede-camp performs for his general. This classed him as a lackey. When someone called at his lodging and asked for the general his landlady pointed to the colonel, saying: “There's his toady.” Some nuances are almost imperceptible. A countryman named Lefèvre appeared before the registrar for the census. “Is it Lefèvre or Lefebvre?” he was asked. “Do you spell it with a *b*?” “Oh no!” he replied. “I am not a gentleman.”

On Guernsey the judges wear purple robes. Surprisingly in this old Norman territory, stamped paper is unknown. Legal disputes are carried on using ordinary paper. Parliamentary discussions sometimes become quite lively. In local council meetings you will hear remarks such as these:

One speaker to another: “You are an impertinent fellow and a rogue.”

The chairman: “What you are saying is quite off the point.”

Some of our colloquial Parisian turns of phrase have been imperturbably adopted into the grave language of official business. For example, the case of Dobrée versus Jehan (April 5, 1866) gave rise to a judicial summing-up that said, à propos of the deposition of one Marguerite Jehan: “This witness is completely off her head.” Another unusual use of language: we have in front of us a doctor’s prescription for a purgative: “Take one of these pills this evening and the other tomorrow morning if the first one has not paid off.”

XIII

LOCAL PECULIARITIES

Each island has its own coinage, its own patois, its own government, its own prejudices. Jersey is worried about having a French landowner. Suppose he wanted to buy up the whole island! On Jersey foreigners are not permitted to buy land; on Guernsey they may. On the other hand, religious austerity is less on the former island than on the latter; the Jersey Sunday is freer than the Guernsey Sunday. The Bible has greater mandatory force in St. Peter Port than in St. Helier. The purchase of a property on Guernsey is a complicated matter, particularly for an ignorant foreigner, and one of great peril: the buyer gives security on his purchase for twenty years that the commercial and financial situation of the seller shall be the same as it was at the precise moment when the sale took place. Other confusions arise from differences in the coinage and in weights and measures. The shilling, the old French *ascalin* or *chelin,* is worth twenty-five sous in England, twenty-six sous on Jersey, and twenty-four sous on Guernsey. The “Queen’s weight” also has its whims: the Guernsey pound is not the same as the Jersey pound, which is not the same as the English pound. On Guernsey land is measured in *vergées* and *vergées* in *perches.* There are different measures on Jersey. On Guernsey only French money is used, but it is called by English names. A franc is known as a tenpenny piece. The lack of symmetry is carried so far that there are more women than men in the archipelago: six women to five men. Guernsey has had many names, some of them archaeological: to scholars it is known as Granosia, while for loyal citizens it is Little England. And indeed it resembles England in geometrical form; Sark can be seen as its Ireland, though an Ireland off the east coast. In the waters around Guernsey there are two hundred varieties of shellfish and forty species of sponges. For the Romans the island was sacred to Saturn, for the Celts to Gwyn; it did not gain much by the change, for Gwyn, like Saturn, was a devourer of children. It has an old law code dating from 1331 called the Precept of Assize. Jersey for its part has three or four old Norman courts: the Court of Inheritance, which deals with cases concerning the fiefs; the Cour de Catel, a criminal court; the Cour du Billet, a commercial tribunal; and the Saturday Court, a police court.

Guernsey exports vinegar, cattle, and fruit, but above all it exports itself: its main trade is in gypsum and granite. Guernsey has 305 uninhabited houses: why? The reason, for some of them at least, is perhaps to be found in one of the chapters of this book.[38] The Russian troops who were stationed on Jersey in the early years of this century have left their memory in Jersey's horses, which are a compound of the Norman horse and the Cossack horse. The Jersey horse is a fine runner and a powerful walker; it could carry Tancred and leave Mazeppa behind.[39]

In the seventeenth century there was a civil war between Guernsey and Castle Cornet, Castle Cornet being for the Stuarts and Guernsey for Cromwell—rather as if the Île Saint-Louis declared war on the Quai des Ormes.[40] On Jersey there are two factions, the Rose and the Laurel—diminutives of the Whigs and the Tories. The islanders of this archipelago, so well called the "unknown Normandy," [41] delight in divisions, hierarchies, castes, and compartments. The people of Guernsey are so fond of islands that they form islands in the population. At the head of this little social order are the "Sixty," sixty families who live apart; halfway down are the "Forty," forty families who form a separate group and keep to themselves; and around them are the ordinary people. The authorities of the island, local and English, consist of ten parishes, ten rectors, twenty constables, 160 douzeniers, a Royal Court with a public prosecutor and controller, a parliament called the States, ten judges called jurats, and a bailiff, referred to as *ballivus et coronator* in old charters. In law they follow the customs of Normandy. The prosecutor is appointed by commission, the bailiff by patent—a distinction of great importance in England. In addition to the bailiff, who holds civil authority, there are the dean, who is in charge of religious affairs, and the governor, who is in command of the military. Other offices are listed in detail in the "Table of Gentlemen occupying Leading Positions on the Island."

XIV

PROGRESS OF CIVILIZATION IN THE ARCHIPELAGO

Jersey is the seventh largest English port. In 1845 the archipelago possessed 440 ships with a total burden of forty-two thousand tons, and its harbors handled an incoming traffic of sixty thousand tons and an outgoing traffic of fifty-four thousand tons, carried in 1,265 vessels of all nations, including 142 steamers. These figures have more than tripled in twenty years.

Paper money is used on a large scale in the islands, and with excellent results. On Jersey anyone who wishes can issue banknotes; and if the notes are honored when they fall due the bank is established. Banknotes in the archipelago are invariably for a pound sterling. If and when the idea of bills is understood by the Anglo-Normans, they will undoubtedly adopt them; and we should then have the curious spectacle of the same thing as a Utopian vision in Europe and as an accomplished fact in the Channel Islands. A financial revolution would have been achieved, though on a microscopic scale, in this small corner of the world. The people of Jersey are characterized by a firm, lively, alert, and rapid intelligence that would make them admirable Frenchmen if they so desired. The people of Guernsey, though just as penetrating and just as solid, are slower. These are strong and valiant people, more enlightened than is generally supposed, who afford not a few surprises. They are well supplied with newspapers in both English and French, six on Jersey and four on Guernsey—excellent, high-class papers. Such is the powerful and irreducible English instinct. Imagine a desert island: the day after his arrival Robinson Crusoe will publish a newspaper, and Man Friday will become a subscriber. To complement the newspapers there are the advertisements: advertising on a colossal, limitless scale, posters of all colors and all sizes, capital letters, pictures, illustrated texts displayed in the open air. On all the walls of Guernsey is displayed a huge picture of a man, six feet tall, holding a bell and sounding the alarm to call attention to an advertisement. Guernsey has more posters than the whole of France. This publicity promotes life; frequently the life of the mind, with unexpected results, leveling the population by the habit of reading, which produces dignity of manner. On the road to St. Helier or St. Peter Port you may fall into conversation with a passerby of unexceptionable aspect, wearing a black coat, severely buttoned up, and the whitest of linen, who talks of John Brown[42] and asks about Garibaldi. Is he a minister of the church? Not at all: he is a cattle drover. A contemporary writer comes to Jersey, goes into a grocer’s shop,[1] and sees, in a magnificent drawing room attached to the shop, his complete works, bound, in a tall glass-fronted bookcase topped by a bust of Homer.

XV

OTHER PECULIARITIES

The various islands fraternize with one another; they also make fun of each other, gently. Alderney, which is subordinate to Guernsey, is sometimes vexed by this, and would like to become the seat of the bailiff and make Guernsey its satellite. Guernsey ripostes, goodhumoredly, with this popular jest:

Hale, Pier', hale, Jean,
L'Guernesey vian.

Pull (the oar), Pierre, pull, Jean:
Guernsey's coming!

These islanders, being a sea family, are sometimes cross with one another, but never feel rancor. Anyone who thinks they utter coarse insults misunderstands them. We do not believe in the proverbial exchange that is said to have taken place between Jersey and Guernsey: "You are a lot of donkeys," with the retort: "You are a lot of toads." This is a form of salutation of which the Norman archipelago is incapable. We cannot accept that two islands in the ocean play the parts of Vadius and Trissotin.[43]

In any case Alderney has its relative importance: for the Casquets it is London. The daughter of a lighthouse keeper named Houguer, who had been born on the Casquets, traveled to Alderney for the first time at the age of twenty. She was overwhelmed by the tumult and longed to get back to her rock. She had never seen cattle before; and, seeing a horse, exclaimed: "What a big dog!"

On these Norman islands people age early. Two islanders meet and chat: "The old fellow who used to pass this way is dead."—"How old was he?"—"All of thirty-six."

The women of this insular Normandy do not like to be servants: are they to be criticized or praised for this? Two servants in the same house find it difficult to agree. They make no concessions to each other: hence their service is awkward, intermittent, and spasmodic.

They have little care for the well-being of their master, though without bearing him any ill will: he must get along as best he can. In 1852 a French family who had come to Jersey as a result of events in their country took into their service a cook who came from St. Brelade and a chambermaid who came from Boulay Bay. One morning in December the master of the house, having risen early, found the front door, which opened on to the main road, standing wide open, and no sign of the servants. The two women had been unable to get on together, and after a quarrel—no doubt feeling that they had fully earned their wages—had bundled up their belongings and gone their separate ways in the middle of the night, leaving their master and mistress in bed and the front door open. One had said to the other: “I can’t stay in the house with a drunkard,” and the other had retorted: “I can’t stay in the house with a thief.”

“Always the two on the ten” is an old local proverb. What does it mean? It means that if you employ a laborer or a female servant your two eyes must never leave their ten fingers. It is the advice of a miserly employer: ancient mistrust denouncing ancient idleness. Diderot tells us how five men came to mend a broken pane of glass in his window in Holland: one was carrying the new pane, one the putty, one a bucket of water, one the trowel, and another the sponge. It took two days for the five of them to replace the pane.

These are, of course, ancient Gothic habits of idleness born of serfdom, just as Creole indolence is born of slavery, which nowadays are disappearing everywhere under the friction of progress, in the Channel Islands as in other countries, but perhaps more rapidly there than elsewhere. In these industrious island communities active work, which is an essential element of honesty, is increasingly becoming the law of labor.

In the archipelago of the Channel certain things belonging to the past can still be seen. This, for example: “Fief court held in the parish of St. Ouen, in Monsieur Malzard’s house, on Monday, May 22, 1854, at noon. Presided over by the seneschal, with the provost on his right and the serjeant on his left. Also present the noble squire, seigneur of Morville and other places, who possesses part of the parish in vassalage. The seneschal called on the provost to take the oath, in these terms: ‘You swear and promise, by your faith in God, that you will well and faithfully perform the duties of provost of the fief and seigneurie of Morville and preserve the rights of the seigneur.’ And the said provost, having raised his hand and bowed to the seigneur, said: ‘I swear so to do.’ ”

The Norman archipelago speaks French, but with some variants, as we shall see. *Paroisse* (parish) is pronounced *paresse.* You may have *un mâ à la gambe qui n’est pas commun* (“a sore leg, which doesn’t often happen”). “How are you?” “ *Petitement. Moyennement. Tout à l’aisi*”: that is to say, poorly, fairly well, well. To be sad is to “have low spirits”; to smell bad is to have a *mauvais sent;* to cause damage is *faire du ménage;* to sweep your room, wash the dishes, etc., is *picher son fait;* a bucket, which is often filled with refuse, is a *bouquet.* A man is not drunk, he is *bragi.* You are not wet, you are *mucre.* To be a hypochondriac is *avoir des fixes.* A girl is a *hardelle;* an apron is a *tablier;* a tablecloth is a *doublier;* a dress is *un dress;* a pocket is a *pouque;* a drawer is an *haleur;* a cabbage is a *caboche;* a cupboard is a *presse;* a coffin is a *co fret à mort;* New Year gifts are *irvières;* the roadway is the *cauchie;* a mask is a *visagier;* pills are *boulets.* “Soon” is *bien dupartant.* If stocks are low in the market hall and there is little on sale they say that fish and vegetables are *écarts* (scarce). Early potatoes are *temprunes* on Guernsey and *heurives* on Jersey. Going to law, building, traveling, running a house, having people to dinner, entertaining friends are all *coûtageux* (costly; in Belgium and French Flanders they say *frayeux*). A girl does not allow a young man to kiss her for fear of coming home *bouquie,* with her hair disarranged. *Noble* is one of the words most frequently heard in this local variant of French. Anything that has been successfully achieved is a *noble train.* A cook brings back from the market a *noble quartier de veau.* A plump duck is a *noble pirot.* A fat goose is a *noble picot.* The language of justice and the law also has a Norman flavor. Case papers, petitions, and draft laws are “lodged with the clerk of court.” A father whose daughter marries is no longer responsible for her while she is *couverte de mari.*

In accordance with Norman custom, an unmarried woman who becomes pregnant indicates the father of her child. She sometimes makes her own choice, and this may have inconvenient consequences.

The French spoken by the older inhabitants of the archipelago is not perhaps entirely their fault. Some fifteen years ago a number of Frenchmen arrived in Jersey, as we have already noted. (We may remark in passing that people could not understand why they had left their country: some of the inhabitants called them *ces biaux révoltés*, these handsome rebels). One of these Frenchmen was visited by a former teacher of French who had lived in the country, he said, for many years. He was an Alsatian, and was accompanied by his wife. He had little respect for the Norman French that is the language of the Channel. He once remarked, on entering a room: *“J’ai pien de la beine à leur abrendre le vranzais. On barle ici badois.”* (“I have great difficulty in teaching them French. Here they speak a patois.”)

“*Comment badois?*” (“What do you mean, *badois*?”), said someone.

“Oui, badois.”

“Ah! Patois?”

“C’est ça, badois.”

The professor continued his complaints about the Norman *badois.* When his wife spoke to him he turned to her, saying: *“Ne me vaites bas* ici te zènes gonchigales.” (“Don’t let us have any conjugal scenes here.”)[44]

XVI

ANTIQUITIES AND ANTIQUES; CUSTOMS, LAWS, AND MANNERS

Nowadays, let us remark at the outset, the Norman islands, which have each their college and numerous schools, have excellent teachers, some of them French, others natives of Guernsey and Jersey.

As for the patois denounced by the Alsatian professor, it is a true language and by no means to be despised. This patois is a complete idiom, extremely rich and very distinctive. It throws an obscure but profound light on the origins of the French language. A number of scholars have devoted themselves to the patois, among them the translator of the Bible into the language of Guernsey, Monsieur Métivier, who is to the Celto-Norman language what Abbé Eliçagaray was to the Hispano-Basque language. On the island of Guernsey there are a stone-roofed chapel of the eighth century and a Gallic statue of the sixth century, now serving as a jamb to the gateway of a cemetery; both are probably unique. Another unique specimen is a descendant of Rollo, a very worthy gentleman of whom we have already spoken. He consents to regard Queen Victoria as his cousin. His pedigree seems to be proven, and it is not at all improbable.

In the islands, as we have said, people are much attached to their coats of arms. We once heard a lady of the M family complaining about the Gs: “They have taken our coat of arms to put it on their tombs.”

Fleursde-lys abound. England likes to take over fashions that France has discarded. Few members of the middle class with handsome houses and gardens are without railings ornamented with fleursde-lys.

People are very touchy, too, about misalliances. On one of the islands—Alderney, I think—when the son of a very ancient dynasty of wine merchants misallied himself with the daughter of a hatter of recent origin, there was universal indignation. The whole island cried out against the son, and a venerable dame exclaimed: “What a cup for parents to sup!” The Princess Palatine was not more tragically vexed when she reproached a cousin of hers who had married Prince de Tingry with lowering herself to wed a Montmorency.[45]

On Guernsey if a man offers his arm to a woman it indicates that they are engaged. A new bride does not leave her house for a week after her marriage except to go to church: a taste of prison adds spice to the honeymoon. Besides, a certain modesty is in order. Marriage involves so few formalities that it is easily concealed. Cahaigne,[46] on Jersey, once heard this exchange of question and answer between a mother, an old woman, and her daughter, a girl of fourteen: “Why do you not marry this Stevens?”—“Do you want me to get married twice, then, Mother?”—“What do you mean?”—“We were married four months ago.”

On Guernsey, in October 1863, a girl was sentenced to six weeks in prison “for annoying her father.”

XVII

PECULIARITIES (CONTINUED)

The Channel Islands have as yet only two statues, one on Guernsey of the Prince Consort and one on Jersey known as the Golden King, though no one knows what personage it represents and whom it immortalizes. [47] It stands in the center of the main square in St. Helier. An anonymous statue is still a statue: it flatters the self-esteem of the local people and probably celebrates the glory of someone. Nothing emerges more slowly from the earth than a statue, and nothing grows faster. When it is not an oak it is a mushroom. Shakespeare is still waiting for his statue in England; Beccaria is still waiting for his statue in Italy; but it seems that Monsieur Dupin is going to have his in France.[48] It is gratifying to see such public homage being rendered to men who have been an honor to a country, as in London, for example, where emotion, admiration, regret, and the crowds of mourners reached successive crescendos at the funerals of Wellington, Palmerston, and the boxer Tom Sayers.

Jersey has a Hangman's Hill, which Guernsey lacks. Sixty years ago a man was hanged on Jersey for taking twelve sous from a drawer— though it must be said that about the same time in England a child of thirteen was hanged for stealing cakes and in France an innocent man, Lesurques, was guillotined. Such are the beauties of the death penalty.

Nowadays Jersey, more progressive than London, would not tolerate the gallows. The death penalty has been tacitly abolished.

In prison the inmates' reading is carefully watched. A prisoner has the right to read only the Bible. In 1830 a Frenchman condemned to death, named Béasse, was allowed to read the tragedies of Voltaire while waiting for the gallows. Such an enormity would not be tolerated nowadays. This Béasse was the second-last man to be hanged on Guernsey. Tapner [49] is, and will be, let us hope, the last.

Until 1825 the salary of the bailiff of Guernsey was thirty *livres tournois*, or about fifty francs—the same as in the time of Edward III. Now he gets three hundred pounds sterling. On Jersey the royal court is called the Cohue. A woman who goes to law is called the *actrice.* On Guernsey criminals are sentenced to be flogged; on Jersey the accused is put in an iron cage.

People laugh at the relics of saints, but venerate Charles II's old boots, which are respectfully preserved in St. Ouen's Manor. Tithes are still collected: as you go about the island you will come across the tithe-collectors' stores. *Jambage* seems to have been abolished, but *poulage* 50 is still strictly enforced. The author of these lines pays two hens a year to the queen of England.

Taxes, curiously, are assessed on the total fortune, actual or surmised, of the taxpayer. This has the disadvantage of not attracting great consumers to the island. Monsieur de Rothschild, if he owned a pretty cottage on Guernsey that had cost some 20,000 francs, would pay an annual 1.5 million francs in tax. It must be added that if he lived there only five months in the year he would pay nothing. It is the sixth month that is to be dreaded.

The climate is an extended spring. Winter there may be, and of course summer, but not in excess: never Senegal, never Siberia. The Channel Islands are England's Îles d'Hyères. Albion's delicate chests are sent there. Such a Guernsey parish as St. Martin's, for example, ranks as a minor Nice. No Vale of Tempe, no Gémenos, no Val Suzon surpasses the Vallée des Vaux on Jersey or the Vallée des Talbots on Guernsey. On the southern slopes at least nothing can be greener, milder, and fresher than this archipelago.

High life is possible here; for these small islands have their own great world, their high society. They speak French, as we have noted; the best people say, for example: *"Elle a-z-une rose à son chapeau"* ("She has a rose in her hat").[51] Apart from that their conversation is charming.

Jersey admires General Don; Guernsey admires General Doyle. These were governors in the early part of this century. Jersey has a Don Street, Guernsey a Doyle Road. In addition, Guernsey dedicated to its general a tall column standing above the sea that can be seen from the Casquets, while Jersey presented its general with a cromlech. It originally stood in St. Helier, on the hill now occupied by Fort Regent. General Don accepted the cromlech, had it carted, block by block, down to the shore and loaded onto a frigate, and carried it off. This monument was the marvel of the Channel Islands: it was the only round cromlech on the islands; it had seen the Cimmerians, who remembered Tubal Cain, just as the Eskimos remember Frobisher[52]; it had seen the Celts, whose brain, compared with the brain of the present day, was in the proportion of thirteen to eighteen; it had seen those strange timber towers (*donjons*) whose carcasses are found in sepulchral mounds, and make one hesitate between Du Cange's etymology, deriving the term from *domgio,* and Barleycourt's, deriving it from *domijunctae;* it had seen clubs made from flint and the axes of the druids; it had seen the great wickerwork figure of Teutatès;[53] it existed before the Roman wall; it contained four thousand years of history. At night sailors had seen from afar in the moonlight this huge crown of standing stones on the high cliffs of Jersey: now it is a pile of stones in some corner of Yorkshire.

XVIII

COMPATIBILITY OF EXTREMES

The right of primogeniture exists; the tithe exists; the parish exists; the seigneur exists, both the seigneur of a fief and the seigneur of a manor; crying *haro* exists, as witness “The case of crying *haro* between Nicolle, esquire, and Godfrey, seigneur of Mélèches, was heard by the justices, after the court had been opened by the customary prayer” (Jersey, 1864). The *livre tournois* exists; seisin and disseisin exist; the right of forfeiture exists; feudal tenure exists; the redemption of family property exists; the past exists. There is the style of *messire.* There are the bailiff, the seneschal, *centeniers, vingteniers,* and *douzeniers.* There are the vingtaine at St. Savior’s and the cueillette at St. Ouen’s.[54] Every year there is the “constables’ ride” to survey the state of the roads. It is headed by the viscount, [55] “bearing in his hand the royal staff.” There is the canonical hour, before noon. Christmas, Easter, Midsummer, and Michaelmas are the legal quarter days. Property is not sold, it is granted on lease. A dialogue like this may be heard in court: “Provost, is this the day, the place, and the hour at which the pleadings of the court of the fief and seigneurie have been published?”—“Yes.”—“Amen.”— “Amen.”

The case of “the villager who denies that his holding is in the enclaves” is provided for.

There are “casualties, treasure troves, marriages, etc., from which the seigneur may profit.”

There is “the seigneur’s entitlement as guardian until a proper party presents himself.” There are adjournment and act of vassalage, record and double record; there are the court of chief pleas, enfoeffments, acts of seisin, allodial tenure, and rights of regality. All very medieval, you may say. No: this is true liberty. Come here; live; exist. Go where you will, do what you will, be what you will. No one has the right to know your name. If you have a God of your own, preach his faith. If you have a flag of your own, fly it. Where? In the street. It is white:

very well. It is blue: all right. It is red: red is a color like any other. Do you want to denounce the government? Stand on a boundary stone and say whatever you want. Do you want to form an association? By all means. Of how many members? As many as you want. What limit is there? None. Do you want to hold a meeting? Carry on. Where? In the public square. Suppose I want to attack royalty? That is no concern of ours. What if I want to put up a poster? *There* are the walls. You may think, speak, write, print, make a speech on anything you like: that is your own affair. You are free to hear anything and read anything, and that implies that you are also free to say anything and write anything. And so there is absolute freedom of speech and of the press. Anyone who wants can be a printer, an apostle, a pontiff. If you want to be pope, that is up to you. For that you have only to invent a religion. Imagine a new form of God, of whom you will be the prophet. No one has any right to interfere. If necessary the police will help you. There are no restrictions. Absolute freedom: it is a magnificent spectacle. You can argue about a judicial decision. Just as you can preach to the priest, you can judge the judge. The papers can say: “Yesterday the court reached an iniquitous decision.” A possible judicial error, surprisingly, has no claim to respect. Human justice is open to dispute just as is divine revelation. Individual independence can scarcely go further. Each man is his own sovereign, not by law but by custom. This is sovereignty so complete and so intrinsic to life that it is no longer felt. Law has become breathable: it is as colorless, imperceptible, and as necessary as air. At the same time people are “loyal.” They are citizens who allow themselves the vanity of being subjects.

All in all, the nineteenth century rules and governs; it finds its way in through all the windows in this medieval world. The old Norman legality is shot through with liberty. This old house is full of the light of liberty. Never was an anachronism so little troublesome.

History makes this archipelago Gothic, but industry and intelligence make it modern. It avoids falling into immobility thanks to the lungs of the people—though this does not prevent there being a seigneur of Mélèches. Feudalism de jure, a republic de facto: such is the phenomenon of the Channel Islands.

There is one exception to this liberty: only one, which we have already noted. The tyrant of England has the same name as Don Juan’s creditor: it is Sunday. The English are the people for whom time is money, but Sunday, the tyrant, reduces the working week to six days: that is, it deprives them of a seventh of their capital. And there is no possibility of resistance. Sunday rules by custom, which is more despotic than law. Sunday, that king of England, has as his Prince of Wales the dullness known as spleen. He has the power to create boredom. He closes workshops, laboratories, libraries, museums, and theaters, and almost closes gardens and forests, too. We must not omit to notice, however, that the English Sunday is less oppressive on Jersey than on Guernsey. On Guernsey a poor woman who keeps a tavern serves a glass of beer to a customer on a Sunday: fifteen days in prison. An exile from France, a bootmaker, decides to work on Sunday to feed his wife and children, and closes his shutters so that his hammering will not be heard: if anyone hears him, a fine. One Sunday a painter just arrived from Paris stops in the road to draw a tree; a centenier speaks to him and tells him to cease this scandalous activity, but is merciful enough not to report him to the *greffe* (record office). A barber from Southampton shaves someone on Sunday: he pays three pounds sterling to the public treasury. The reason is quite simple: God rested on that day. Fortunate, however, is a people that is free six days out of seven. If Sunday is regarded as a synonym of servitude, we can think of countries where the week has seven Sundays.

Sooner or later these last restrictions will be swept away. No doubt the spirit of orthodoxy is tenacious. No doubt the trial of Bishop Colenso, for example, is a serious matter. But consider the progress that England has made in liberty since the days when Elliott[56] was brought before the assizes for saying that the sun was inhabited.

There is an autumn for the fall of prejudices. It is the time for the decline of monarchies.

That time has now arrived.

The civilization of the Norman archipelago is moving forward and will not stop. That civilization is autochthonous, which does not prevent it from being hospitable and cosmopolitan. In the seventeenth century it felt the effects of the English revolution, and in the nineteenth century of the French revolution. It has twice felt the profound emotions of independence.

Besides, all archipelagos are free countries. It is the mysterious work of the sea and the wind.

XIX

A PLACE OF ASYLUM

These islands, formerly to be dreaded, have become gentler. Once they were mere reefs: now they are refuges. These places of distress have become havens of rescue. Those who have escaped from disaster emerge here. All those who have suffered shipwreck, whether in a storm or in a revolution, come here. These men, the sailor and the exile, wet with different kinds of foam, dry themselves together in this warm sun. Chateaubriand,[57] young, poor, obscure, and without a country, was sitting on a stone on the old wharf on Guernsey, when a good woman said to him: “What do you want, my friend?” It is very sweet—almost a mysterious relief—for one banished from France to hear in the Channel Islands the language that is civilization itself, the accents of our provinces, the cries to be heard in our ports, the songs of our streets and countryside: *remi*niscitur Argos. [58] Louis XIV thrust into this ancient Norman community a valuable band of good Frenchmen speaking pure French: the revocation of the Edict of Nantes [59] revitalized the French language in the islands.

Frenchmen who have been exiled from France like to spend their time in this archipelago in the Channel, dreaming, as they walk about amid the rocks, the dreams of men who are waiting for something— drawn by the charm of hearing their native tongue. The marquis de Rivière—the same man to whom Charles X said: “By the way, I forgot to tell you that I had made you a duke”—wept at the sight of the apple trees in Jersey, and preferred Pier Road in St. Helier to London’s Oxford Street. The duc d’Anville, who was a Rohan and a La Rochefoucauld, also lived in Pier Road. One day Monsieur d’Anville, who had an old basset hound, had occasion to consult a doctor in St. Helier about his health and thought that the doctor would be able to do something for his dog. He asked him, therefore, for a prescription for his basset. The doctor gave his advice, and the following day the duke received a bill in the following terms:

Two consultations:
for the duke, one louis

for his dog, ten louis.

These islands have offered shelter to men afflicted by destiny. All kinds of misfortunes have passed this way, from Charles II fleeing from Cromwell to the duc de Berry on his way to encounter Louvel.[60] Two thousand years ago Caesar, who was to meet his fate at the hands of Brutus, came here. Since the seventeenth century these islands have had fraternal feelings for the whole world; they glory in hospitality. They have the impartiality of a place of asylum.

Royalists, they welcome the vanquished republic; Huguenots, they admit the Catholic exile. They even show him the politeness, as we have observed, of hating Voltaire as much as he does. And since, in the view of many people, and particularly of state religions, to hate our enemies is the best way of loving ourselves, Catholicism should be much loved in the Channel Islands. For a newcomer escaped from shipwreck and spending some time here in the course of his unknown destiny, these solitudes sometimes bring on a profound despondency: there is despair in the air. And then suddenly he feels a caress, a passing breath of air that raises his spirits. What is this breath of air? A note, a word, a sigh, nothing. This nothing is enough. Who in this world has not felt the power of this: a nothing!

Some ten or twelve years ago a Frenchman who had recently landed on Guernsey was wandering along one of the beaches on the west coast—alone, sad, bitter, thinking of the country he had lost.[61] In Paris you stroll about; on Guernsey you roam. The island seemed to him lugubrious. Everything was covered in mist, the breakers thundered onto the shore, the sea was discharging immense quantities of foam on the rocks, the sky was hostile and black. Yet it was spring; but the spring of the sea has a wild name: it is called the equinox. It is more a hurricane than a zephyr; and there are memories of a day in May when, under this blast, the foam leapt up to twenty feet above the top of the signal mast on the highest platform of Castle Cornet. This Frenchman felt as though he was in England; he knew not a word of English; he saw an old Union Jack, torn by the wind, flying on a ruined tower at the end of a deserted promontory; there were two or three cottages nearby; in the distance there was nothing to be seen but sand, heath, moorland, and spiny furze; a few batteries, low built, with wide embrasures, showed their angles; the stone dressed by man had the same melancholy aspect as the rocks worn down by the sea. The Frenchman felt rising within him the deepening feeling of internal mourning that is the beginning of homesickness; he looked and listened; not a ray of sun; cormorants on the hunt, clouds fleeting by; everywhere on the horizon a leaden weight; a vast livid curtain falling down from the zenith; the specter of spleen in the shroud of the tempest; nothing anywhere that resembled hope, and nothing that resembled his native land. The Frenchman was pondering on all this, more and more cast down; then suddenly he raised his head. From one of the cottages, half-open, there came a clear, fresh, delicate voice, the voice of a child, and the voice was singing:

La clef des champs, la clef des bois,
La clef des amourettes! [62]

XX

Not all reminiscences of France in the archipelago are as happy as these. One Sunday on the charming island of Sark an acquaintance of ours heard in a farmyard this verse of an old French Huguenot hymn, very solemnly sung in chorus by religious voices with the grave tones of Calvinism:

Tout le monde pue, pue, pue
Comme une charogne.
Gniac', gniac', gniac' mon doux Jésus
Qui ait l'odeur bonne.

Everyone stinks, stinks, stinks
Like carrion.
There is only my sweet Jesus
Who smells sweet.

It is a melancholy and almost painful thought that people died in the Cévennes to the sound of these words. This verse, though involuntarily high comic, is tragic. We laugh at it: we ought to weep. At this verse Bossuet, one of the Forty of the French Academy, cried: "Kill! Kill!"

In any case, to fanaticism, hideous when it is the persecutor, august and touching when it is the persecuted, the outward hymn is nothing. It has its own grand and somber internal hymn that it sings mysteriously in its soul, whatever the words. It permeates even the grotesque with sublimity, and, whatever may be the poetry and prose of its priests, it transfigures that prose and that poetry with the immense latent harmony of its faith. It corrects the deformity of formulas by the greatness of trials accepted and torments endured. Where poetry is lacking it substitutes conscience. The libretto of martyrdom may be dull: what matter if the martyrdom is noble!

XXI

Fishermen, great eaters of fish, have large families. This law holds good in the Norman archipelago, where there may be up to seven or eight children per cottage. This gives rise to particular problems, involving true matters of conscience. What is the first duty of a pilot? He is a pilot, and he has a duty to mariners in distress. He is a father, and he has a duty to his children. He is himself in distress. Risking your life is of no consequence when you are on your own; but the question changes when you are part of a family unit. In a hurricane and in darkness, when out at sea a ship is in distress and there is a chance that anyone going to its aid may not return, the pilot finds himself caught between two shipwrecks, the shipwreck of the seamen in danger who without him will perish, and the shipwreck of his children, who without him will die. It is a fearful dilemma. He has to think of his family. This means that heroism is for sale; a man is not an angel of salvation free of charge; he has his price.

Frequently, such is the strange asperity of man, the price is negotiated at sea, in clouds, in lightning, off a reef. One party is selling life, the other is buying it. It is a question of take it or leave it. The benefit is not to be given away free. The man who is drowning finds the price proposed too high. There is a dispute over a few coppers on the threshold of this formidable good action.

It is certain at any rate that one night, in the midst of a storm, someone who was on the summit of a cliff, battered by wind and rain, heard below him, in the deep, raging sea, the following dialogue, interrupted by the sinister interventions of the wind. Two black shapes could be distinguished in the darkness, two vague shapes of vessels bobbing up and down, close together, on the foam, and speaking to one another: “Where have you come from?”

“Take care. Don’t come too close. My mizzen mast may fall on you.”

“Where have you come from?”

“I don’t know.”

“Where are you making for?”

“I don’t know.”

“Do you want me to rescue you?”

“Take care. I have more than one mast. It may fall on you.”

“Do you want me to rescue you?”

“How many of you are there in your boat?”

“Three men.”

“If my mast fell on your boat you would be drowned. Go away.”

“If I go away you are lost.”

“God will preserve us!”

“Do you want me to take you in to Guernsey? I am a pilot.”

“Where is Guernsey?”

“There.”

“You are wrong. It is Jersey.”

“I am not wrong. It is Guernsey.”

“God will preserve us!”

“What ship are you?”

“La Galante.”

“Where from?”

“Portrieux.”

“Whither bound?”

“Newfoundland.”

“What have you on board?”

“Nineteen men. Plus my cargo.”

“Do you want me to rescue you?”

“Who are you?”

“Pilot Number Six.”

“Your name?”

“Létivier.”

“Where are you from?”

“St. Peter-in-the-Wood.”

“God will preserve us!”

“Do you want me to rescue you?”

“How much?”

“Fifty pounds.”

“Will you take twenty-five?”

“No. Fifty.”

“No. Twenty-five.”

“I’m off, then.”

“Right: off you go.”

“You’re just off the coast: it’s a stony bottom. Do you hear the alarm bell yonder? In a quarter of an hour you’ll be done for.”

“Will you take forty pounds?”

“No. Forty-five.”

“All right: forty-five.”

And so Létivier saved *La Galante.* Such is the grim bargaining process.

XXII

HOMO EDAX 63

The configuration of an island changes over time. An island is a construction by the ocean. Matter is eternal; not its aspect. Everything on earth is being perpetually moulded by death: even extra-human monuments, even granite. Everything changes shape, even the shapeless. Edifices built by the sea crumble like any other. The sea, which has built them up, also demolishes them.

In fifteen hundred years, between the mouth of the Elbe and the mouth of the Rhine alone, seven islands out of twenty-three have foundered. They must be looked for under the sea. The sea created the Zuider Zee in the thirteenth century; in the fifteenth century it created the bay of Bies-Bosch, destroying twenty-two villages; and in the sixteenth century it improvised the Dollart gulf, swallowing up Torum. A hundred years ago, off Bourg-d'Ault, now perched atop a sheer cliff in Normandy, the church tower of the old village of Bourg-d'Ault could still be seen under the sea. It is said that on Écrehou you can sometimes see under the water at low tide the trees of a druidical forest that was drowned in the eighth century. Guernsey was once attached to Herm, Herm to Sark, Sark to Jersey, and Jersey to France. A child could straddle the strait between France and Jersey. When the bishop of Coutances passed that way a bundle of sticks was thrown into the gap so that he should not wet his feet.

The sea builds up and demolishes; and man helps the sea, not in building up but in destroying. Of all the teeth of time the one that works hardest is man's pickax. Man is a rodent. Everything is modified or changed at his hand, either for the better or for the worse. Here he disfigures, there he transfigures. The Brèche de Roland[64] is not so fabulous as it seems; man can carve up nature. The scar of human work can be seen on the work of God.

It seems that a certain power of achievement is granted to man. He appropriates the creation to humanity. Such is his function. He has the necessary boldness; one might also say the necessary impiety. This collaboration with nature is sometimes offensive. Man, a short-lived being who is perpetually dying, takes on the infinite. Against all the ebb and flow of nature, against elements seeking to communicate with other elements, against the vast navigation of forces in the depths man declares a blockade. He, too, can say: “Thus far and no farther.” He has his idea of fitness, and the universe must accept it. Besides, has he not a universe of his own? He intends to make of it whatever he thinks fit. A universe is a mass of raw material. The world, which is God’s work, is man’s canvas.

Everything limits man, but nothing stops him. He responds to limits by jumping over them. The impossible is a frontier that is perpetually receding.

A geological formation that has at its base the mud of the Deluge and at its summit the eternal snows is, for man, a wall like any other: he cuts through it and continues beyond. He slashes an isthmus, subdues a volcano, cuts away a cliff, mines the rock for minerals, breaks up a promontory into small pieces. Once upon a time he did all this work for Xerxes;[65] nowadays, less foolish, he does it for himself. This diminution of foolishness is called progress. Man works on his house, and his house is the earth. He disarranges, displaces, suppresses, knocks down, levels, mines, undermines, digs, excavates, breaks up, pulverizes, effaces this, abolishes that, and rebuilds with what he has destroyed. Nothing makes him hesitate—no mass, no blockage, no obstacle, no consideration for splendid material, no majesty of nature. If the enormities of creation are within his reach he tears them down. This aspect of God that can be ruined tempts him, and he mounts an assault on immensity, hammer in hand. Globe, let this ant of yours have his way.

A child, breaking a toy, seems to be looking for its soul. Man, too, seems to be looking for the soul of the earth.

Let us not, however, exaggerate our power. Whatever man does, the great lines of creation persist; the supreme mass does not depend on man. He has power over the detail, not over the whole. And it is right that this should be so. The Whole is providential. Its laws pass over our head. What we do goes no farther than the surface. Man clothes or unclothes the earth; clearing a forest is like taking off a garment. But to slow down the rotation of the globe on its axis, to accelerate the course of the globe on its orbit, to add or subtract a fathom on the earth’s daily journey of 718,000 leagues around the sun, to modify the precession of the equinoxes, to eliminate one drop of rain—never! What is on high remains on high. Man can change the climate, but not the seasons. Just try and make the moon revolve anywhere but in the ecliptic!

Dreamers, some of them illustrious, have dreamed of restoring perpetual spring to the earth. The extreme seasons, summer and winter, are produced by the excess of the inclination of the earth’s axis over the plane of the ecliptic of which we have just spoken. In order to eliminate the seasons it would be necessary only to straighten this axis. Nothing could be simpler. Just plant a stake on the Pole and drive it in to the center of the globe; attach a chain to it; find a base outside the earth; have 10 billion teams, each of 10 billion horses, and get them to pull. The axis will straighten up, and you will have your spring. As you can see, an easy task.

We must look elsewhere for Eden. Spring is good; but freedom and justice are better. Eden is moral, not material.

To be free and just depends on ourselves.

Serenity is internal. Our perpetual spring is within us.

XXIII

POWER OF THE STONE BREAKERS

Guernsey is a Trinacria.[66] The queen of Trinacrias is Sicily. Sicily belongs to Neptune, and each of its three angles was dedicated to one of the three prongs of his trident. On its three capes were three temples, one dedicated to Dextra, another to Dubia, and the third to Sinistra. Dextra was the cape of rivers, Sinistra the cape of the sea, Dubia the cape of rain. In spite of the threat by Pharaoh Psammetichus to Thrasydaeus, king of Agrigentum, to make Sicily “as round as a discus,” these Trinacrias are immune to reshaping by man, and will keep their three promontories until the deluge that made them unmakes them. Sicily will always have its Cape Peloros facing Italy, its Cape Pachynos facing Greece, and its Cape Lilybaion facing Africa, and Guernsey will always have its L’Ancresse Point in the north, its Pleinmont Point to the southwest, and its Jerbourg Point to the southeast.

Apart from this, the island of Guernsey is in course of demolition. This granite is good: who wants it? All its cliffs are up for auction. The inhabitants are selling the island by retail. The curiously shaped Roque-au-Diable has recently been sold off for a few pounds sterling. When the huge quarry of La Ville-Baudue has been worked out they will move on to another.

This stone is in demand all over England. For the embankments being built along the Thames alone two hundred thousand tons will be needed. Loyal citizens who like their royal statues to be solid were upset that the pedestal of the bronze figure of Prince Albert, which is in Cheesering granite, was not made of good Guernsey stone. However that may be, the coasts of Guernsey are falling to the pickax. In St. Peter Port, under the windows of the inhabitants of La Falue, a mountain has disappeared in four years.

And this is happening in America as well as in Europe. At the present time Valparaiso is engaged in selling to stone merchants by auction the magnificent and venerable hills that earned it its name of Paradise Valley.

Old Guernsey people no longer recognize their island. They would be tempted to say: “They have changed my native place.” Wellington said this of Waterloo, which was his native place.

Add to this the fact that Guernsey, which used to speak French, now speaks English: another demolition.

Until about 1805 Guernsey was divided into two islands. An inlet cut across it from side to side, from the eastern Mount Crevel to the western Mount Crevel. This arm of the sea debouched at the west end opposite the Fruquiers and the two Sauts Roquiers. There were also bays reaching quite far inland, one of them going as far as Salterns; this arm of the sea was called the Braye du Valle. Last century St. Sampson had moorings for boats on both sides of an ocean street—a narrow and winding street. In the same way as the Dutch have drained the Haarlemmer Meer, making it a not very attractive plain, the people of Guernsey have filled in the Braye du Valle, which is now meadowland. The street has become a blind alley: the harbor of St. Sampson.

XXIV

KINDNESS OF THE PEOPLE OF THE ARCHIPELAGO

Those who have seen the Norman archipelago love it; those who have lived there esteem it. The inhabitants are a noble little people, great of soul. They have the soul of the sea. These men of the Channel Islands are a race apart. They maintain a certain supremacy over the *grand'terre,* the mainland, and take a high line with the English, who are sometimes disposed to disdain "these three or four flowerpots in the pond." Jersey and Guernsey retort: "We are Normans, and it is we who conquered England." You may smile, but you can also admire. The day will come when Paris will make these islands the fashion and make their fortune; and they deserve it. A constantly increasing prosperity awaits them when they are known. They have the singular attraction of combining a climate made for idleness and a population made for work. This eclogue is also a workshop. The Norman archipelago has less sunshine than the Cyclades, but more greenery; it has as much greenery as the Orkneys, but more sun. It has no temple like the one at Astypalaea, but it has the cromlechs; it has no Fingal's Cave, but it has Sark. Moulin Huet is as good as Le Tréport; the beach at Azette is as good as Trouville; Plémont is as good as Étretat. The landscape of the archipelago is beautiful; its people are kind; it has a proud history. It has an apostle, Saint Helier; a poet, Robert Wace; a hero, Pierson. 67 Several of England's best admirals and generals were born in the archipelago. These poor fishermen are magnificent when the occasion calls for it; when collections were made to help the victims of flooding in Lyons and famine in Manchester, Jersey and Guernsey gave more, proportionately, than either France or England.[2] These peoples have preserved from their earlier activities as smugglers a proud liking for risk and danger. They go everywhere. They send out swarms. The Norman archipelago nowadays establishes colonies, as the Greek archipelago used to do. That is their glory. There are Jerseymen and Guernseymen in Australia, in California, in Ceylon. North America has its New Jersey and its New Guernsey, which is in Ohio. These Anglo-Normans, though a little hampered by their sects, have an incorruptible appetite for progress. A plenitude of superstitions, no doubt, but also a plenitude of good sense. Was not France once a land of brigands? Was not England once given to cannibalism? Let us be modest and remember our tattooed ancestors.

Where banditry once prospered commerce now rules: a superb transformation. It has been the work of centuries, no doubt, but also of men. This magnanimous example is given by a microscopic archipelago. Such little nations as these are the proof of civilization. Let us love them and venerate them. These microcosms reflect on a small scale the great process of development of mankind in all its phases. Jersey, Guernsey, Alderney: once the haunts of animals and bandits, now workshops. Once wild reefs, now ports.

For the observer of the series of transformations that are called history no spectacle is more moving than the sight of these nocturnal sea peoples climbing up slowly and by degrees to the sunlight of civilization. The man of the shadows has turned around and now faces the dawn. Nothing can be greater, nothing more moving. Once a pirate, now a workman; once a savage, now a citizen; once a wolf, now a man. Is he any less daring than he used to be? No: only this daring is heading toward the light. What a magnificent difference between the shipping of the present day—coastal and inland shipping, commercial shipping, honest and fraternal shipping—and the shapeless old dromond, which had for its motto *Homo homini monstrum!* 68 The barrier has become a bridge; the obstacle has become a help. These people were pirates: now they are pilots. And they are more enterprising and bolder than ever. This country has remained the country of adventure while becoming the country of probity. The lower has been the starting point, the more impressive is the ascent. The droppings of the nest on the eggs in it arouse admiration of the bird’s wingspan. We now think indulgently of the piracy formerly practiced in the Norman archipelago. In the presence of all these charming and serene vessels being triumphantly guided through these mazes of waves and reefs by the lenticular beacon and the electric lighthouse, we think, with the satisfied conscience inherent in the progress that has been achieved, of these old wild and furtive seamen who sailed their boats without a compass over dark seas lividly lighted from promontory to promontory, long distances apart, by ancient braziers with flickering flames, tormented in their iron cages by the tremendous winds of the deep.

PART I

SIEUR CLUBIN

BOOK I

THE MAKING OF A BAD REPUTATION

I

A WORD WRITTEN ON A BLANK PAGE

The Christmas of 182– in Guernsey was unusual. On Christmas Day it snowed. In the Channel Islands a winter in which it freezes is memorable, and snow is an event.

On that Christmas morning the road that skirts the sea between St. Peter Port and the Vale was covered in white. It had been snowing from midnight until dawn. About nine o’clock, just after sunrise, since it was not yet time for the Anglicans to go to St. Sampson’s Church and the Wesleyans to the Eldad Chapel, the road was practically deserted. In the whole stretch between the first and second Martello towers there were only three people—a child, a man, and a woman. These three, walking at some distance from one another, had apparently no connection with one another. The child, whose age might be about eight, had stopped and was looking curiously at the snow. The man was perhaps a hundred paces behind the woman. Like her, he was making for St. Sampson. Youngish, he looked like a workman or seaman or something of that kind. He was dressed in his workaday clothes, a jacket of coarse brown cloth and trousers with tarpaulin leggings—suggesting that, notwithstanding the holy day, he was not on his way to church or chapel. His thick shoes of rough leather, the soles studded with large nails, left prints on the snow more like the lock of a prison gate than a man’s footprint. The woman for her part was evidently dressed for church: she wore a wide padded cloak of black ribbed silk, under which was a smart dress of Irish poplin striped white and pink, and but for her red stockings could have been taken for a Parisienne. She walked with a light and lively step, a gait that had not yet borne the weight of life and that revealed her to be a young girl. She had the fugitive grace of bearing that marks the most delicate of transitions—adolescence, the mingling of two twilight periods, the first emergence of a woman in the final stage of childhood. The man was paying no attention to her.

Suddenly, near a clump of holm oaks at the corner of a field, at a spot known as the Basses Maisons, she turned back, and the movement caught the man’s eye. She stopped, seemed to look at him for a moment, and then bent down, and the man thought he saw her writing something in the snow with her finger. She straightened up and continued on her way, walking more quickly; then turned back again, now laughing, and disappeared off the road to the left into the path lined by hedges that leads to the Ivy Castle. When she turned around for the second time the man recognized Déruchette, a charming local girl.

Feeling no need to hasten his pace, he walked on and in a few moments came to the clump of holm oaks. He was no longer thinking of the girl, and it is possible that if at that moment a porpoise had emerged from the sea or a robin from the bushes he would have continued on his way, with eyes only for the robin or the porpoise. But as chance had it he was looking down, and his glance fell mechanically on the spot where the girl had stopped. There were two small footprints, and beside them he saw the word she had traced in the snow: “Gilliatt.”

It was his own name. He was called Gilliatt.

He stood motionless for some time, looking at the name, the little footprints and the snow; then continued thoughtfully on his way.

II

THE BÛ DE LA RUE[69]

Gilliatt lived in the parish of St. Sampson. He was not liked in the parish. There were reasons for this.

In the first place, he lived in a “ghostly” or haunted house. Sometimes, on Jersey or Guernsey, either in the country or in the town, in some desolate area or in a populous street, you will come across a house whose entrance is barricaded. The doorway is blocked by a holly bush, and the ground-floor windows are closed by unsightly structures of planks nailed together; while the windows on the upper floors are both closed and open: they are bolted shut, but all the panes are broken. If there is an inner courtyard, it is overgrown by grass and the enclosing wall is crumbling. If there is a garden it is a wilderness of nettles, brambles, and hemlock, home to rare insects. The chimneys are cracked and the roof is falling in. Inside, so far as can be seen, the rooms are dismantled; the woodwork is rotten, the stonework is covered with mold. The wallpaper is peeling off the walls, and you can study old wallpaper styles—the griffins of the Empire, the swags of the Directory, the balusters and cippi of Louis XVI. The dense growth of spiders' webs full of trapped flies points to the deep peace enjoyed by the spiders. Sometimes you will see a broken jar left on a shelf. This is a haunted house—a house to which the Devil comes at night.

A house, like a man, can become a corpse: it can be killed by superstition, and then it becomes a place of dread. Such dead houses are by no means uncommon in the Channel Islands.

Country people and seagoing folk are worried by the Devil. The people of the Channel—the English archipelago and the French coastal regions—have very clear ideas about him. The Devil has agents throughout the world. It is well established that Belphegor is the ambassador of Hell in France, Hutgin in Italy, Belial in Turkey, Thammuz in Spain, Martinet in Switzerland, and Mammon in England. Satan is an emperor like other emperors: Satan Caesar. His household is well staffed: Dagon is controller of the pantry, Succor Benoth chief of the eunuchs, Asmodeus banker of the gaming house, Kobal manager of the theater, Verdelet grand master of ceremonies, Nybbas the court fool. The learned Wierus, a good strygologist and a well-informed demonographer, calls Nybbas the great parodist.

The Norman fishermen of the Channel need to take a great many precautions when they are at sea because of the illusions created by the Devil. It was long believed that Saint Maclou lived on the great square stack of Ortach, in the open sea between Alderney and the Casquets, and in the past many old seamen declared that they had frequently seen him in the distance, sitting on the rock and reading a book. And so seamen sailing past the rock made many genuflections as they passed until the fable was dissipated and gave place to the truth. It was discovered, and is now generally known, that the rock was inhabited not by a saint but by a devil. This devil, one Jochmus, had been clever enough to be accepted for several centuries as Saint Maclou. The Church itself, of course, sometimes falls into errors of this kind. The devils Raguhel, Oribel, and Tobiel were saints until 745, when Pope Zacharias, having found them out, ejected them. In order to carry out such expulsions, which are undoubtedly beneficial, it is necessary to know your way about with devils.

The oldest inhabitants of the region say—but facts of this kind belong to the past—that the Catholic population of the Norman archipelago was formerly, in spite of itself, more closely in communication with the Devil than the Huguenot population. Why? We do not know.

What is certain is that this minority was formerly much troubled by the Devil. He had taken a liking to the Catholics and sought to associate with them, which might suggest that the Devil is more Catholic than Protestant. One of his most intolerable familiarities was to pay nocturnal visits to Catholic marital beds at a time when the husband was fast asleep and the wife just falling asleep. This inevitably gave rise to misunderstandings. Patouillet believed that Voltaire was conceived in this way, and this is not at all improbable. This case is well known, and is described in books of exorcisms under the heading “De erroribus nocturnis et de semine diabolorum.” The Devil was particularly active at St. Helier toward the end of the last century, probably as a punishment for the crimes of the Revolution. The consequences of the excesses of the Revolution are incalculable. At any rate this possible arrival of the Devil at night, when people cannot see clearly, when they are asleep, embarrassed many orthodox women believers. To give birth to a Voltaire is not a pleasant thought. One woman, worried, consulted her confessor about the best way to clear up misunderstandings of this kind. The confessor replied: “To be sure whether it is the Devil or your husband, feel his forehead, and if you find horns you will be sure. . . .” “Sure of what?” asked the woman.

The house in which Gilliatt lived had been haunted but was so no longer. But this made it all the more suspect. Everyone knows that when a witch or warlock takes up residence in a house the Devil decides that the house is sufficiently well kept and obligingly gives up calling there unless he is summoned, like the doctor.

The house was called the Bû de la Rue. It was situated at the tip of a tongue of land, or rather of rock, that formed a small private anchorage in the creek of

Houmet Paradis.[70] The water here is deep. The house stood by itself on the point, almost off the island, with just enough land to make a small garden. The garden was sometimes drowned by high tides. Between St. Sampson harbor and the creek of Houmet Paradis is the large hill that is crowned by the complex of towers and ivy known as Vale Castle or the Archangel's Castle, so that the Bû de la Rue could not be seen from St. Sampson.

Witches and warlocks are by no means uncommon on Guernsey. In certain parishes they still practice their profession, and the nineteenth century makes no difference. Some of their practices are decidedly criminal. They boil up gold. They gather herbs at midnight. They cast the evil eye on people's livestock. They are consulted by the local people; they ask to be brought the "water" of sick people in bottles, and are heard to murmur, "The water seems very sad." One day in March 1856 one of them found seven devils in the "water" of a sick person. They are fearsome and are feared. One of them recently bewitched a baker "along with his oven." Another is villainous enough to wafer and seal with great care envelopes "that contain nothing." Another again goes so far as to have three bottles labeled *B* on a shelf in his house. These monstrous facts are well authenticated. Some witches and warlocks are obliging and, for two or three guineas, will take over your illnesses. Then they writhe about on their bed, groaning. While they are writhing you say: "There! I'm all right again." Others will cure you of all ills by tying a handkerchief around your body: a remedy so simple that it is surprising no one has thought of it before. Last century the Royal Court of Guernsey put them on a pile of faggots and burned them alive. Nowadays it sentences them to eight weeks in prison, four weeks on bread and water alternating with four weeks in solitary confinement. Amant alterna catenae.[71]

The last witch-burning on Guernsey was in 1747. It took place in one of the squares in the town, the Carrefour du Bordage. Between 1565 and 1700 eleven witches and warlocks were burned in the square. As a rule they confessed their guilt, and were helped to confess by the use of torture. The Carrefour du Bordage also rendered other services to society and religion. Heretics, too, were burned there. In the reign of Mary Tudor, among other Huguenots, a mother and her two daughters were burned. The mother was called Perrotine Massy. One of the daughters was with child and gave birth while at the stake. In the words of the chronicle, "her belly burst open" and from it emerged a living infant. The newborn child rolled out of the fire and was picked up by an onlooker called House. Thereupon Bailiff Hélier Gosselin, like a good Catholic as he was, had the child thrown back into the flames.

III

“FOR YOUR WIFE, WHEN YOU MARRY”

Let us return to Gilliatt.

There was a story among the local people that toward the end of the French Revolution a woman with a small child had come to live on Guernsey. She was English—unless perhaps she was French. She had an odd name that in the Guernsey pronunciation and the countryfolk’s spelling became Gilliatt. She lived alone with the child, who some said was her nephew, others her son, others again a grandson, still others no relation at all. She had a little money—just enough to live in a poor way. She had bought a piece of grazing land at La Sergenté and a furze-brake at La Roque Crespel, near Rocquaine. At that time the house at the Bû de la Rue was haunted. It had been unoccupied for more than thirty years, and it was falling into ruin. The garden had been too frequently invaded by the sea to produce any crops. Apart from the noises that were heard and the lights that were seen at night, the most frightening thing about the house was that, if you left a ball of wool, needles, and a plateful of soup on the chimneypiece at night, in the morning you would find the soup eaten, the plate empty, and a newly knitted pair of mittens. This wretched dwelling, along with its resident demon, was for sale for a few pounds sterling. The woman bought it, evidently tempted by the Devil. Or by the low price.

She not only bought it: she moved into it along with her child; and from that moment the house quieted down. The house has got what it wants, said the local people. The haunting ceased. No cries were now heard at daybreak. No lights were seen apart from the tallow candle that the woman lit in the evening. A witch’s candle is the Devil’s torch, they say; and with this explanation people were satisfied.

The woman made good use of the few rods[72] of land she possessed. She had a good cow, of the kind that produces yellow butter. She grew white beans, cabbages, and Golden Drop potatoes. Like everyone else, she sold "parsnips by the barrel, onions by the hundred, and beans by the dénerel."[73] She did not go to market, but sold her produce through Guilbert Falliot, at Les Abreveurs Saint-Sampson. Falliot's ledgers show that on one occasion he sold on her behalf a dozen bushels of "three-month" potatoes, the earliest variety.

The house had been patched up—just enough to make it habitable. It was only in very bad weather that rain dripped into the rooms. It consisted of a ground floor and a loft. The ground floor was divided into three rooms, two for sleeping and one for meals. A ladder led up to the loft. The woman did the cooking and taught the child to read. She did not go to any church, which led people to conclude, all things considered, that she must be French.

Not to go "anywhere" was a bad sign.

In short, people did not know what to make of the newcomers.

That she was French is probable. Volcanoes cast out stones, revolutions people. Families are removed to distant places, destinies are transferred to other countries, groups of family and friends are scattered and broken up, and strangers fall from the clouds—some in Germany, others in England, others again in America. They surprise the people of the country. Where have these unknowns come from? They have been spewed out by the Vesuvius smoking over there. Various names are given to these aerolites, these people who have been expelled and ruined, who have been eliminated by fate: they are called émigrés, refugees, adventurers.

If they stay in their new country they are tolerated; if they move on, people are relieved. Sometimes they are completely inoffensive, strangers—at least so far as the women are concerned—to the events that have driven them from home, feeling neither hate nor anger; involuntary projectiles, astonished at their fate. They put down roots again wherever they can. They were doing no harm to anyone and do not understand what has happened to them. I have seen a wretched tuft of grass tossed into the air by the explosion of a mine. The French Revolution cast more people to great distances than any other explosion.

The woman known on Guernsey as "la Gilliatt" was perhaps one such tuft of grass. The woman grew old, the child grew up. They lived alone, avoided by their neighbors. They were sufficient unto themselves. The she-wolf and the cub groom one another. This was another of the formulas that the good feeling of their neighbors applied to them. The child became a youth, the youth became a man, and then— since the old skins of life must always be sloughed off—the woman died. She left him the field at La Sergenté, the furze-brake at La Roque Crespel, the house at the Bû de la Rue, and, in the words of the official inventory, “a hundred golden guineas in the foot of a stocking.” The house was adequately furnished with two oak chests, two beds, six chairs, a table, and the necessary domestic utensils. On a shelf were a few books, and in a corner was a very ordinary trunk, which had to be opened for the inventory. The trunk was of tawny leather, ornamented with arabesques of copper nails and pewter stars, and contained a bride’s trousseau, new and complete, of fine Dunkirk cloth, chemises, and skirts, together with silk dresses and a paper on which was written, in the dead woman’s hand, “For your wife, when you marry.”

This death was a terrible blow for the survivor. Previously unsociable, he now avoided all human contact. He had been used to isolation: now his life was a blank. When there are two people, life is possible: when one of them is left alone it seems impossible to carry on, and he gives up. This is the first form of despair. Later the realization comes that duty involves a series of acceptances. We look on life and we look on death, and we submit; but it is a submission that draws blood.

Since Gilliatt was young, the wound healed. At that age the fibers of the heart recover their strength. His sadness, gradually fading away, mingled with the nature around him and became a kind of charm, drawing him toward natural things and away from men, increasingly assimilating him to the solitude in which he lived.

IV

UNPOPULARITY

Gilliatt, as we have said, was not liked in the parish. This antipathy was entirely natural.

There were abundant reasons for it. In the first place, as explained above, there was the house he lived in. Then there were his origins. Who was the woman? And where did the child come from? People do not like strangers about whom there is something of a mystery. Then, too, his clothes. He dressed like a workman, but—though not rich—he had enough to live on without working. Then there was his garden, which he managed to cultivate and which produced crops of potatoes in spite of the equinoctial gales. And then there were the big books that he kept on a shelf and that he actually read.

There were other reasons, too.

Why did he live such a solitary life? The Bû de la Rue was a kind of lazaretto in which Gilliatt was confined in quarantine. This explained why people were surprised by his isolation and held him responsible for the solitude that they had made around him.

He never went to chapel. He often went out at night. He held converse with witches and warlocks. He had once been seen sitting on the grass with a look of astonishment on his face. He haunted the dolmen of L'Ancresse and the fairy stones that are scattered about in the countryside. People were convinced that he had been seen respectfully saluting the Crowing Rock. He bought all the birds that were brought to him and set them free. He was polite to the good people he encountered in the streets of St. Sampson, but liked to take a long way around to avoid the town. He often went out fishing and always came back with a catch. On Sundays he worked in his garden. He had a set of bagpipes, bought from the Highland soldiers who had been stationed on Guernsey, and used to play them at nightfall amid the rocks on the seashore. He waved his arms about as if he were sowing seed. What are people to make of a man like that?

And the books that he had inherited from the dead woman, and that he read, were disturbing, too. When the Reverend Jaquemin Hérode, rector of St. Sampson's, had been in the house for the woman's funeral, he had read on the spines of the books the titles of Rosier's *Dictionary,* Voltaire's Candide, and Tissot's Advice to the People on Health. [74] A French noble, an émigré who had come to live in St. Sampson, declared that this must have been the Tissot who had carried the Princesse de Lamballe's head on a pike.

The reverend gentleman had also noticed on one of the books the daunting and threatening title *De Rhubarbaro.*

It must be said, however, that since this work, as the title indicates, was written in Latin, it was doubtful whether Gilliatt, who knew no Latin, read it. But it is just those books that a man does not read that provide evidence against him. The Spanish Inquisition considered this point and put the matter beyond doubt.

In fact the book was merely Dr. Tilingius's treatise on rhubarb, published in Germany in 1679.

There was also a suspicion that Gilliatt might be making charms, philters, and magic potions. He certainly possessed vials.

Why did he go out walking along the cliffs in the evening, sometimes as late as midnight? Evidently it was to talk to the evil beings that haunt the seashore at night, enveloped in smoke.

Once he had helped the witch of Torteval—an old woman called Moutonne Gahy—to pull her cart out of the mud.

When a census was taken on the island, he replied to a question about his occupation, "Fisherman, when there are any fish to catch." Put yourself in the place of the local people: they don't like answers of that kind.

Poverty and wealth are comparative terms. Gilliatt owned fields and a house, and, compared with people who had nothing, he was not poor. One day, to test him, and perhaps also by way of an advance—for there are women who would marry a devil if he had money—a girl asked Gilliatt, "When are you going to take a wife?" Gilliatt replied, "I will take a wife when the Crowing Rock takes a husband."

This Crowing Rock is a large stone standing erect in a field near Monsieur Lemessurier du Frie's. It is a stone to beware of. No one knows what it is there for. A cock is heard crowing there, but it cannot be seen: a very unpleasant occurrence. Then, too, it is asserted that the stone was set up in the field by sarregousets, who are the same as sins.[75]

At night, when it thunders, if you see men flying in the red of the clouds and the quivering of the air, these are sarregousets. A woman who lives at Grand Mielles knows them. One evening when there were sarregousets at a crossroads this woman shouted to a carter who did not know which road to take, “Ask them your way. They are civil creatures, always ready to talk to people.” Ten to one the woman was a witch.

The learned and judicious King James I had women of this kind boiled alive: then he tasted the stock and from its taste was able to say whether the woman was a witch or not.

It is regrettable that in our day kings have lost any talent of this kind, which showed the usefulness of the institution of monarchy.

Gilliatt had a reputation for sorcery, and there were good grounds for this. One night at midnight, during a storm, when he was in a boat, alone, off the Sommeilleuses,[76] he was heard to ask, “Is there room enough for me to get through?”

Then a voice cried from the rocks, “Plenty of room! Go to it!”

Whom could he have been speaking to, if not to whoever it was that replied? This seems to us proof.

On another stormy evening, when it was so dark that you couldn’t make out anything, near Catioroc[77]—a double row of rocks, where witches and warlocks, goats and spectral faces gather to dance on Fridays—people were sure they recognized Gilliatt’s voice in this terrible conversation:

“How is neighbor Brovard?” (This was a building worker who had fallen off a roof.)

“Getting better.”

“*Ver dia!* He fell from a bit higher than that big post. Good that he didn’t break anything.”

“There was good weather for the seaweed-gathering last week.”

“Better than today.”

“Right! There won’t be much fish in the market.”

“It blows too hard.”

“They won’t be able to put their nets down.”

“How is Catherine?”

“She is a charmer.”

Catherine was evidently a sarregousette.

Clearly Gilliatt was up to some dark business at night. Certainly no one doubted it.

He was seen sometimes pouring water from a jug onto the ground. And it is well known that water poured on the ground marks out the form of devils.

On the road to St. Sampson, opposite the first of the Martello towers, are three stones set in the form of steps. On the top step, which is now empty, there once stood a cross—or it may have been a gibbet. These stones are maleficent.

Worthy people and absolutely credible witnesses declared that they had seen Gilliatt talking to a toad near these stones. Now there are no toads on Guernsey: Guernsey has all the grass snakes, while Jersey has all the toads. This toad must have swum over from Jersey to speak to Gilliatt. The conversation was in a friendly tone.

These facts were clearly established; and the proof is that the three stones are still there. Anyone who doubts this can go and see them; moreover, a short distance away, there is a house on the corner of which is the sign: DEALER IN CATTLE, ALIVE OR DEAD, OLD ROPE, IRON, BONES, AND CHEWING TOBACCO; PROMPT PAYMENT AND ATTENTION TO ORDERS.

No honest man can deny that the stones and this house exist. All this was injurious to Gilliatt’s reputation.

Only the ignorant are unaware that the greatest danger in the waters of the Channel is the king of the Auxcriniers. No figure in the marine world is more redoubtable. Anyone who sees him is sure to suffer shipwreck between one St. Michael and the other.[78] He is small, being a dwarf, and deaf, being a king. He knows the names of all those who have died at sea and the places where they lie. He is familiar with every part of that great graveyard, the ocean. A head, massive in the lower part and narrow at the top, a squat body, a viscous and misshapen belly, wartlike excrescences on his skull, short legs, long arms, flippers for feet, claws for hands, a broad green face: such is this king. His claws are webbed and his flippers have nails. Imagine a fish that is a specter and has a face like a man. To get the better of him you would have to exorcise him or fish him out of the sea. But as he is, he is a sinister figure. It is alarming to encounter him at sea. Above the breakers and the swell, through the dense mist, sailors glimpse the outlines of a figure: a low forehead, a snub nose, flat ears, an enormous gap-toothed mouth, a glaucous grimace, eyebrows in the form of inverted *V*s, great grinning eyes. When the lightning is red he is livid; when the lightning is purple he is pallid. He has a stiff, spreading, square-cut beard, dripping wet, over a membrane in the form of a cape, ornamented with fourteen shells, seven in front and seven behind. These shells are extraordinary even to those who know about shells. The king of the Auxcriniers is seen only in violent seas. He is the lugubrious strolling player of the storm. His figure is seen emerging from the fog, the gust of wind, the rain. His navel is hideous. A carapace of scales covers his flanks like a waistcoat. He stands erect above the heaving waves whipped up by the wind, which twist and turn like shavings from a carpenter's plane. His whole body emerges from the foam; and if there are any ships in distress on the horizon he dances, pale in the half-darkness, his face lit by the ghost of a smile, mad and terrible in aspect. He is an ill-omened figure to meet. At the time when Gilliatt was a subject of concern to the citizens of St. Sampson, the last people to see the king of the Auxcriniers declared that he now had only thirteen shells on his cape. Thirteen shells: this made him all the more dangerous. But what had become of the fourteenth? Had he given it to someone? And whom had he given it to? No one could say for certain, and people were reduced to conjectures. What is certain is that Monsieur Lupin-Mabier of Les Godaines, a man of property paying tax at the rate of eighty quarters, was ready to depose on oath that he had once seen a very unusual shell in Gilliatt's hands.

It was not uncommon to hear two countrymen talking on these lines:

"It's a fine ox I have, isn't it, neighbor?"

"A fine fat one, certainly, neighbor."

"It's a good one all the same."

"Better for tallow than for meat."

"Ver dia!"

"Are you sure that Gilliatt hasn't cast his eye on it?"

Gilliatt would sometimes stop on the edge of a field where plowing was going on, or of a garden in which gardeners were working, and make mysterious remarks, for example:

"When the devil's bit is in flower, harvest the winter rye." (The "devil's bit" is scabious.)

"The ash is putting on leaves: there will be no more frost."

"Summer solstice, thistles in flower."

"If it doesn't rain in June, the wheat will turn white. Look out for blight."

"There are berries on the wild cherry. Beware of the full moon."

"If the weather on the sixth day of the moon is the same as on the fourth, or on the fifth, it will be the same, nine times out of twelve in the first case and eleven times out of twelve in the second, for the whole of the month."

"Keep an eye on neighbors who are at law with you. Beware of malicious tricks. A pig given hot milk to drink will die. A cow that has had its teeth rubbed with a leek won't eat."

"When the smelts spawn beware of fevers."

"When frogs appear, sow your melons."

"The liverwort is in flower: sow your barley."

“The lime trees are in flower: mow the meadows.”

“The poplars are in flower: take the covers off.”

“The tobacco is in flower: close the greenhouses.”

And the terrible thing was that those who took this advice did well out of it.

One night in June, when he was playing his bagpipes in the dunes at La Demie de Fontenelles, the mackerel fishing failed.

One evening, at low tide, a cart laden with seaweed overturned on the beach below the house at the Bû de la Rue. Gilliatt was probably afraid of being brought before the magistrates, for he went to a good deal of trouble in helping to raise the cart, and reloaded the seaweed himself.

When a little girl in the neighborhood was infested with lice he went to St. Peter Port and returned with an ointment, which he rubbed on the child; and since Gilliatt had got rid of her lice this proved that he had given her them in the first place. Everyone knows that there is a charm for giving people lice.

Gilliatt was suspected of looking into wells, which is dangerous when a person has the evil eye; and it is a fact that one day at Les Arculons, near St. Peter Port, the water in a well turned bad. The woman to whom the well belonged said to Gilliatt: “Just look at that water,” and she showed him a glassful. Gilliatt admitted it was bad. “It’s true,” he said, “the water is thick.” The woman, who mistrusted him, said: “Then put it right again for me.” Gilliatt asked a number of questions: Had she a stable? Had the stable a drain? Did the gutter of the drain run close to the well? The woman replied, “Yes.” Then Gilliatt went into the stable, worked on the drain, and altered the line of the gutter: whereupon the water became pure again. The local people knew what to think. A well does not become foul one moment, and then pure, without reason. The trouble with the well was clearly not natural; and indeed it is difficult not to believe that Gilliatt had cast a spell on the water.

One day he had gone to Jersey, and it was noted that he had stayed in St. Clement’s, in Rue des Alleurs; and *alleurs* are ghosts.

In villages the inhabitants observe all the little details of a man’s behavior;

then they add them up, and the total makes a reputation.

One day Gilliatt was observed to have a nosebleed. This was thought to be a grave matter. The master of a ship who had traveled a lot—who had sailed almost around the world—affirmed that among the Tungusians all witch doctors were subject to nosebleeds. When you see a man with a bleeding nose you know what to think. Fair-minded people, however, remarked that what was true of witch doctors in Tungusia might not apply to the same extent on Guernsey.

One year around Michaelmas he was observed to stop in a field at Les Huriaux, on the highway to Les Videclins. He gave a whistle, and a moment afterward a crow flew down, followed a moment later by a magpie. The fact was attested by a worthy local citizen, who was later appointed douzenier in the douzaine,[79] which had power to make a new survey and register of tenants of the royal fief.

In Le Hamel, in the vingtaine[80] of L'Épine, there were some old women who were positive that one morning, at daybreak, they had heard swallows calling Gilliatt's name.

Add to all this that he was ill-natured. One day a poor man was beating a donkey that wouldn't move. The man gave it a few kicks in the belly, and the donkey fell to the ground. Gilliatt ran to pick it up, but it was dead. Thereupon he cuffed the man.

On another occasion, seeing a boy coming down from a tree with a nestful of newly hatched tree-creepers, naked and almost featherless, he took the brood from the boy and carried his malevolence so far as to return the fledglings to the tree. When passersby took him to task, he merely pointed to the father and mother birds, which were crying plaintively above the tree as they returned to their brood.

Gilliatt had a soft spot for birds—and this is, of course, a distinctive mark of a magician. The local children delight in robbing the nests of seagulls on the cliffs. They bring home quantities of blue, yellow, and green eggs, with which they make chimney ornaments. Also very pretty are screens decorated with seabirds' eggs. Since the cliffs are steep, children sometimes slip and fall to their death.

There was no limit to Gilliatt's ingenuity in ill-doing. At the risk of his own life he would climb up the sheer cliff faces and hang up bundles of hay, old hats, and other objects to act as scarecrows and prevent the birds from nesting and the children from venturing there.

All this explains why Gilliatt was disliked in the neighborhood— and surely with ample cause.

V

MORE SUSPICIOUS FACTS

Public opinion was divided about Gilliatt.

He was generally believed to be a *marcou,* but some went farther and thought he was a *cambion.* A cambion is a son begotten on a woman by the Devil.

When a woman has borne a man seven male children in a row, the seventh is a marcou. But the sequence must not be spoiled by a daughter.

The marcou has the imprint of a natural fleur-de-lys on some part of his body, and so is able to cure scrofula, just like the king of France. There are marcous in all parts of France, particularly in the Orléanais. Every village in the Gâtinais has its marcou. All that is necessary to cure sufferers is for the marcou to breathe on their sores or let them touch his fleur-de-lys. The cure is particularly successful on the night of Good Friday. Some ten years ago the marcou of Ormes in the Gâtinais, known as the *beau marcou,* who was consulted by people from all over the Beauce region, was a cooper named Foulon, who kept a horse and carriage. To put a stop to his miracles it was found necessary to call in the gendarmes. He had a fleur-de-lys under his left breast. Other marcous have it in different places.

There are marcous on Jersey, Alderney, and Guernsey—no doubt because of France's rights over the duchy of Normandy. Otherwise what is the point of the fleur-de-lys?

There are people afflicted with scrofula in the Channel Islands; and this makes it necessary to have marcous.

Some people who had been present one day when Gilliatt was bathing in the sea thought they saw the fleur-de-lys. When asked about it he merely laughed; for he laughed sometimes like other men. Since then no one had ever seen him bathing: he now bathed only in solitary and dangerous places. Probably by moonlight—which it will be agreed is in itself suspicious. Those who persisted in believing that he was a cambion—that is, a son of the Devil—were clearly wrong. They ought to have known that cambions are rarely met with except in Germany. But fifty years ago ignorance was widespread among the inhabitants of the Vale and St. Sampson.

To believe that anyone on Guernsey is a son of the Devil is evidently absurd.

The very fact that Gilliatt caused disquiet led people to consult him. The countryfolk came to him, apprehensively, to talk about their diseases. This apprehension itself contained an element of faith in his skill; for in the country the more a doctor is suspected of possessing uncanny powers, the more certain is the cure. Gilliatt had his own medicines, inherited from the dead woman, and dispensed them to anyone who asked for them, never taking any money. He cured whitlows by applications of herbs, and the liquor in one of his vials relieved a fever—the chemist in St. Sampson (who in France would be called a pharmacist) thought that it was probably a decoction of cinchona. The less well disposed readily conceded that he was a good devil enough so far as the treatment of his patients with ordinary remedies was concerned. But he would not admit to being a marcou. When someone suffering from scrofula asked if he could touch his fleur-de-lys, he merely slammed the door in his face. He obstinately refused to perform any miracles, which is a ridiculous attitude for a warlock to take. You are not obliged to be one; but if you are you should carry out the duties of the position.

There were one or two exceptions to this universal dislike. Sieur Landoys of Clos-Landès was clerk and registrar of the parish of St. Peter Port, custodian of the records, and keeper of the register of births, marriages, and deaths. He was vain of his descent from Pierre Landais, treasurer of Brittany, who was hanged in 1485. One day Sieur Landoys swam too far out to sea and was in danger of drowning. Gilliatt dived into the water, almost drowning, too, and saved him. From that day Landoys never spoke ill of Gilliatt. To those who expressed surprise at this he replied: “How can I feel dislike for a man who has never done me any harm and has rendered me such a service?” He even came to form a kind of friendship with Gilliatt. The parish clerk and registrar was a man without prejudices. He did not believe in witches and warlocks. He laughed at those who were afraid of ghosts. He had a boat in which he went fishing in his leisure hours and had never observed anything out of the ordinary, except that once, on a moonlit night, he had seen a woman clad in white leaping out of the sea; and even of this he was not absolutely sure. Moutonne Gahy, the witch of Torteval, had given him a small bag, to be worn under his cravat, which gave protection from spirits. He made fun of the bag and had no idea what it contained; but he did wear it, feeling safer when he had it hanging around his neck.

A few courageous characters, following in the footsteps of Sieur Landoys, ventured to find a number of extenuating circumstances in Gilliatt, a few signs of good qualities such as his sobriety and his abstinence from gin and tobacco, and sometimes went so far as to pay him this generous tribute: “He doesn’t drink or smoke or chew tobacco or take snuff.”

But sobriety only counts as a quality if it is accompanied by other qualities.

There was a general aversion to Gilliatt. Nevertheless, as a marcou, he was in a position to be of service. One Good Friday, at midnight— the day and time commonly chosen for cures of this kind—all the scrofulous people on the island flocked to the Bû de la Rue, either as the result of inspiration or by agreement among themselves, and, with clasped hands and pitiable sores, begged Gilliatt to cure them. He refused; and they saw this as another manifestation of his malevolence.

VI

THE PAUNCH

Such a man was Gilliatt.

Girls considered him ugly.

He was not ugly. He might even have been called handsome. His profile had something of the air of a barbarian of antiquity. In repose, he resembled the figure of a Dacian on Trajan’s Column. His ears were small and delicate, without lobes, and excellently shaped for hearing. Between his eyes he had that proud vertical furrow that betokens boldness and perseverance. The corners of his mouth turned down, giving it an expression of bitterness. His forehead formed a serene and noble curve. His clear eyes had a firm glance, in spite of the flickering of the eyelids brought on in fishermen by the reverberation of the waves. He had a charming boyish laugh. No ivory could be of a purer white than his teeth. But tanning by the sun had given him almost the coloring of a Negro. You cannot brave the ocean, storms, and night with impunity: at the age of thirty he looked like a man of forty-five. He wore the somber mask of the wind and the sea.

People called him Gilliatt the Cunning One.[81]

There is an Indian fable that tells how Brahma asked Strength, “Who is stronger than you?” The reply was “Cunning.” And there is a Chinese proverb: “What could the lion not do if he were a monkey?” Gilliatt was neither a lion nor a monkey; but his actions gave some warrant to the Chinese proverb and the Hindu fable. He was of ordinary height and ordinary strength, but was able, thanks to his inventive and powerful dexterity, to lift weights that might have taxed a giant and perform feats that would have done credit to an athlete. There was something of the gymnast about him; and he used both his right and his left hand with equal skill.

He did not go shooting, but he fished—sparing the birds but not the fish. So much the worse for these dumb creatures! He was an excellent swimmer.

Solitude produces men of talent or idiots. Gilliatt had something of both. Sometimes his face had the air of astonishment we have already mentioned, and then he might have been taken for a savage. At other times he had a look of profound thought. Ancient Chaldea had men of this kind; at certain times the blankness of the shepherd became transparent, revealing the magus.

After all, he was only a poor man who could read and write. Probably he was on the borderline between the dreamer and the thinker. The thinker wills what happens, the dreamer accepts it. Solitude adds a quality to simple people, and gives them a certain complication. They become imbued, unconsciously, with a sacred awe. The shadowy area in which Gilliatt's mind constantly dwelt was composed, in almost equal parts, of two elements, both of them obscure but very different from each other: within him ignorance and weakness; without, mystery and immensity.

By dint of climbing about on the rocks, scaling the cliffs, coming and going in the archipelago in all weathers, sailing in any kind of craft that came to hand, venturing by day or by night through the most difficult channels, he had become —without seeking any personal advantage, but merely following his fancy and pleasure—a seaman of extraordinary skill.

He was a born pilot. The true pilot is the sailor who navigates the bed of the ocean more than its surface. The waves are an external problem, continually complicated by the submarine configuration of the sea over which the boat is traveling. To see Gilliatt sailing over the shallows and amid the reefs of the Norman archipelago, you might well think that he carried in his head a map of the sea bottom. He was familiar with it all and would venture anywhere.

He knew the various buoys better than the cormorants that perched on them. The imperceptible differences between the four buoys at Les Creux, Alligande, Les Trémies, and La Sardrette were perfectly obvious and clear to him, even in foggy weather. He could distinguish at once the oval-topped post at Anfré, the three-spiked marker at La Rousse, the white ball at La Corbette, and the black ball at Longue-Pierre, and he was in no danger of confusing the cross at Goubeau with the sword set in the ground at La Platte, or the hammer-shaped marker at Les Barbées with the swallowtail marker at Le Moulinet.

His rare skill in seamanship was strikingly demonstrated one day when one of those naval tournaments known as regattas was held on Guernsey. This was a competition to navigate a four-sailed boat single-handed from St. Sampson to the island of Herm, a league away, and then back from Herm to St. Sampson. Any fisherman can work a four-sailed boat single-handed, and this does not seem a great challenge; but there were two things that made it more difficult. In the first place, the boat was one of those old broad and heavy boats of Rotterdam build, wide-bellied, that the seamen of the last century called Dutch paunches. This ancient style of Dutch craft, flat and big-bellied, which dispense with a keel and instead have wings to starboard and port that are let down on one or other side, depending on the wind, can occasionally still be met with at sea. The second difficulty was that on the return journey from Herm the boat was to have a heavy ballast of stones. Empty on the outward journey, it was to return fully laden. The prize in this contest was the boat itself, which was to be presented to the winner. It had served as a pilot boat, and the pilot who had rigged it and worked it for twenty years was the stoutest seaman in the Channel. After his death no one had been found capable of managing it, and it had been decided to make it the prize for the winner of a regatta. Although not decked, it had good seagoing qualities and would be a tempting prize for a skillful seaman. Its mast was well forward, increasing the pulling power of its sails. Another advantage of this was that the mast did not get in the way of the cargo.

It was a strongly built vessel—heavy, but roomy, and taking the open sea well: altogether, a good, serviceable craft. There was eager competition for the boat: the challenge was a tough one, but the prize was handsome. Seven or eight fishermen, the most vigorous on the island, entered the contest. One after the other they set out in the boat, but not one of them reached Herm. The last one to try was noted for having rowed a boat across the dangerous narrows between Sark and Brecqhou in heavy seas. Streaming with sweat, he brought the paunch back, saying: “It can’t be done.” Then Gilliatt got into the boat, took hold of the oar and then the mainsheet, and put to sea. He did not bitt the sheet, which would have been unwise, but neither did he let it go, which kept him in control of the sail, and, leaving the boom to move with the wind without drifting, he took hold of the tiller with his left hand. In three-quarters of an hour he was at Herm. Three hours later, although a strong south wind had sprung up and was blowing across the seaway, he brought the boat back to St. Sampson with its load of stones. As an extra, in a show of bravado, he had added to his cargo the little bronze cannon that the people of Herm fire off every year on the fifth of November in celebration of the death of Guy Fawkes.

Guy Fawkes, it may be noted in passing, died 260 years ago: long-continued rejoicings indeed!

And so Gilliatt, overloaded and overtaxed as he was, and in spite of the fact that he had the Guy Fawkes cannon on board and the south wind in his sails, brought the paunch back—you could almost say carried it back—to St. Sampson.

Seeing this, Mess Lethierry[82] exclaimed: “There’s a bold seaman for you!” And he held out his hand to Gilliatt.

We shall have more to say about Mess Lethierry.

The paunch was awarded to Gilliatt.

This exploit did nothing to injure his reputation for cunning.

There were some who declared that there was nothing surprising about his feat, seeing that Gilliatt had hidden a branch from a wild medlar tree in the boat. But this could not be proved.

From that day on Gilliatt had no other boat than the paunch. In this heavy craft he went on his fishing expeditions. He moored it in the excellent little anchorage that he had all to himself under the very walls of the house at the Bû de la Rue. At nightfall he would throw his nets over his shoulder, walk down through his garden, step over the drystone wall, and jump down from one rock to another and into the paunch. Then off to the open sea.

He brought home good catches of fish, but it was said that the medlar branch was always fixed to the boat. No one had ever seen the branch, but everyone believed in its existence.

When he had more fish than he needed he did not sell them but gave them away.

The poor people of the parish took his fish, but still held it against him, because of the medlar branch. It wasn’t right: you shouldn’t cheat the sea.

He was a fisherman, but he was not only that. By instinct, or by way of relaxation, he had learned three or four other trades. He was a carpenter, a craftsman in iron, a wheelwright, a boat caulker, and even a bit of an engineer. No one could mend a broken wheel better than he. He made all his fishing equipment in his own fashion. In a corner of the Bû de la Rue he had a small forge and an anvil; and, finding that the paunch had only one anchor, he had made another all by himself. The anchor was first-rate. The ring had the necessary strength; and Gilliatt, without ever having been taught how to do it, had found the exact dimensions of the stock required to prevent the anchor from tripping.

He had patiently replaced all the nails in the planking of the boat by rivets, making it impossible for rust to make holes.

In this way he had greatly improved the seagoing quality of the boat, and was now able to go off occasionally and spend a month or two on some lonely islet like Chousey or the Casquets. People would say: “So Gilliatt is away again”; but no one was upset by his absence.

VII

A GHOSTLY TENANT FOR A GHOSTLY HOUSE

Gilliatt was a man of dreams. Hence his acts of daring; hence also his moments of timidity.

He had ideas that were all his own.

Perhaps there was an element of hallucination in Gilliatt, something of the visionary. Hallucinations may haunt a peasant like Martin[83] just as much as a king like Henry IV. The Unknown sometimes holds surprises for the spirit of man. A sudden rent in the veil of darkness will momentarily reveal the invisible and then close up again. Such visions sometimes have a transfiguring effect, turning a camel driver into a Mohammed, a goat girl into a Joan of Arc. Solitude brings out a certain amount of sublime exaltation. It is the smoke from the burning bush. It produces a mysterious vibration of ideas that enlarges the scholar into the seer and the poet into the prophet; it produces Horeb, Kedron, Ombos, the intoxication induced by the chewing of laurel leaves at the Castalian spring, the revelations of the month of Busios,[84] Peleia at Dodona, Phemonoe at Delphi, Trophonius at Lebadeia, Ezekiel by the river Chebar, Jerome in the Thebaid.

Usually the visionary state overwhelms a man and stupefies him. There is such a thing as a divine besottedness. The fakir bears the burden of his vision as the cretin bears his goiter. Luther talking to devils in his garret at Wittenberg, Pascal in his study shutting off the view of hell with a screen, the negro obi conversing with the white-faced god Bossum are all examples of the same phenomenon, diversely affecting the different minds it inhabits according to their strength and their dimensions. Luther and Pascal are, and remain, great; the obi is a poor half-witted creature.

Gilliatt was neither so high nor so low. He was given to thinking a lot: nothing more.

He looked on nature in a rather strange way.

From the fact that he had several times found in the perfectly limpid water of the sea strange creatures of considerable size and varied shape belonging to the jellyfish species that when out of the water resembled soft crystal but when thrown back into the water became one with their natural element, having identical coloring and the same diaphanous quality, so that they were lost to sight, he concluded that since such living transparencies inhabited the water there might be other living transparencies in the air, too. Birds are not inhabitants of the air: they are its amphibians. Gilliatt did not believe that the air was an uninhabited desert. Since the sea is full, he used to say, why should the atmosphere be empty? Air-colored creatures would disappear in daylight and be invisible to us. What proof is there that there are no such creatures? Analogy suggests that the air must have its fish just as the sea has. These fishes of the air would be diaphanous—a provision by a wise Creator that is beneficial both to us and to them; for since light would pass through them, giving them no shadow and no visible form, they would remain unknown to us and we should know nothing about them. Gilliatt imagined that if we could drain the earth of atmosphere, and then fished in the air as we fish in a pond, we should find a multitude of strange creatures. And then, he went on in his reverie, many things would be explained.

Reverie, which is thought in a nebulous state, borders on sleep, which it regards as its frontier area. Air, inhabited by living transparencies, may be seen as the beginning of the unknown; but beyond this lies the vast expanse of the possible. *There* live different creatures; *there* are found different circumstances. There is nothing supernatural about this: it is merely the occult continuation of the infinite natural world. Gilliatt, in the hardworking idleness that was his life, was an odd observer. He went so far as to observe sleep. Sleep is in contact with the possible, which we also call the improbable. The nocturnal world is a world of its own. Night, as night, is a universe. The material human organism, living under the weight of a fifteen-league-high column of air, is tired at the end of the day, it is overcome by lassitude, it lies down, it rests; the eyes of the flesh close; then in this sleeping head, which is less inert than is generally believed, other eyes open; the Unknown appears. The dark things of this unknown world come closer to man, whether because there is a real communication between the two worlds or because the distant recesses of the abyss undergo a visionary enlargement. It seems then that the impalpable living creatures of space come to look at us and are curious about us, the living creatures of earth; a phantom creation ascends or descends to our level and rubs shoulders with us in a dim twilight; in our spectral contemplation a life other than our own, made up of ourselves and of something else, forms and disintegrates; and the sleeper—not wholly aware, not quite unconscious—catches a glimpse of these strange forms of animal life, these extraordinary vegetations, these pallid beings, ghastly or smiling, these phantoms, these masks, these faces, these hydras, these confusions, this moonlight without a moon, these dark decompositions of wonder, these growths and shrinkings in a dense obscurity, these floating forms in the shadows, all this mystery that we call dreaming and that in fact is the approach to an invisible reality. The dream world is the aquarium of night.

So, at least, thought Gilliatt.

VIII

THE SEAT OF GILD-HOLM-‘UR

Nowadays you will look in vain, in the little bay of Houmet, for Gilliatt’s house, his garden, and the creek in which he moored his boat. The Bû de la Rue is no longer there. The little promontory on which it stood has fallen to the picks of the cliff demolishers and has been carried, cartload by cartload, aboard the ships of the rock merchants and the dealers in granite. It is now transformed into quays, churches, and palaces in the capital city. All this ridge of rocks has long since gone off to London.

These lines of rocks extending into the sea, with their fissures and their fretted outlines, are like miniature mountain chains. Looking at them, you have the same kind of impression as would a giant looking at the Cordilleras. In the language of the country they are called banks. They have very different forms. Some are like backbones, with each rock representing a vertebra; others are in the form of herringbones; others again resemble a crocodile in the act of drinking.

At the end of the Bû de la Rue bank was a large rock that the fishing people of Houmet called the Beast’s Horn. Pyramidal in shape, it was like a smaller version of the Pinnacle on Jersey. At high tide the sea cut it off from the bank, and it was isolated. At low tide it could be reached on a rocky isthmus. The remarkable feature of this rock, on the seaward side, was a kind of natural seat carved out by the waves and polished by the rain. It was a treacherous place. People were attracted to it by the beauty of the view; they came here “for the sake of the prospect,” as they say on Guernsey, and were tempted to linger, for there is a special charm in wide horizons. The seat was inviting. It formed a kind of recess in the sheer face of the rock, and it was easy to climb up to it: the sea that had hewn it from the rock had also provided a kind of staircase of flat stones leading up to it. The abyss sometimes has these thoughtful ideas; but you will do well to beware of its kindness. The seat tempted people to climb up to it and sit down. It was comfortable, too: the seat was formed of granite worn and rounded by the surf; for the arms there were two crevices in the rock that seemed made for the purpose; and the back consisted of the high vertical wall of the rock, which the occupant of the seat was able to admire above his head, without thinking that it would be impossible to climb. Sitting there, it was all too easy to fall into a reverie. You could look out on the great expanse of sea; you could see in the distance ships arriving and departing; you could follow the course of a sail until it disappeared beyond the Casquets over the curve of the ocean. Visitors were entranced; they enjoyed the beauty of the scene and felt the caress of the wind and the waves. There is a kind of bat at Cayenne that sets out to fan people to sleep in the shade with the gentle beating of its dusky wings. The wind is like this invisible bat: it can batter you, but it can also lull you to sleep. Visitors would come to this rock, look out on the sea and listen to the wind, and then feel the drowsiness of ecstasy coming over them. When your eyes are sated with an excess of beauty and light, it is a pleasure to close them. Then suddenly the visitor would wake up. It was too late. The tide had risen steadily, and the rock was now surrounded by water. He was lost.

The rising sea is a fearful blockading force. The tide swells insensibly at first, then violently. When it reaches the rocks it rages and foams. Swimming is not always possible in the breakers. Fine swimmers had been drowned at the Beast’s Horn on the Bû de la Rue.

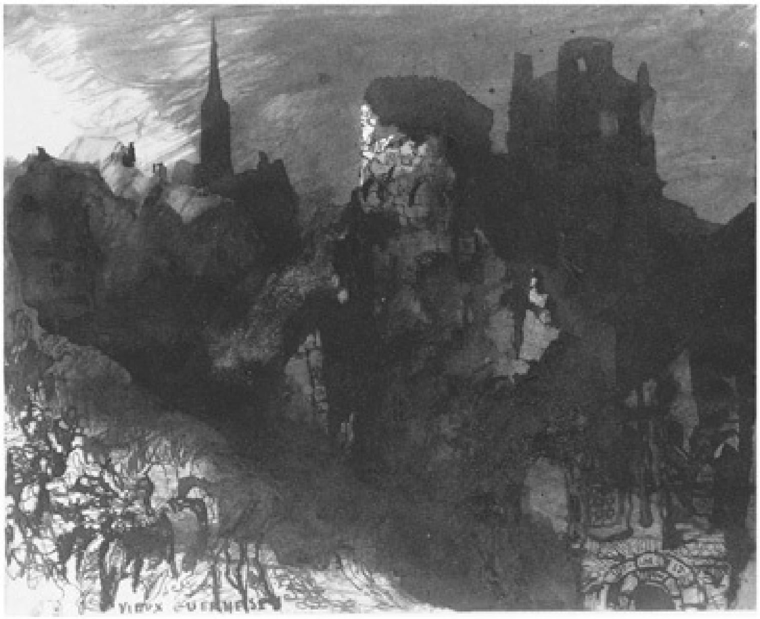
At certain places and at certain times to look at the sea is a dangerous poison; as is, sometimes, to look at a woman.

The old inhabitants of Guernsey called this recess fashioned from the rock by the waves the Seat of Gild-Holm-‘Ur or Kidormur. It is said to be a Celtic word, which those who know Celtic do not understand and those who know French do. The local translation of the name is Qui-Dort-Meurt, “he who sleeps dies.” We are free to choose between this translation and the translation given in 1819, I think, in the *Armoricain* by Monsieur Athénas. According to this respectable Celtic scholar Gild-Holm-‘Ur means “the resting place of flocks of birds.”

There is another seat of the same kind on Alderney, the Monk’s Seat, which has been so well fashioned by the waves, with a rock projection so conveniently placed that it could be said that the sea has been kind enough to provide a footstool for the visitor’s feet.

At high tide the Seat of Gild-Holm-‘Ur could no longer be seen: it was entirely covered by water.

Gild-Holm-‘Ur was a neighbor of the Bû de la Rue. Gilliatt knew it well and used to sit in the seat. He often went there. Was he meditating? No. As we have just said, he did not meditate: he dreamed. He did not allow himself to be caught unawares by the sea.


VIEUX GUERNESEY

“Vieux Guernesey” (1864–65).

BOOK III

DURANDE AND DÉRUCHETTE

I

CHATTER AND SMOKE

The human body is perhaps nothing more than an appearance. It conceals our reality. It solidifies over the light and shadow of our life. The reality is the soul. In absolute terms, our face is a mask. The real man is what exists under the man. If we were able to perceive that man crouching, sheltered, behind that illusion that we call the flesh, we should have many a surprise. The common error is to take the external being for the real one. Some girl we know, for example, if we were to see her as she really is, would appear in the form of a bird. A bird in the form of a girl: what could be more exquisite? Just imagine that you have one in your own home. Take, for example, Déruchette. What a charming creature! One would be tempted to say to her, "Good morning, Mademoiselle Wagtail!" You do not see her wings, but you hear her twittering. Now and then she sings. In her chattering she is below mankind; in her singing she is above it. There is a mystery in this singing; a virgin is the mortal habiliment of an angel. When she develops into a woman the angel departs; but later it returns, bringing back a small soul to the mother. While waiting for life to begin, she who will one day be a mother long remains a child; the little girl continues to exist within the young woman, and now she is a warbler. Looking at her, we think, How good of her not to fly away! This sweet familiar being moves freely about the house, from branch to branch—that is to say, from room to room—going in and out, drawing nearer and then retreating, preening her feathers or combing her hair, making all kinds of delicate little noises, murmuring ineffable things in your ears. She asks questions, and you reply; you ask her something in return, and she twitters a reply. You chat with her: chatting is a form of relaxation after serious talk. This creature has something of the sky within her. She is a blue thought mingling with your black thought. You are grateful to her for being so light, so fleeting, so evasive, so ungraspable, and for her kindness in not being invisible, when she could, it seems, be impalpable. In this world of ours, beauty is a necessity. There are few functions on earth more important than this: simply being charming. The forest would be in despair without the hummingbird. To shed joy around, to radiate happiness, to emit light amid dark things, to be the gilding on our destiny, to be harmony and grace and kindness: is not this to render a service? Beauty does me good merely by being beautiful. Occasionally we meet with someone who has this fairylike power of enchanting all around her. Sometimes she is not aware of it herself, and this makes her power all the more sovereign. Her presence lights up her surroundings; her nearness is warming. She passes on her way, and we are content; she stays, and we are happy. Merely to look at her is to feel alive; she is like the dawn with a human face. She need merely be there to make an Eden of the house; she exudes Paradise from every pore; and she distributes this ecstasy to all by doing nothing more than breathing in their presence. To have a smile that somehow lessens the weight of the enormous chain dragged behind them by all living beings in common—what else can we call it but divine? Déruchette had such a smile; indeed we might rather say that Déruchette *was* that smile. If there is one thing that has more resemblance to us than our face, it is the look on our face; and if there is one thing that has more resemblance to us than the look on our face, it is our smile. Déruchette smiling was simply Déruchette.

There is something particularly attractive about the blood of Jersey and Guernsey. The women, particularly the young girls, have a blooming and unaffected beauty, a Saxon fairness and a Norman freshness combined. Rosy cheeks and blue eyes. But the eyes lack brilliancy: English education dulls them. These limpid eyes will be irresistible when they acquire the depth of Parisiennes' eyes. Paris, fortunately, has not yet made its way among Englishwomen. Déruchette was not a Parisienne, but she was not really a Guernsey girl either. She had been born in St. Peter Port, but she had been brought up by Mess Lethierry. He had brought her up to be dainty and pretty; and so she was.

Déruchette had an indolent and an unwittingly aggressive glance. She perhaps did not know the meaning of the word *love*, but she liked people to fall in love with her. But she had no ulterior motive. She was not thinking of marriage. An old French nobleman, an émigré who had settled in St. Sampson, used to say: "That girl is flirting with powder."[95]

Déruchette had the prettiest little hands in the world and feet to match her hands—“four fly’s feet,” Mess Lethierry used to say. In person she was all sweetness and goodness; for her family and fortune she had Mess Lethierry, her uncle; for occupation she had the living of her life, for accomplishments a few songs, for learning her beauty, for intelligence her innocence, for heart her ignorance. She had the graceful indolence of a Creole, mingled with thoughtlessness and vivacity, the teasing gaiety of childhood with a leaning toward melancholy. She dressed elegantly but in a rather insular fashion that would not have been regarded as correct on the mainland, with flowers on her bonnet all year round. She had an open forehead, a simple and tempting neck, chestnut hair, a fair skin with a few freckles in summer, a wide, healthy mouth, and on that mouth the adorable and dangerous brightness of her smile. Such was Déruchette.

Sometimes in the evening, after sunset, when night mingles with the sea and twilight invests the waves with a kind of terror, there could be seen entering the harbor of St. Sampson, menacingly churning up the water, a shapeless mass, a monstrous form that whistled and spluttered, a hideous thing that roared like a wild beast and smoked like a volcano, a kind of hydra slavering in the foam and trailing a wake of fog, hurtling toward the town with a fearful beating of its fins and a maw belching forth flames. This was Durande.

II

THE ETERNAL HISTORY OF UTOPIA

A steamship was a prodigious novelty in the waters of the Channel in 182–. For many years it caused alarm along the whole coast of Normandy. Nowadays ten or twelve steamers sail across the horizon in both directions and no one pays any attention to them. At the most some knowledgeable observer may watch them for a moment to make out from the color of their smoke whether they are burning Welsh coal or Newcastle coal. They pass on their way: that is all. “Welcome” to them if they are coming in; “Bon voyage” if they are outward bound.

People did not accept these new inventions so calmly in the first quarter of this century, and these vessels with their smoke were particularly disliked by the Channel Islanders. In this puritanical archipelago, where the queen of England has been accused of violating the Bible by giving birth with the help of chloroform,[96] the steamship immediately became known as the devil boat. To the worthy fishermen of those days—formerly Catholics, now Calvinists, but always bigots—it was seen as hell afloat. A local preacher took as his text, “Is it right to let water and fire, which were divided by God, work together?”[97] Did not this beast of fire and iron resemble Leviathan? Were we not re-creating Chaos on a human scale? This was not the first time that the advance of progress had been called a return to chaos.

“A mad idea—a gross error—an absurdity!” Such had been the verdict of the Academy of Sciences when consulted by Napoleon at the beginning of this century on the subject of steamboats; and the fishermen of St. Sampson can be excused for being no wiser in scientific matters than the mathematicians of Paris. In religious matters, too, a small island like Guernsey cannot be expected to be more enlightened than a great continent like America. In 1807, when Fulton’s first boat, equipped with one of Watt’s engines imported from England, captained by Livingston and manned by two Frenchmen, André Michaux and another, in addition to the crew—when this first steamship made its maiden voyage from New York to Albany it chanced to be the seventeenth of August: whereupon the Methodists gave voice and in every chapel preachers denounced this machine, declaring that the number seventeen was the sum of the ten horns and the seven heads of the beast of the Apocalypse. In America they invoked the beast of the Apocalypse against the steamship, in Europe the beast of Genesis: that was the only difference.

Learned men had rejected the steamship as impossible; the priests for their part rejected it as impious. Science had condemned it; religion damned it. Fulton was a variant of Lucifer. The simple people of the coasts and the countryside joined in this reprobation because of the uneasiness they felt at the sight of this novelty. Faced with the steamship, the religious point of view was that there was a division between water and fire, a division ordained by God. Man must not separate what God has joined; and must not join what He has disjoined. The countryfolk’s point of view was: “I’m afraid of it.”

No one, at that remote period, was daring enough for such an enterprise—a steamship sailing between Guernsey and Saint-Malo—except Mess Lethierry. He alone, as an independent thinker, was able to conceive the plan and, as a hardy seaman, to carry it out. The French part of his nature had the idea; the English part put it into execution.

How and when this was, we shall now explain.

III

RANTAINE

Some forty years before the events we have been relating there stood in the suburbs of Paris, near the city wall, between the Fosse-aux-Loups and the Tombe Issoire, a house of very dubious reputation. It was an isolated, tumbledown hovel, a likely setting for dark deeds. Here lived, with his wife and child, a kind of urban bandit who had once been clerk to a public prosecutor at the Châtelet and had then become a thief in real earnest, later appearing before the assize court. The name of this family was Rantaine. On a mahogany chest of drawers in their house stood two porcelain cups decorated with flower patterns; on one of them, in gilt letters, were the words A SOUVENIR OF FRIENDSHIP, on the other IN TOKEN OF ESTEEM. The child lived in this miserable home side by side with crime. Since the father and mother had once belonged to the semimiddle class, the child was learning to read; he was being properly brought up. The mother, pale-faced and almost in rags, was mechanically giving her son an “education,” teaching him to spell, and interrupting his lessons from time to time to help her husband in some criminal enterprise or to prostitute herself to some passerby. While she was away *La Croix-de-Jésus* [98] lay on the table, open at the place where she had stopped; the boy sat beside it, day-dreaming.

The father and mother, caught red-handed in some crime, disappeared into the night of the penal system. The child, too, disappeared.

Lethierry, in the course of his travels, encountered an adventurer like himself, helped him out of some awkward predicament or other, was of service to him, as a result felt grateful to him, took a liking to him, picked him up and brought him to Guernsey, found him quick to learn the coastal shipping trade and made him his partner. This was the Rantaine boy, now grown up.

Rantaine, like Lethierry, had a bull neck, a powerful breadth of shoulders for carrying burdens, and the loins of the Farnese Hercules. Lethierry and he had the same bearing and the same sturdy build; Rantaine was taller. Anyone who saw them from behind, walking side by side in the harbor, would take them for two brothers. From the front it was quite different. Whereas Lethierry was all openness, Rantaine was reserved and impenetrable. He was circumspect. He was an expert swordsman, played the harmonica, could snuff a candle with a bullet at twenty paces, had a tremendous punch, could recite verses from Voltaire's *Henriade* and interpret dreams. He knew Treneuil's "Les Tombeaux de Saint-Denis" by heart. He talked of having been a friend of the sultan of Calicut, "whom the Portuguese call the Zamorin." If you had been able to look through the little diary he carried you would have found among his memoranda notes such as this: "At Lyons, in a crack in the wall of one of the cells in the Saint-Joseph prison, there is a file." He spoke slowly and deliberately. He claimed to be the son of a knight of the Order of St. Louis. His linen did not match and was marked with different initials. No one was more touchy than he on a point of honor: he was ever ready to fight and kill his man. His eye had something of the watchfulness of an actress's mother.

A powerful body housing a crafty mind: that was Rantaine.

It was the beauty of his punch, applied to a cabeza de moro [99] at a fair, that had originally won Lethierry's heart.

No one on Guernsey knew anything of his adventures. They were varied and colorful. If men's destinies have a wardrobe, Raintaine's destiny would have worn the garb of a harlequin. He had seen the world and had seen life. He had circumnavigated the globe. He had run through a whole gamut of trades. He had been a cook in Madagascar, a breeder of birds on Sumatra, a general in Honolulu, a religious journalist in the Galapagos Islands, a poet at Oomrawuttee, [100] a freemason in Haiti. In this last capacity he had delivered a funeral oration at Grand-Gôave, of which the local newspapers have preserved this fragment: "Farewell, then, noble spirit! In the azure vault of the heavens whither you now take flight you will no doubt meet the good Abbé Léandre Crameau of Petit-Gôave. Tell him that, thanks to ten years of glorious effort, you have completed the church at L’Anse-à-Veau. Farewell, transcendent genius, model mas∴!” As can be seen, his freemason’s mask did not prevent him from wearing a Catholic false nose. The former won over the men of progress, the latter the men of order. He declared himself pure-bred white, and hated the blacks; but he would undoubtedly have admired Soulouque. At Bordeaux, in 1815, he had been a Verdet. At that period the vapors of his royalism emerged from his brow like an immense white plume.[101] His whole life had been a series of eclipses—appearing, disappearing, reappearing. He was a rogue fitted with a revolving light. He knew Turkish; and instead of “guillotined” he said *neboissed.* He had been the slave of a thaleb,[102] and had learned Turkish by dint of regular beatings. His employment had been to stand at the doors of mosques in the evening and read aloud to the faithful passages of the Koran written on wooden tablets or camels’ shoulder blades. He was probably a renegade.

He was capable of anything, and of worse than that.

He had a way of laughing out loud and frowning at the same time. He used to say: “In politics I esteem only those who cannot be influenced by others.” He would say: “I am for decency and morality.” He would say: “The pyramid must be set back on its base.” His manner was cheerful and cordial rather than otherwise. The form of his mouth gave the lie to the meaning of his words. His nostrils were like those of a horse. At the corners of his eyes there were networks of wrinkles where all kinds of dark thoughts congregated. It was only there that the secrets of his physiognomy could be deciphered. His crow’s-feet were like a vulture’s claws. His skull was low on the crown and wide at the temples. His misshapen ear, bristling with hair, seemed to say: “Beware of speaking to the beast in this cave.”

One fine day, on Guernsey, Rantaine was suddenly found to be missing.

Lethierry’s partner had absconded, leaving the partnership’s treasury empty. It had contained some of Rantaine’s money, no doubt, but there were also fifty thousand francs of Lethierry’s.

In forty years of industry and probity as a shipowner and shipwright Lethierry had made a hundred thousand francs. Rantaine had gone off with half of it.

Although half ruined, Lethierry did not lose heart and at once set out to restore his fortunes. A stout heart can be ruined in fortune but not in courage. At that time people were beginning to talk about boats driven by steam. Lethierry conceived the idea of trying out Fulton's engine, which had been the subject of so much controversy, and linking the Norman archipelago with France by a fire-driven vessel. He staked everything on his idea and devoted his remaining wealth to the project. Six months after Rantaine's flight the astonished people of St. Sampson saw, putting out to sea from the harbor, the first steamer to sail in the Channel, belching smoke and looking like a ship on fire at sea.

This vessel, attracting general dislike and disdain and immediately christened "Lethierry's galliot," was advertised as being about to run a regular service between Guernsey and Saint-Malo.

IV

CONTINUATION OF THE HISTORY OF UTOPIA

Understandably, the project did not at first go down well. All the owners of cutters sailing between Guernsey and the French coast were loud in their outcries. They denounced this attack on the Holy Scriptures and on their monopoly. There were fulminations in some of the chapels. One reverend gentleman named Elihu called the steamship a "licentious invention." The sailing ship was declared orthodox. The devil's horns were clearly seen on the heads of cattle transported by the steamship. These protests went on for some time. Gradually, however, it was realized that the cattle arrived less tired and sold better, their meat being better; that the risks of sea travel were less for men as well as for beasts; that the crossing was shorter, cheaper, and safer; that the boat sailed at a fixed time and arrived at a fixed time; that fish, traveling faster, arrived fresher; that the surplus of the large catches so frequent on Guernsey could now be sent to French markets; that the butter produced by Guernsey's fine cows traveled faster in the devil boat than in sailing sloops and lost none of its quality, so that it was in great demand at Dinan and Saint-Brieuc and Rennes; and that, thanks to "Lethierry's galliot," the people of Guernsey now had safe travel, regular communications, prompt and easy passages to and fro, more traffic, wider markets for their produce, increased trade; in short, they had to reconcile themselves to this devil boat that flew in the face of the Bible but brought wealth to the island. One or two freethinkers even ventured to show some degree of approval. Sieur Landoys, the registrar, thought well of the boat. This showed his impartiality, for he did not like Lethierry. In the first place Lethierry was Mess, while Landoys was merely Sieur. Then Landoys, though registrar in St. Peter Port, lived in the parish of St. Sampson; and in that parish there were only two men without prejudices, Lethierry and himself. Necessarily, therefore, they hated one another. Two of a trade rarely agree.

Nevertheless Sieur Landoys was fair-minded enough to approve of the steamship. Others then joined him. Gradually the thing grew; facts are a rising tide; and in course of time, with continual and increasing success, with the evidence of good service rendered, with the clear increase in general well-being, there came the day when everyone, with the exception of a few wiseacres, admired “Lethierry’s galliot.”

It would be less admired today. This steamer of forty years ago would make the shipbuilders of the present day smile. This marvel was misshapen; this prodigy was a frail thing.

Our great transatlantic steamers of the present day are as far removed from Denis Papin’s steam paddleboat on the Fulda in 1707 as is the three-decker Montebello[103]—200 feet long by 50 wide, with a main yard 115 feet long and a burden of three thousand tons, carrying eleven hundred men, 120 guns, ten thousand cannonballs, and 160 rounds of grapeshot, when in action belching out thirty-three hundred pounds of iron at every broadside and when under way spreading to the wind fifty-six hundred square meters of canvas—from the Danish dromond of the second century, discovered, laden with stone axes, bows, and clubs, in the mud of the sea bottom at Wester Satrup and now preserved in the town hall of Flensburg.

A space of a hundred years, from 1707 to 1807, separates Papin’s first boat from Fulton’s. “Lethierry’s galliot” was undoubtedly an improvement on these two primitive models, but it was still primitive. For all that it was a masterpiece. Every embryo conceived by science has a double aspect: as a fetus it is a monster, as the germ of something more it is a marvel.

V

THE DEVIL BOAT

“Lethierry’s galliot” was not masted to make the best use of the wind. This was not a fault peculiar to her, but in accordance with the laws of naval architecture; in any event, since the vessel was driven by steam, the sails were only accessory. Besides, it makes almost no difference to a paddleboat what sails she carries. The new vessel was too short, too round, too tubby; she was too bluff and had too much beam; for shipbuilders were not yet bold enough to construct their vessels light. She had some of the disadvantages and some of the qualities of the paunch. She did not pitch much, but rolled a lot. The paddle boxes were too high. She had too much breadth of quarter for her length. The massive engines took up a lot of room, and to enable her to carry a large cargo it had been necessary to give her unusually high bulwarks, so that she had something of the same defect as the old seventy-fours, a bastard type of vessel, which had to be cut down to make it properly seaworthy and capable of fighting. Being short, she should have been able to veer quickly, since the time taken in carrying out a maneuver is related to the length of the vessel, but her weight canceled out the advantage of her shortness. Her midship frame was too broad, and this slowed her down, the resistance of the water being proportional to the greatest width below the waterline and to the square of the vessel’s speed. She had a vertical prow, which would not be a fault nowadays; but in those days the invariable practice was to set the prow at an angle of forty-five degrees. All the curves of the hull were well adjusted to one another, but they were not long enough for oblique sailing, still less for lying parallel with the water displaced, which must always be thrown off to the side. In heavy weather she drew too much water, sometimes fore and sometimes aft, which showed that her center of gravity was not in the right place. The cargo not being where it ought to be because of the weight of the engines, the center of gravity often moved aft of the mainmast, and then it was necessary to depend on steam power and beware of the mainsail, for in these circumstances its effect was to cause the vessel to fall off instead of keeping her head to the wind. The best thing to do, when the ship was close to the wind, was to loose the mainsheet immediately; the wind was thus held ahead by the tack and the mainsail no longer acted as an after sail. This was a difficult maneuver. The rudder was the old-fashioned type, not the wheel-controlled rudder of our day but a bar rudder, turning on hinges fixed to the sternpost and controlled by a horizontal bar passing above the transom. Two dinghies hung from davits. The ship had four anchors— the sheet anchor, a second anchor (the working anchor), and two bower anchors. These four anchors, slung on chains, were worked, as occasion required, by the main capstan at the stern and the small capstan in the bow. At that period the pump windlass had not yet superseded the intermittent use of the handspike. Having only two bower anchors, one to starboard and one to port, she lacked the greater security of a third anchor between the two and might have some difficulty in certain winds, though she could get help in such cases from the working anchor. The buoys were of the usual type, so constructed as to carry the weight of the buoy ropes without dipping. The longboat was of serviceable size, a useful safety precaution for the vessel; it was strong enough to raise the sheet anchor. A novel feature of the ship was that she was partly rigged with chains; but this did not reduce either the ease of movement of the running rigging or the tension on the standing rigging. The masts and yards, although of secondary importance, were perfectly adequate; the top rigging, drawn taut, looked light. The ribs were solid but roughly shaped, since a steamship does not require the same delicate molding as a sailing ship. The Durande had a speed of two leagues an hour.[104] When lying to she rode well. Such as she was, “Lethierry’s galliot” was a good sea boat; but she lacked the sharpness of bow to cut her way through the waves, and she could not be said to be a graceful sailer. There was a feeling that in a situation of danger, faced with a reef or a cloudburst, she would be difficult to handle. She creaked like something that had been clumsily put together. When rolling in the waves she squeaked like a new shoe.

She was mainly a freighter, and, like all ships built for commerce rather than war, was designed mainly for the stowage of cargo. She had little room for passengers. The transport of livestock made stowage difficult and awkward. In those days cattle were carried in the hold, which complicated the loading of the ship. Nowadays they are carried on the foredeck. The devil boat’s paddle boxes were painted white, the hull down to the waterline red and the rest of the vessel black, in accordance with the rather ugly fashion of this century. Empty, she had a draft of seven feet; laden, of fourteen.

The engines were powerful, delivering one horsepower per three tons burden —almost the power of a tug. The paddle wheels were well placed, a little forward of the vessel’s center of gravity. The engines had a maximum pressure of two atmospheres. They consumed a great deal of coal, in spite of the fact that they used the method of condensation and expansion. They had no flywheel because of the instability of their mounting, but they made up for this lack, as is still the practice in our day, by having two alternating cranks at the ends of the driving shaft, so arranged that one was always at its thrusting point when the other was at its dead point. The engines rested on a single cast-iron plate, so that even in a serious accident no battering by the waves could upset their balance and even in the event of damage to the hull the engines themselves would not be affected. To make the engines still stronger, the main connecting-rod had been set close to the cylinder, thus transferring the center of oscillation of the beam from the middle to the end. Since then oscillating cylinders have been invented that make it possible to do without connecting rods; but in those days setting the connecting rod near the cylinder was regarded as the last word in technology. The boiler was divided by partitions and had a brine pump. The paddle wheels were very large, which reduced the loss of power, and the funnel was very tall, giving a better draft; but the size of the wheels exposed them to the force of the waves and the height of the funnel exposed it to the violence of the wind. The wheels were well made, with wooden blades, iron clamps, and cast-iron hubs, and, remarkably, could be taken to pieces. There were always three paddle blades under water. The speed at the center of the blades was only a sixth greater than that of the vessel: this was the main defect of the paddle wheels. Moreover, the end of the cranks was too long, and the slide valve caused too much friction in admitting steam into the cylinder. By the standards of that time, however, the engines seemed, and indeed were, admirable.

The engines had been made in France, at the Bercy ironworks. Mess Lethierry had more or less designed them himself; the engineer who had built them according to his plans was now dead, so that they were unique and could not be replaced. The designer was still there, but the constructor had gone.

The engines had cost forty thousand francs.

Lethierry had built his ship himself on the large covered stocks beside the first Martello tower between St. Peter Port and St. Sampson. He had gone to Bremen to buy the timber for it. He had used all his skill as a shipwright in its construction, and his talent was demonstrated by the planking, with straight and even seams covered with sarangousti, an Indian mastic that is better than pitch.

The sheathing had been well beaten. Lethierry had painted the lower part of the hull with a protective coat of galgal,[105] and to compensate for the roundness of the hull he had fitted a jibboom on the bowsprit, enabling him to add a false spritsail to the regular one. On the day the ship was launched he cried, “Now I’m afloat!” [106] And indeed the ship proved to be a success, as we have seen.

Either by chance or by design, the ship had been launched on the fourteenth of July, the anniversary of the taking of the Bastille. On that day Lethierry stood on the deck between the paddle wheels, gazed at the sea, and shouted to it: “It’s your turn now! The people of Paris took the Bastille: now we are taking you!”

Lethierry’s galliot sailed once a week from Guernsey to Saint-Malo, leaving on Tuesday morning and returning on Friday evening, in time for the Saturday market. She had stouter timbers than the largest sloops engaged in the coastal trade in the archipelago, and, with a cargo-carrying capacity proportionate to her size, carried as much in one voyage as the ordinary local boats did in four. As a result she brought in large profits. The reputation of a ship depends on the stowage of the cargo, and Lethierry was a skilled stevedore. When he could no longer work at sea himself, he trained up a seaman to replace him. At the end of two years the steamship was bringing in a clear 750 pounds sterling a year, or eighteen thousand francs. The Guernsey pound sterling is worth twenty-four francs, the English pound twenty-five and the Jersey pound twenty-six. These little differences are not so unimportant as they seem: the banks, at any rate, do well out of them.

VI

LETHIERRY’S TRIUMPH

Lethierry’s galliot prospered, and Mess Lethierry saw the moment approaching when he would be called Monsieur. On Guernsey men do not automatically become Monsieur: there is a whole ladder to be climbed first. The first rung is the name by itself, let us say Pierre; then, on the second rung, Neighbor Pierre; on the third rung, Father Pierre; on the fourth, Sieur Pierre; on the fifth, Mess Pierre; then, at the top of the ladder, Monsieur Pierre.

This ladder, starting from the ground, continues into the empyrean. The whole of hierarchical England comes into it at their appropriate levels. These are the various rungs, increasingly glorious as they go up: above the gentleman (the equivalent of Monsieur) is the esquire, above the esquire the knight (with the title *Sir* for life); then, still higher up, the baronet (with the hereditary title *Sir*), then the lord (laird in Scotland), then the baron, then the viscount, then the earl (count in France, jail in Norway), then the marquis, then the duke, then the peer, then the prince of the blood royal, then the king. The ladder ascends from the common people to the middle classes, from the middle classes to the baronetage, from the baronetage to the peerage, from the peerage to royalty.

Thanks to his successful enterprise, thanks to steam, thanks to his engines, thanks to the devil boat, Mess Lethierry had become *someone.* In order to build his boat he had had to borrow; he had incurred debts in Bremen, he had incurred debts in Saint-Malo; but every year he paid off some of the money he owed.

He had also bought on credit a pretty stone-built house, entirely new, just at the entrance to St. Sampson harbor, with the sea in front and a garden behind. At one corner of the house was its name, Les Bravées. The house, whose front formed part of the harbor wall, was notable for a double range of windows: one on the north side, looking into a flower-filled garden, and one on the south, looking onto the ocean. The house thus had two fronts, one facing onto storms, the other onto roses.

These two fronts seemed made for the two occupants of the house, Mess Lethierry and Miss Déruchette.

The house was popular in St. Sampson, for Mess Lethierry had at length become popular. This popularity was due partly to his good nature, his tenacity, and his courage, partly to the number of men he had rescued, a great deal to his success, and also because he had given St. Sampson the privilege of being the port of departure and arrival of the steamship. St. Peter Port, the capital, had wanted that honor for itself, but Lethierry had held to St. Sampson. It was his native town. “That was where I was pitched into the water,” he used to say. This brought him great local popularity. His position as a house owner paying land tax made him what is called on Guernsey an *habitant.* He had been appointed douzenier. This poor seaman had risen to the fifth of the six levels in the Guernsey social scale; he was Mess Lethierry; he was within reach of the dignity of Monsieur; and who could say that he might not rise even further? Who could say that they might not one day find in the Guernsey almanac, in the section headed “Gentry and Nobility,” the proud and unheard-of entry “Lethierry, Esq.”?

But Mess Lethierry disdained, or rather never thought of, the vanity of such distinctions. He felt he was useful, and that gave him pleasure. Being popular meant less to him than being necessary. He had, as we have said, only two objects of affection, and consequently had only two ambitions—Durande and Déruchette.

At any rate he had taken a ticket in the lottery of the sea, and he had won the first prize.

The first prize was the Durande steaming to and fro.

VII

THE SAME GODFATHER AND THE SAME PATRON SAINT

After creating his steamship Lethierry had christened it. He had called it the Durande. Henceforth we shall call it by no other name. We may be permitted also, in spite of typographical practice, not to italicize the name *Durande*, in line with the notions of Mess Lethierry, for whom the Durande was almost a living person.

Durande and Déruchette are the same name. Déruchette is the diminutive—a diminutive that is very common in the west of France.

In country areas the saints frequently bear names with all their diminutives and all their augmentatives. You might think there were several different persons when in fact there is only one. These multiple identities of patron saints under different names are by no means rare. Lise, Lisette, Lisa, Élisa, Isabelle, Lisbeth, Betsy are all Elizabeth. It is probable that Mahout, Maclou, Malo, and Magloire are the same saint: this, however, we are less sure about.

Saint Durande is a saint of the Angoumois and Charente. Is she an authentic saint? We leave that to the Bollandists. Whether authentic or not, she has chapels dedicated to her.

When he was a young seaman at Rochefort, in Charente, Lethierry had made the acquaintance of this saint, probably in the person of some pretty local girl, perhaps the grisette with the fine nails. He remembered it sufficiently well to give this name to the two things he loved—Durande to the ship, Déruchette to the girl.

He was father of one and uncle of the other.

Déruchette was the daughter of a brother of his. She had lost her father and mother, and he had adopted her, replacing both the father and the mother.

Déruchette was not only his niece: she was his goddaughter. It was he who had held her in his arms at her christening and he who had chosen her patron saint, Durande, and her name, Déruchette.

Déruchette, as we have said, had been born in St. Peter Port. Her name was entered in the parish register under the date of her birth.

While the niece was small and the uncle poor, no one paid any particular attention to the name Déruchette; but when the child became a young lady and the seaman a gentleman, the name struck people as odd. They were astonished at Lethierry's choice. They asked him: "Why Déruchette?" He replied: "It's a name like any other." Several attempts were made to change her name. He would have none of it. One day a fine lady of St. Sampson's high society, the wife of a well-to-do blacksmith who no longer worked, said to Mess Lethierry: "In the future I shall call your girl Nancy." "Why not Lons-le-Saulnier?" he retorted.[107] The fine lady did not give up, and on the following day returned to the attack, saying: "We really cannot have Déruchette. I have found a pretty name for her—Marianne." "Certainly it is a pretty name," rejoined Mess Lethierry, "but it is made up of two ugly creatures, a husband and a donkey."[108] So he held to the name Déruchette. It would be wrong to conclude from this last remark that he did not want to see his niece married. He wanted to have her married, but in the way he wanted. He wanted her to have a husband like himself, a hard worker whose wife would have little to do. He liked black hands in a man and white hands in a woman. To prevent Déruchette from spoiling her pretty hands, he had brought her up to be a young lady. He had given her a music teacher, a piano, a small library, and a work-basket with needles and thread. She liked reading better than sewing, and playing the piano better than reading. This was what Mess Lethierry wanted. To be charming was all that he expected of her. He had brought her up to be a flower rather than a woman. Anyone who is familiar with seamen will understand this. Rough characters like delicate ones. For the niece to realize the uncle's ideal, she had to be rich. This was Mess Lethierry's firm intention. His great maritime machine was working toward that end. He had made it Durande's mission to provide a dowry for Déruchette.

VIII

"BONNY DUNDEE"

Déruchette had the prettiest room in Les Bravées, with two windows, figured mahogany furniture, a bed with curtains in a white-and-green-check pattern, and a view of the garden and the high hill on which stands Vale Castle. On the far side of the hill was the Bû de la Rue.

In her room Déruchette had her music and her piano. She accompanied herself on the piano when she sang her favorite song, the melancholy Scottish air "Bonny Dundee." All the gloom of evening is in the song, all the brightness of dawn was in her voice, making a pleasantly surprising contrast. People said: "Miss Déruchette is at her piano," and as they passed by at the foot of the hill they would sometimes stop outside the garden wall to listen to this voice of such freshness singing a song of such sadness.

Déruchette was gaiety itself as she flitted about the house, creating a perpetual spring. She was beautiful, but more pretty than beautiful, and more sweet than pretty. She reminded the good old pilots who were Mess Lethierry's friends of the princess in a soldiers' and sailors' song—

Qui était si belle qu'elle passait pour telle
Dans le régiment.

Mess Lethierry used to say: “She has a cable of hair.”

She had been a charmer since her earliest days. There had been concern for many years about her nose, but the little girl—probably determined to be pretty—had held on her course. The process of growth had done her no harm; her nose had become neither too long or too short; and as she grew up she remained charming.

She always referred to her uncle as “my father.”

Lethierry allowed her to develop some skill as a gardener and even as a housewife. She personally watered her beds of hollyhocks, purple mulleins, perennial phlox, and scarlet herb bennet; she grew pink hawk’s-beard and pink oxalis; and took full advantage of the Guernsey climate, so hospitable to flowers. Like everyone else, she had aloes growing in the open, and—what is much more difficult—she successfully grew Nepalese cranesbill. Her little kitchen garden was well organized; she had spinach in succession to radishes and peas in succession to spinach; she sowed Dutch cauliflowers and brussels sprouts, planting them out in July, turnips for August, curly endive for September, round parsnips for the autumn, and rampion for the winter. Mess Lethierry did not interfere with these activities, provided that she did not do too much digging or raking and, above all, that she did not apply the fertilizer herself. He had given her two maids, one called Grace and the other Douce—common Guernsey names. They worked in the garden as well as in the house, and were allowed to have red hands.

Mess Lethierry’s bedroom was a small room looking onto the harbor and adjoining the large low room on the ground floor in which were the main doorway of the house and its various staircases. In this room were his hammock, his chronometer, and his pipe. There were also a table and a chair. The ceiling, with exposed beams, was whitewashed, as were the four walls. Nailed to the wall on the right of the door was the Archipelago of the Channel, a handsome chart bearing the inscription W. FADEN, 5 CHARING CROSS. GEOGRAPHER TO HIS MAJESTY. To the left of the door, also suspended on nails, was one of those large cotton handkerchiefs displaying in color the naval signals used all over the globe, with the flags of France, Russia, Spain, and the United States in the four corners and the Union Jack of England in the center.

Douce and Grace were two quite ordinary girls, in the best sense of the term. Douce was not ill natured and Grace was not plain. The dangerous names they bore had not brought them to any harm. Douce was not married but had a “gallant”: the term is used in the Channel Islands, and the thing exists. The two girls provided what might be called a Creole type of service, with a slowness characteristic of Norman domesticity in the archipelago. Grace, a pretty and coquettish girl, kept scanning the horizon with the watchfulness of a cat: like Douce, she had a gallant, but also, it was said, a husband, a seaman whose return she dreaded. But that is none of our business. The difference between Grace and Douce was that, in a house less austere and less innocent, Douce would have remained a servant and Grace would have become a soubrette. Grace’s potential talents were lost on an ingenuous girl like Déruchette. In any case, the love affairs of Douce and Grace were kept secret. Mess Lethierry knew nothing of them, and no word of them had reached Déruchette.

The room on the ground floor, a spacious hall with a fireplace and benches and tables around the walls, had been the meeting place in the last century of a conventicle of French Protestant refugees. The only form of decoration on the bare stone walls was a frame of black wood displaying a parchment notice recording the achievements of Bénigne Bossuet, bishop of Meaux, which some poor Protestant refugees from the diocese of this ecclesiastical eagle, who had been persecuted by him after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes and had found refuge on Guernsey, had hung up to bear witness to their trials. On this you might read, if you could decipher the awkward writing and the yellowed ink, the following little known facts: “October 29, 1685, demolition of the Protestant churches of Morcef and Nanteuil on the orders of the king at the request of the bishop of Meaux.”—“April 2, 1686, arrest of the Cochards, father and son, on account of their religion, at the request of the bishop of Meaux. Released, the Cochards having abjured their faith.”—“October 28, 1699, the bishop of Meaux sends Monsieur de Pontchartrain a memorandum advising him that it would be necessary to consign the Demoiselles de Chalandes and de Neuville, who are of the reformed religion, to the house of the New Catholics in Paris.”—“July 7, 1703, execution of the king’s order, at the request of the bishop of Meaux, to have the individual named Baudouin and his wife, bad Catholics of Fublaine, confined in a hospital.” At the far end of the room, near the door into Mess Lethierry’s bedroom, was a small wooden structure that had been the Huguenot pulpit and with the addition of a grille with an opening in it had become the office of the steamship company; that is, the office of the Durande, manned by Mess Lethierry in person. On the old oak reading-desk, replacing the Bible, was a ledger with pages headed “Debit” and “Credit.”

IX

THE MAN WHO HAD SEEN THROUGH RANTAINE

As long as Mess Lethierry had been able to sail, he had commanded the Durande and had no other pilot or captain than himself. But, as we have said, a time had come when he had to find someone to replace him. He had chosen Sieur Clubin of Torteval, a man of few words who was reputed along the whole coast for his absolute integrity. He had now become Lethierry’s alter ego and deputy.

Although Sieur Clubin looked more like a lawyer than a mariner, he was an excellent and very competent seaman. He had all the skills necessary to deal with the risks of seafaring and come safely through. He was a good stevedore, a meticulous topman, a careful and knowledgeable boatswain, a sturdy helmsman, a skilled pilot, and a bold captain. He was prudent, and sometimes carried prudence so far as to be daring, which is a great quality at sea. His fear of what was probable was tempered by his instinct for what was possible. He was one of those seamen who face danger in a proportion known to them and are able to wrest success from any adventure. He had all the certainty that the sea allows to any man.

On top of all this Sieur Clubin was a renowned swimmer; he was one of those men who are at home in the gymnastics of the waves, who can stay in the water as long as they wish, and who, on Jersey, set out from the Havre des Pas, round the Collette, continue past the Hermitage Rock and Elizabeth Castle, and return to their starting point after a two-hour swim. He came from Torteval, and was reputed to have swum several times through the dangerous waters between the Hanois and Pleinmont Point.

One of the things that had most strongly recommended him to Mess Lethierry was that, knowing or discovering what Rantaine was like, he had warned Lethierry about his dishonesty, saying, “Rantaine will rob you.” And so it had turned out. More than once, though admittedly in matters of no great importance, Mess Lethierry had tested Sieur Clubin's own scrupulous honesty, and he now relied on him in his retirement. He used to say: "An honest man should be given your full confidence."

X

A MARINER'S TALES

Mess Lethierry always wore his seagoing clothes—he would have been uncomfortable in anything else—and preferred his seaman's pea jacket to his pilot's jacket. Déruchette wrinkled her little nose at this. Nothing is more charming than the face a pretty woman makes when she is displeased. She would scold him, laughing. "Father," she would say, "Ugh! You smell of tar," and she would give him a little tap on his broad shoulder.

This good old hero of the sea had brought back some surprising tales from his voyages. In Madagascar he had seen birds' feathers so large that only three were needed to roof a house. In India he had seen sorrel growing nine feet high. In New Holland he had seen flocks of turkeys and geese rounded up and guarded by a sheepdog in the form of a bird known as the agami. He had seen elephant graveyards. In Africa he had seen gorillas—half men, half tigers—seven feet tall. He knew the ways of all kinds of monkeys, from the wild macaque, which he called *macaco bravo,* to the howling macaque, which he called *macaco barbado.* In Chile he had seen a female monkey softening the hearts of her hunters by showing them her young one. In California he had seen the hollow trunk of a fallen tree through which a horseman could ride a distance of 150 paces. In Morocco he had seen Mozabites and Biskris fighting with clubs and iron bars—the Biskris because they had been called *kelb,* which means dogs, and the Mozabites because they had been called *khamsi,* which means people of the fifth sect. In China he had seen a pirate named Chanhthong-quan-larh-Quoi being cut into pieces for murdering the âp of a village. At Thu-dan-mot he had seen a lion carrying off an old woman from the middle of the town market. He had watched the arrival in Saigon of the great serpent from Canton to take part in the celebrations of the festival of Quan-nam, goddess of seamen, in the Cho-len pagoda. Among the Moi he had seen the great Quan-Sû. In Rio de Janeiro he had seen Brazilian ladies putting little balls of gauze in their hair in the evening, each containing a *vagalumes,* a beautiful firefly, so as to give them a headdress of stars. In Uruguay he had fought with anthills, and in Paraguay with bird spiders, hairy creatures the size of a child's head, covering a diameter of a third of an ell with their feet, and attacking men by firing bristles that pierce their skin like arrows and raise blisters. On the river Arinos, a tributary of the Tocantins, in the virgin forests to the north of Diamantina, he had encountered the fearsome bat men, the *murdagos,* who are born with white hair and red eyes, who live in the gloom of the woods, sleeping by day, waking at night, and fishing and hunting in the darkness, seeing better when there is no moon. Near Beirut, in the encampment of an expedition in which he had taken part, after a rain gauge was stolen from a tent, a witch doctor wearing only a few strips of leather, and looking like a man clad in his braces, had rung a bell attached to a horn with such vigor that a hyena had brought back the rain gauge. The hyena had been the thief. These true stories were so like romantic tales that they amused Déruchette.

The figurehead of the Durande was the link between the ship and the girl. In the Channel Islands the figurehead is called the *poupée,* the doll. Hence the local expression that means "being at sea," *être entre poupe et poupée* ("being between the poop and the puppet").

The Durande's figurehead was particularly dear to Mess Lethierry. He had had it made by a carpenter to resemble Déruchette. The resemblance was achieved with strokes of an ax. It was a block of wood trying to be a pretty girl.

Mess Lethierry saw this slightly misshapen block of wood with the eyes of illusion. He looked on it with the reverence of a believer. He sincerely believed that it was a perfect likeness of Déruchette—in much the same way as a dogma resembles a truth and an idol resembles God.

Mess Lethierry had two great joys during the week, one on Tuesday and the other on Friday. The first joy was seeing the Durande leaving harbor; the second, seeing it return. He leaned on his windowsill, looked on what he had created, and was content. It was something like the verse in Genesis, Et vidit quod esset bonum.[109]

On Friday the sight of Mess Lethierry at his window was as good as a signal. When people saw him lighting his pipe at the window of Les Bravées they said, “Ah! The steamship is on the horizon.” One puff of smoke heralded another.

Entering the harbor, the Durande tied up to a large ring in the basement of Les Bravées, under Mess Lethierry’s windows. On the nights after the vessel’s return Lethierry slept soundly in his hammock, knowing that on one side Déruchette was asleep and on the other Durande was moored.

The Durande’s mooring was close to the harbor bell. Here, too, in front of the entrance to Les Bravées, was a short stretch of quay.

This quay, Les Bravées, the house and garden, the lanes lined by hedges, and most of the surrounding houses are no longer there. The working of Guernsey’s granite has led to the sale of the land in this area, and the whole site is now occupied by stone breakers’ yards.

XI

CONSIDERATION OF POSSIBLE HUSBANDS

Déruchette was growing up, but was showing no sign of marrying.

Mess Lethierry, in making her a girl with white hands, had made her difficult to please. Educations of that kind later turn against you.

But he himself was even more difficult to please. The husband he wanted for her was also to some extent to be a husband for Durande. He would have liked to provide for both his daughters at once. He would have liked the master of the one to be the pilot of the other. What is a husband? He is the captain in charge of a voyage. Why should the girl and the boat not have the same master? A household is subject to the tides. If you can manage a boat you can manage a woman. They are both ruled by the moon and the wind. Sieur Clubin, being only fifteen years younger than Mess Lethierry, could be no more than a temporary master for Durande: what was wanted was a young pilot, a longtime master, a true successor to the founder, the inventor, the creator. The pilot finally chosen to be the pilot of Durande would be like a son-in-law for Mess Lethierry. Why should the two sons-in-law not be combined? He cherished this idea. He too saw a bridegroom in his dreams. A sturdy topman, rough and weather-beaten, an athlete of the sea: this was his ideal. This was not quite Déruchette's ideal. She had a rosier dream.

At any rate the uncle and the niece seemed to agree on one thing: that there was no hurry. When Déruchette had been seen to become a probable heiress there was no lack of suitors. But eager contenders of this kind are not always of good quality. Mess Lethierry realized this. He would mutter, "A girl of gold, a lover of copper." And he dismissed the suitors. He was prepared to wait; and so was she.

Strangely enough, he thought little of the aristocracy. In this respect Mess Lethierry was an unlikely Englishman. It may be difficult to believe, but he had actually turned down offers from a Ganduel of Jersey and a Bugnet-Nicolin of Sark. Some have even claimed—but we doubt whether it can be true—that he had not accepted an approach from the aristocracy of Alderney and had rejected proposals from a scion of the Édou family, which is clearly descended from Edward the Confessor.[110]

XII

AN ANOMALY IN LETHIERRY'S CHARACTER

Mess Lethierry had one fault; a serious one. He hated, not someone, but *something*—the priesthood. One day, reading—for he was a reader—Voltaire—for he read Voltaire—the words, "Priests are cats," he put down the book and could be heard muttering under his breath, "Then I'm a dog."

It must be remembered that while he was creating the local devil boat he had suffered lively opposition and mild persecution from priests, Lutheran and Calvinist as well as Catholic. To be a revolutionary in seafaring matters, to try to bring progress to the Norman archipelago, to impose on the poor little island of Guernsey the disturbance of a new invention: this—we are obliged to admit—was an act of damnable rashness. And it had, more or less, been damned. It should not be forgotten that we are here talking of the old clergy, very different from the clergy of the present day, who in almost all the local churches have a liberal attitude to progress. Every possible obstacle had been put in Lethierry's way, and he had encountered the great mass of objections that can be contained in preachings and sermons. He was hated by the men of the cloth, and hated them in return. Their hatred served as a mitigating circumstance in favor of his.

But it must be said that his aversion to priests was idiosyncratic. He did not need to be hated by them to hate them. As he said, he was the dog to these cats. He was against them as an idea, and—the most invincible ground—by instinct. He felt their hidden claws, and showed his teeth. Rather wildly, it must be admitted, and not always with reason. It is wrong not to make distinctions. Hatred should not be applied en bloc. Lethierry would not have agreed with the Savoyard vicar.[111] It is doubtful whether he would have admitted that there were any good priests. His position as a philosopher[112] brought a diminution of wisdom. Tolerant people are sometimes intolerant, as moderate people are sometimes violent in their opinions. But Lethierry was too good-natured to be a good hater. He thrust his enemies to one side rather than attacking them. He kept the churchmen at a distance. They had done him harm; he was content not to wish them any good. The difference between their hatred and his was that theirs was animosity, while his was antipathy.

Guernsey, small island as it is, has room for two religions. It accommodates both the Catholic religion and the Protestant religion. It does not, however, house both religions in the same church: each form of worship has its own church or chapel. In Germany, for example in Heidelberg, they make less fuss: they cut the church in two, one half for St. Peter and the other for Calvin, with a partition between them to prevent any quarrels. They have equal shares: three altars for the Catholics and three altars for the Huguenots; and since they have services at the same times one bell rings for both, summoning worshipers to God and the Devil at the same time. It is certainly a simplification.

German phlegm can tolerate a proximity of this kind. But on Guernsey each religion has its own home. There is the orthodox parish church and the heretical one. Everyone can choose for himself. Neither one nor the other: that had been Mess Lethierry's choice.

This seaman, this worker, this philosopher, this self-made man was simple in appearance but at bottom was not at all simple. He had his contradictions and his stubbornnesses. On priests he was unshakeable. He could have given points to Montlosier.[113]

On occasion he made jokes that were quite out of place, and he had some odd turns of phrase that nevertheless had some meaning. He called going to confession “combing one’s conscience.” The little learning he had—very little indeed, gleaned from books he had picked up between two squalls at sea—was subject to spelling mistakes. He also mispronounced words, not always unintentionally. When Waterloo brought peace between Louis XVIII’s France and Wellington’s England Mess Lethierry remarked, “Bourmont was the link between the two camps.” Once he spelled *papauté* (papacy) *pape ôté* (pope removed). We do not think it was done on purpose.[114]

But Lethierry’s hostility to the papacy did not win him the favor of the Anglicans. He was no more popular with the Protestant rectors than with the Catholic curés. Faced with the gravest of dogmas, his irreligion burst out almost without restraint. Chance having led him to hear a sermon on hell by the Reverend Jaquemin Hérode—a magnificent sermon filled from beginning to end with texts from Holy Writ proving the eternal punishments, the torments, the tortures, the damnations, the inexorable chastisements, the burnings without end, the inextinguishable curses, the wrath of the Almighty, the heavenly furies, the divine vengeances that inevitably awaited the wicked—he was heard to say quietly, when leaving with another member of the congregation: “Do you know, I’ve got an odd idea. I believe that God is merciful.”

This leavening of atheism came to him from his stay in France.

Although a Guernsey man of fairly pure-bred stock, he was known on the island as the “Frenchman” because of his “improper” notions. He made no secret of them, and he was full of subversive ideas. His determination to build his steamship, his devil boat, was proof enough of that. He would say, “I was suckled on 1789.” That is not a good kind of milk.

Of course he made blunders. It is very difficult to avoid error in a small society. For a quiet life in France you have to “keep up appearances”; in England you have to be “respectable.” Being respectable involves a series of observances, from keeping the Sabbath holy to tying your necktie properly. “Not to have the finger pointed at you” is another harsh law. To have the finger pointed at you is the diminutive form of anathema. Small towns—hotbeds of gossip—excel in this type of malignity, which, isolating its victims, is like an ecclesiastical malediction seen through the wrong end of a spyglass. The most valiant are afraid of this Raca.[115] They will stand firm in the face of grapeshot, they will stand firm in a hurricane, but they will retreat when confronted by Mrs. Grundy. Mess Lethierry was tenacious rather than logical; but under such pressure as this even his tenacity gave way. To use another phrase laden with hidden and sometimes shameful concessions, he “watered his wine.” He held aloof from the clergy but did not completely close his door to them. On official occasions and at the regular times for pastoral visits he received with adequate courtesy either the Lutheran minister or the Popish chaplain. Very occasionally he would accompany Déruchette to the Anglican parish church, which she attended, as we have seen, only on the four great festivals of the year.

But these compromises, which cost him a considerable effort, annoyed him, and, instead of making him more favorably disposed toward the clergy, stiffened his internal resistance. He relieved his feelings by increased mockery. This man who was entirely without bitterness had harsh feelings only in this quarter. There was no curing him of this.

In short, that was the way he was, and nothing could be done about it.

He disliked all clergymen. He had preserved the irreverence of the French Revolution. He made little distinction between different forms of worship. He did not even appreciate the great progress that had been made—the disbelief in the real presence. His shortsightedness in these matters went so far as to prevent him from seeing any difference between a minister and an abbé. He made no difference between a reverend doctor and a reverend father. He would say, “Wesley is no better than Loyola.” If he saw a Protestant clergyman walking with his wife he would turn aside. “A married priest!” he would say, in the mocking tone in which these words were spoken in France at that period. He was fond of telling how, on his last visit to England, he had seen the “bishopess of London.” This kind of union roused him to anger. “Gown does not marry gown!” he would say. To him the priesthood was like a third sex. “Neither a man nor a woman: a priest!” he might have said. Regardless of good taste, he applied the same disdainful epithets to both the Anglican and the Popish clergy, lumping them together in the same phraseology; and he did not take the trouble, when talking of either Catholic or Lutheran priests, to vary the military-style versions of the terms used at that period. He used to say to Déruchette, “Marry whom you please, so long as it isn’t a parson!”

XIII

INSOUCIANCE—AN ADDITIONAL CHARM

A word once spoken, Lethierry remembered it; a word once spoken, Déruchette forgot it. That was the difference between the uncle and the niece.

Déruchette, brought up as we have seen, had become accustomed to having little sense of responsibility. It must be observed that there are latent dangers in an education that has been too much taken for granted. It is perhaps a mistake to want to make your child happy too soon.

Déruchette thought that as long as she was happy all was well. She felt, too, that her uncle was pleased to see her pleased. Her ideas were much the same as Mess Lethierry’s. Her religious beliefs were satisfied with going to the parish church four times a year. We have already seen her dressed for the Christmas service. She knew nothing at all of life. She had all that was required to fall, some day, madly in love. In the meantime she was lightheartedly happy.

She sang when the fancy took her, chattered when the fancy took her, lived for the moment, threw out some remark and then passed on her way, did something or other and then ran off, was charming. She enjoyed, too, all the freedom of English life. In England children go out on their own, girls are their own mistresses, young people are given a free hand. Such is the English way of life. Later on these free young girls become slave wives. We take these two words in their best sense: free as they grow up, then slaves to duty.

Déruchette woke up each morning without a thought of what she had been doing on the previous day. You would embarrass her considerably if you asked her what she had done last week. Yet in spite of all this there were more troubled moments when she had a mysterious sense of disquiet, a feeling that something of the darker side of life was passing over her gaiety and her joy. Such clear blue skies have their clouds. But the clouds soon passed away. She would cast the feeling off with a laugh, not knowing why she had been sad or why she was happy again. Everything was a game to her. She teased passersby with her mischief. She played tricks on boys. If she had encountered the Devil she would have had no pity on him but would have played some prank on him. She was pretty, but was so innocent that she took undue advantage of her prettiness. She smiled as a kitten scratches. So much the worse for the person scratched: she thought no more of the matter. Yesterday did not exist for her; she lived in the fullness of today. That is what it is to be too happy. In Déruchette recollection faded as snow melts in the sun.

BOOK VI

DRUNK HELMSMAN, SOBER CAPTAIN

I

THE DOUVRES

Some five leagues out to sea, to the south of Guernsey, opposite Pleinmont Point and between the Channel Islands and Saint-Malo, is a group of rocks known as the Douvres.[138] It is a baneful spot.

There are many reefs and rocks called Douvre, in English Dover. Near the Côtes du Nord is a rock with the name of Douvre on which a lighthouse is at present being built. It is a dangerous reef, but it is not to be confused with the one we are concerned with here.

The nearest point to the Douvres on the French mainland is Cap Bréhant. They are a little farther from the French coast than the nearest of the Channel Islands. Their distance from Jersey is about the same as the distance from the northwest to the southeast of Jersey. If that island were turned on Corbière Point as on a hinge the promontory in St. Catherine's Bay would reach almost exactly to the Douvres. The distance is rather more than four leagues.

In the seas of the civilized world even the wildest rocks are seldom deserted. There are smugglers on Hagot, customs officers on Binic, Celts on Bréhat, oyster cultivators at Cancale, rabbit catchers on Césambre or Caesar's Island, crab gatherers on Brecqhou, trawlermen on the Minquiers, hand-net fishers on Les Écrehou. On the Douvres there is no one. Only seabirds make their home there.

No spot in the ocean is more dreaded. The Casquets, on which the White Ship is said to have been wrecked; the Calvados Bank; the Needles on the Isle of Wight; the Ronesse, which makes the Beaulieu coast so dangerous; the Préel

shoals, which restrict the entrance to Merquel and make it necessary to set the red-painted marker buoy twenty fathoms out; the treacherous approaches to Étables and Plouha; the two granite Druids off the south coast of Guernsey, Old Anderlo and Little Anderlo; Corbière Point; the Hanois; the Île des Ras, whose terrors are expressed in the saying, *Si jamais tu passes le Ras,*
si tu ne meurs, tu trembleras;

Should ever you pass by the Ras,
if you do not die, you will tremble;

the Mortes-Femmes, the passage between the Boue and the Frouquie; the Déroute between Guernsey and Jersey; the Hardent between the Minquiers and Chousey; the Mauvais Cheval between Boulay Bay and Barneville—none of these has such a sinister reputation as the Douvres. A seaman would rather face all these rocks, one after the other, than the Douvres once.

In all this perilous sea that is the Channel—the Aegean of the west—there is nothing to equal the terrors of the Douvres apart from the Paternoster reef between Guernsey and Sark. And even from the Paternoster you can signal for help: it is within sight of Icart Point to the north and Gros-Nez to the south. From the Douvres you can see nothing.

There is nothing here but squalls, water, clouds, limitless horizons, emptiness. No one sails this way unless he has lost his bearings. The granite rocks are huge and hideous. Cliffs everywhere. The harsh inhospitability of the abyss.

This is the open sea. The water here is very deep. A completely isolated rock like the Douvres attracts and provides a home for creatures that shun the haunts of men. It is like a huge madrepore, a submarine bank of coral. It is a labyrinth engulfed by the sea. Here, at a depth that divers can barely reach, are hidden caves and caverns and dens, a network of dark passageways in which monstrous creatures pullulate. They devour each other: the crabs eat the fish and are themselves eaten. In this dark world roam fearful living shapes, created to be unseen by the human eye. Vague forms of mouths, antennae, tentacles, gaping jaws, scales, claws, and pincers float and quiver in the water, grow larger, decompose, and disappear in the sinister transparency. Fearful swarms of sea creatures swim to and fro, prowling, doing what they have to do. It is a hive of hydras.

This is horror in its ideal form.

Imagine, if you can, a teeming mass of holothurians.

To see the inmost depths of the sea is to see the imagination of the Unknown, and to see it from its most terrible side. This abyss has a likeness to night. Here, too, there is a form of sleep, of apparent sleep at least: the sleep of the consciousness of created things. Here are committed, with no fear of retribution, the crimes of the irresponsible. Here, in a fearful peace, rude forms of life—almost phantoms, but wholly demons—go about the dread business of this dark world.

Forty years ago two rocks of extraordinary form marked out the Douvres from afar to any who passed that way: two slender pillars curving toward each other and almost touching at the top. They looked like the tusks of an elephant that had been swallowed up by the sea; only, tall as towers, they were the tusks of an elephant the size of a mountain. Between these two natural towers guarding the dark city of monsters there was only a narrow passage through which the waves surged. This twisting passage, with a series of sharp bends, was like a narrow street between enclosing walls. These twin rocks were called the two Douvres, the Great Douvre and the Little Douvre; one was sixty feet high, the other forty. The constant to-and-fro movement of the waves had acted like a saw at the base of these towers, and on October 26, 1859, a violent equinoctial gale overthrew one of them. The remaining tower, the smaller one, is battered and truncated.

One of the strangest rocks in the Douvres group is known as the Homme or Man. It still stands. Last century some fishermen who had been blown off their course onto this rocky shore found the body of a man on top of this rock. Beside the body were numbers of empty seashells. The man had been shipwrecked here and had taken refuge on the rock, had lived for some time on shellfish, and then had died. Hence the name of the rock.

The solitudes of the ocean are melancholy: tumult and silence combined. What happens there no longer concerns the human race. Its use or value is unknown. Such a place is the Douvres. All around, as far as the eye can see, is nothing but the immense turbulence of the waves.

II

AN UNEXPECTED BOTTLE OF BRANDY

On Friday morning, the day after the departure of the *Tamaulipas*, the Durande sailed for Guernsey. She left Saint-Malo at nine.

The weather was fine; there was no mist. It looked as if old Captain Gertrais-Gaboureau had been maundering.

Sieur Clubin's other activities had evidently cost him most of his cargo. He had loaded only a few packages of fancy goods for shops in St. Peter Port and three crates for the Guernsey hospital, one of yellow soap, another of candles, and a third of French sole leather and fine Cordovan leather. From his previous cargo he was bringing back a case of crushed sugar and three cases of Congou tea to which the French customs had refused entry. He had embarked very little livestock; only a few bullocks, which were rather loosely stowed in the hold.

There were six passengers: a Guernsey man; two Saint-Malo cattle dealers; a "tourist" (a term that was already coming into use at that period); a Parisian of the lower middle class who was probably a commercial traveler; and an American, traveling to distribute Bibles.

The Durande had a crew of seven in addition to the captain, Sieur Clubin: a helmsman, a chief engineer, a carpenter, a cook (who could also work as a seaman if need be), two stokers, and a cabin boy. One of the stokers was also an engineer. This stoker-cum-engineer, a very brave and very intelligent Dutch Negro who had escaped from the sugar refineries of Surinam, was called Imbrancam. He understood the ship's engines and looked after them admirably. In the ship's early days his jet-black face emerging from the engine room had helped to give the Durande her diabolical reputation.

The helmsman, a Jersey man by birth but of Cotentin stock, was called Tangrouille, of a family of the higher nobility.

This was literally true. The Channel Islands, like England, are a hierarchical country. There are still castes in the islands. The castes have their own ideas, which are their defenses. The ideas of castes are the same everywhere, in India as in Germany. Nobility is won by the sword, and is lost by working. It is preserved by idleness. To do nothing is to live nobly; those who do no work are honored. To have a trade brings you down in the world.

Formerly in France an exception was made only for glass manufacturers: emptying bottles being one of the glories of a nobleman, making them did not bring dishonor. In the archipelago of the Channel, as in Great Britain, those who want to remain noble must remain rich. A workman cannot be a gentleman. Even if he has been a gentleman he is one no longer. Many a seaman is descended from knights bannerets but is now only a seaman. Thirty years ago on Alderney there was a lineal descendant of the Gorges family who would have had a claim to the seigneurie of Gorges, confiscated by King Philippe Auguste; he walked barefoot along the beaches, gathering seaweed. A Carteret is a carter on Sark. There are a draper on Jersey and a shoemaker on Guernsey named Gruchy who claim to be members of the Grouchy family and cousins of the French marshal of that name who fought at Waterloo. The old records of the diocese of Coutances mention a seigneurie of Tangroville, evidently related to Tancarville on the lower Seine, which belonged to the Montmorency family. In the fifteenth century Johan de Héroudeville, an archer and squire in the service of the seigneur of Tangroville, carried “his corslet and other equipment.” In May 1371, as Bertrand du Guesclin tells us, “Monsieur de Tangroville did his devoir as knight bachelor” at Pontorson. But in the Channel Islands, if you fall into poverty, you are quickly eliminated from the nobility. It takes only a change of pronunciation. Tangroville becomes Tangrouille, and that is the end of the matter.

This had been the fate of the helmsman of the Durande.

In St. Peter Port, on the Bordage, is a scrap metal merchant named Ingrouille who is probably an Ingroville. In the reign of Louis the Fat the Ingroville family owned three parishes in the electorate of Valognes. A certain Abbé Trigan wrote the *Ecclesiastical History of Normandy*. He was priest in the seigneurie of Digoville. If the seigneur of Digoville had become a commoner he would have been called Digouille.

Tangrouille, probably a Tancarville and possibly a Montmorency, had the time-honored characteristic of a nobleman, but a grave fault for a helmsman: he drank.

Sieur Clubin had insisted on keeping him on, and had answered for his decision to Mess Lethierry.

Helmsman Tangrouille never left the ship, and slept on board.

On the day before the ship sailed, when Sieur Clubin came fairly late in the evening to look over the ship, Tangrouille was asleep in his hammock.

During the night Tangrouille woke up, according to his usual habit. Every drunkard who is not his own master has his private hiding place. Tangrouille had his, which he called his glory hole. It was in the hold. He had chosen this place as the unlikeliest he could think of, and felt sure that no one but himself knew about it. Captain Clubin, a sober man himself, was a stern disciplinarian. The small quantities of rum and gin that the helmsman could conceal from the captain's vigilant eye were stowed away in this mysterious corner of the hold, behind a sounding bucket, and almost every night he had a rendezvous with his store. The captain's surveillance was strict, so that there was little chance of any great orgy, and as a rule Tangrouille's nocturnal excesses were confined to two or three furtive mouthfuls.

Sometimes, indeed, there was nothing at all in the store. On that particular night Tangrouille had found an unexpected bottle of brandy there. His joy had been great, his astonishment greater still. From what seventh heaven had this bottle fallen? He could not recall when or how he had brought it on board. He had drunk it immediately—partly out of prudence, lest the bottle should be discovered and confiscated—and had thrown the empty bottle into the sea. When he went to the helm on the following morning he was unsteady on his feet, but he was able to steer much in his usual way.

Clubin, as we know, had returned to the Auberge Jean to sleep.

He always wore under his shirt a leather traveling belt containing a reserve of some twenty guineas, which he took off only at night. On the inside of the belt he had written his name in thick lithographic ink, which is indelible.

Before leaving the inn on the following morning he had put in his belt the iron box containing the banknotes for seventy-five thousand francs and had then, as usual, buckled it around his waist.

III

INTERRUPTED CONVERSATIONS

The Durande made a jaunty departure. The passengers, after stowing their cases and trunks on and under the benches, proceeded to inspect the ship, as passengers always do—a practice so habitual as to seem obligatory. Two of them, the tourist and the man from Paris, had never seen a steamship before, and when the paddle wheels began to turn admired the foam they produced. Then they admired the smoke. They examined, item by item and in the most minute detail, all the nautical apparatus on the deck and lower deck—the rings, the grapnels, the hooks, the bolts, which with their precision of form and carefully contrived disposition have the quality of colossal pieces of jewelry: iron jewelry gilded with rust by the tempest. They examined the little signal-gun moored on the deck: “chained like a watchdog,” said the tourist; “and with a tarpaulin overall to keep it from catching cold,” added the man from Paris. As the ship drew away from the land the passengers exchanged the usual comments on the view of Saint-Malo. One of them opined that views from the sea are deceptive and that at a league from the coast Ostend and Dunkirk are as like as two peas. The mention of Dunkirk was followed by the observation that the two red-painted lightships were called respectively the *Ruytingen* and the *Mardyck.*

Saint-Malo grew steadily smaller and finally disappeared.

The aspect of the sea was a vast calm. The wake behind the ship was like a long street fringed by foam that continued almost without a twist or turn until it was lost to view.

Guernsey lies on an imaginary straight line drawn between Saint-Malo in France and Exeter in England. At sea a straight line is not always the logical line to take; but steamships have, to some extent, an ability to follow a straight line that is denied to sailing ships.

The sea, in conjunction with the wind, is a composite of forces. A ship is a composite of mechanisms. The sea’s forces are mechanisms of infinite power; the ship’s mechanisms are forces of limited power. Between these two organisms, one inexhaustible, the other intelligent, takes place the combat that is called navigation.

Human will contained in a mechanism confronts the infinite. The infinite, too, contains a mechanism. The elements know what they are doing and where they are going. None of these forces is blind. Man must keep a watch on them and seek to discover their route.

Until the law governing these forces is discovered the struggle continues; and in this struggle steam navigation is a kind of perpetual victory of man's genius, every hour of the day, over all the forces of the sea. It also has the virtue of disciplining the ship: it reduces her obedience to the wind and increases her obedience to man.

The Durande had never sailed better than on this day. She behaved marvelously. About eleven o'clock, with a fresh north-northwesterly breeze, the Durande was off the Minquiers, under low steam, steering west on the starboard tack and keeping close to the wind. The weather was still clear and fine. But for all that the trawlers were making for home.

Gradually, as if everyone was thinking of getting back to harbor, the sea was being cleared of shipping.

It could not be said that the Durande was following her usual route. The crew were not concerned by this, having absolute confidence in the captain; nevertheless—perhaps because of a mistake by the helmsman—there was some deviation from her normal course. She seemed to be heading for Jersey rather than Guernsey. Just after eleven o'clock the captain corrected her course and turned her head toward Guernsey. Only a little time had been lost, but when the days are short it is unfortunate to lose any time. There was a fine February sun. Tangrouille, in the state he was in, had neither a firm footing nor a steady hand. As a result he frequently yawed, and this slowed down the ship's progress.

The wind had now almost died away.

The passenger from Guernsey, who had a telescope, trained it from time to time on a small patch of grayish mist that was lightly floating in the wind on the horizon to the west. It looked like a lump of cotton wool powdered with dust.

Captain Clubin had his usual austere and puritanical air. He seemed to be watching even more intently.

The atmosphere on board was tranquil and almost merry as the passengers talked together. If you close your eyes during a sea passage you can judge the state of the sea from the tremolo of conversations on board. Perfect freedom of conversation between passengers shows that the sea is absolutely calm.

For example, a conversation such as this could only take place on a very calm sea:

“Just look at that pretty green and red fly, sir.”

“It must have lost its way over the sea and is having a rest on the ship.”

“A fly doesn’t usually get tired.”

“No, they are very light. The wind carries them along.”

“Do you know, sir, they once weighed an ounce of flies, and then they counted them and found that there were six thousand two hundred and sixty-eight of them?”

The Guernsey man with the telescope had joined the two cattle dealers from Saint-Malo, and their conversation went something like this: “An Aubrac ox has a round thickset body, short legs, and a tawny hide. He is a slow worker because of the shortness of his legs.”

“In that respect the Salers breed is better than the Aubrac.”

“I’ve seen two magnificent oxen in my life, sir. The first had short legs, solid forequarters, full hindquarters, broad haunches, good length from the neck to the rump, good height to the withers, good fat, and a hide that was easy to take off. The other showed all the signs of having been properly fattened—a sturdy body, a strong neck, light legs, a white-and-red hide, sloping hindquarters.”

“That’s the Cotentin breed.”

“Yes, but with something of the Angus or the Suffolk bull.”

“You’ll hardly believe this, sir, but in the south of France they have donkey shows.”

“Donkey shows?”

“Yes, I assure you. The ugly ones are regarded as the best.”

“Then it’s the same as with mules: the ugliest are the best.”

“Just so. Like the Poitevin mare: big belly, thick legs.”

“The best type of mule is like a barrel on four posts.”

“The standard of beauty for animals is not the same as for men.”

“And certainly not the same as for women.”

“That’s true.”

“I like a woman to be pretty.”

“I like her to be well dressed.”

“Yes: neat, tidy, well turned out, smart.”

“Looking brand-new. A young girl should always look as if she had just come out of a bandbox.”

“But about these two oxen I was talking about. I saw them being sold in the market at Thouars.”

“Yes, I know the Thouars market. The Bonneaus of La Rochelle and the Babus, the grain merchants of Marans—I don’t know if you have heard of them—must have been at that market.”

The tourist and the man from Paris were talking to the American with the Bibles. There, too, the conversation was going well.

“Sir,” said the tourist, “I will tell you the tonnage of shipping in the civilized world: France, seven hundred and sixteen thousand tons; Germany, a million;

the United States, five million; England, five million five hundred thousand. Add to this the tonnage of the smaller countries, and you get a total of twelve million nine hundred and four thousand tons, distributed in a hundred and forty-five thousand ships scattered over the oceans of the globe.”

The American interrupted:

“Sir, it is the United States that have five million five hundred thousand.”

“I will accept that,” said the tourist. “You are an American?”

“Yes, sir.”

“I accept that, too.”

There was a silence. The American was wondering whether to offer the man a Bible.

The tourist went on:

“Is it the case, sir, that you are fond of using nicknames in America, so much so that you apply them to all your famous people, and call your celebrated Missouri banker Thomas Benton ‘Old Bullion’?”

“Yes, sir—just as we call Zachary Taylor ‘Old Rough and Ready.’ ”

“And General Harrison ‘Old Tip’—isn’t that so?—and General Jackson ‘Old Hickory’?”

“Because Jackson is as tough as hickory wood, and because Harrison beat the redskins at Tippecanoe.”

“It’s a very odd fashion.”

“It’s just our way. We call Van Buren the ‘Little Magician’; Seward is called ‘Little Billy’ because he introduced small dollar bills; and Douglas, the Democratic senator for Illinois, who is four feet tall but a great orator, is the ‘Little Giant.’ You can go from Texas to Maine, but you will never find anyone using the name Cass: it is always the ‘big man from Michigan.’ And Clay is known as the ‘Mill-Boy of the Slashes’: his father was a miller.”

“I would rather say Clay or Cass,” said the man from Paris. “It’s shorter.”

“You would show you didn’t know what was what. Corwin, who is secretary of the Treasury, is the ‘Wagon Boy.’ Daniel Webster is ‘Black Dan.’ And Winfield Scott, whose first thought after beating the English at Chippeway was to call for a plate of soup, is called ‘Marshal Tureen.’ ”

The patch of mist that had been seen in the distance had grown in size, and now occupied a segment of about fifteen degrees on the horizon. It was like a cloud hanging low over the water for lack of wind. There was now hardly a breath of air. The sea was as smooth as a millpond. Although it was not yet noon the sun was growing pale. It gave light but not heat.

“I think the weather’s going to change,” said the tourist.

“We’ll perhaps have rain,” said the man from Paris.

“Or fog,” said the American.

“The rainiest place in Italy, sir,” said the tourist, “is Tolmezzo, and Molfetta has the least rain.”

At midday, in accordance with custom in the archipelago, the bell rang for dinner. Those who wanted dinner went below. Some passengers who had brought food with them ate it cheerfully on deck. Clubin ate nothing.

While the passengers were having their meal the conversations continued.

The Guernsey man, feeling an interest in his Bibles, joined the American, who asked him:

“You know these waters?”

“Yes; I belong to these parts.”

“And so do I,” said one of the men from Saint-Malo.

The Guernsey man acknowledged this with a bow, and went on:

“Here we are in the open sea, but I would not have liked having fog when we were off the Minquiers.”

The American, addressing the man from Saint-Malo, said:

“Islanders are more men of the sea than those who live on the coast.”

“That’s true. We coast people are only half in the water.”

“What are the Minquiers?” continued the American.

“They’re very nasty rocks,” replied the man from Saint-Malo.

“There are also the Grelets,” said the Guernsey man.

“That’s true, too,” said the man from Saint-Malo.

“And the Chouas,” added the Guernsey man.

The man from Saint-Malo laughed. “Well, if it comes to that, there are also the Sauvages,” he said.

“And the Moines,”[139] said the Guernsey man.

“And the Canard,”[140] riposted the man from Saint-Malo.

“Sir,” said the Guernsey man politely, “you can always give tit for tat.”

“There are no flies on us Malouins,”[141] said the man from Saint-Malo, with a wink.

“Have we got to make our way through all these rocks?” asked the tourist.

“No. We left them to the south-southeast. They’re behind us now.”

And the Guernsey man went on:

“Counting both the big ones and the little ones, there are altogether fifty-seven rocks in the Grelets.”

“And forty-eight in the Minquiers,” said the man from Saint-Malo.

The conversation now continued between the man from Saint-Malo and the Guernsey man.

“I think, sir,” said the Guernsey man, “that there are three rocks you haven’t counted.”

“I’ve counted them all.”

“From the Dérée to the Maître-Île?”

“Yes.”

“And the Maisons?”

“Yes. They are seven rocks in the middle of the Minquiers.”

“I see that you know your rocks.”

“If I didn’t I wouldn’t be a Saint-Malo man.”

“It is always a pleasure to hear what a Frenchman thinks.”

It was now the Saint-Malo man’s turn to bow in acknowledgment. He went on:

“Then there are the Sauvages—three rocks.”

“And the Moines—two.”

“And the Canard—one.”

“Its name shows that there is only one.”

“That isn’t always so, for the Suarde is four rocks.”

“What do you call the Suarde?” asked the Guernsey man.

“We call the Suarde what you call the Chouas.”

“It’s not an easy passage between the Chouas and the Canard.”

“Only birds can get through.”

“And fish.”

“It’s difficult even for them. In rough weather they knock against the walls.”

“There is sand in the Minquiers.”

“And around the Maisons.”

“These are eight rocks you can see from Jersey.”

“That’s true: from the beach at Azette. Not eight, though—seven.”

“At low tide you can walk between the Minquiers.”

“Yes, of course: the sand is uncovered.”

“And what about the Dirouilles?”

“The Dirouilles are very different from the Minquiers.”

“It’s dangerous there, too.”

“They are over Granville way.”

“It’s easy to see that you Saint-Malo people are just like us: you like sailing.”

“Yes,” said the man from Saint-Malo, “but the difference is that we say we are accustomed to sailing, while you say you like it.”

“You are good sailors.”

“I am a cattle dealer.”

“What other people came from Saint-Malo, then?”

“There was Surcouf.”[143]

“Anyone else?”

“Duguay-Trouin.”[144]

Here the commercial traveler from Paris intervened:

“Duguay-Trouin? He was captured by the English. He was a brave man and a good fellow. A young Englishwoman fell in love with him. It was she who struck off his fetters.”

At this moment a voice of thunder was heard:

“You’re drunk!”

IV

IN WHICH CAPTAIN CLUBIN SHOWS ALL HIS QUALITIES

Everyone looked round.

It was the captain addressing the helmsman.

Unusually, Sieur Clubin was using the familiar *tu* form. Normally he never addressed anyone in that way, and his use of it now showed that he must be furiously angry, or at least wanted to appear so.

A well-timed outburst of anger is a way of throwing off responsibility, and sometimes of transferring it.

The captain, standing on the bridge between the paddle boxes, glared at the helmsman, spitting out the word *Drunkard!* Honest Tangrouille hung his head.

The blanket of fog had grown in size and now covered almost half the horizon. It was advancing in all directions at the same time, for fog has something of the quality of a patch of oil. It was expanding almost imperceptibly, driven noiselessly and without haste by the wind. It was gradually taking possession of the ocean. It was coming from the northwest and blowing straight toward the ship. It was like a vast, shapeless moving cliff, coming down on the sea like a wall. There was an exact spot at which the great waste of water entered the fog and disappeared.

The point of entry into the fog was still about half a league away. If the wind changed they might still avoid being caught in it; but it would have to change immediately. The gap of half a league was visibly lessening; the Durande was moving forward, and the fog, too, was advancing. The fog was approaching the ship and the ship was approaching the fog. Clubin gave orders to put on more steam and to bear east.

The Durande now skirted the fog for some time, but it was still advancing. The ship was still in clear sunlight.

Time was being lost in these maneuvers, which were unlikely to succeed. Night falls quickly in February.

The Guernsey man, watching the fog, remarked to the two Saint-Malo men:

“This is a right nasty fog.”

“A filthy bit of weather,” said one of them.

“A bad thing to happen when you’re at sea,” said the other.

The Guernsey man went up to Clubin:

“Captain Clubin, I’m afraid we’re going to be caught up in the fog.”

“I wanted to stay in Saint-Malo,” said Clubin, “but I was advised to go.”

“Who by?”

“By old sailors.”

“Well,” said the Guernsey man, “I think you were right to sail. Who knows but there may be a storm tomorrow? At this time of year you must always be prepared for the worst.”

A few minutes later the Durande entered the bank of fog.

It was a curious effect. Suddenly those who were in the after part of the vessel could no longer see those who were farther forward. A soft gray wall cut the Durande into two. Then the whole ship plunged into the fog. The sun was now like a great swollen moon.

Everyone shivered with cold. The passengers put on their great-coats, the sailors their oilskins. The sea, with hardly a ripple, had a cold, menacing tranquillity. An undue calm of this kind seems to hold a hidden threat. Everything had turned pale and wan. The black funnel and the black smoke that it emitted stood out boldly against the pallor in which the ship was enveloped.

There was no object now in making east. The captain turned the ship’s head toward Guernsey and put on more steam.

The passenger from Guernsey, who had been standing near the engine room, heard the Negro called Imbrancam talking to his fellow stoker and listened. The Negro was saying: “This morning, when we had sun, we were going slow; now, with this fog, we are going fast.”

The Guernsey man returned to Sieur Clubin.

“Captain Clubin,” he said, “are we taking enough care? Haven’t we too much steam on?”

“What can I do, sir? We must make up for the time lost because of that drunkard of a helmsman.”

“True enough, Captain Clubin.”

And Clubin added:

“I want to make speed for harbor. It is bad enough having fog; it would be much worse with darkness as well.”

The Guernsey man returned to the two from Saint-Malo, saying:

“We have an excellent captain.”

Every now and then great waves of fog, like carded wool, swept over the Durande, concealing the sun, which then reappeared, seeming paler and sickly. What little could be seen of the sky resembled its dirty, blotchy representation on a theater backcloth.

The Durande passed close to a cutter that had prudently dropped anchor. It was the *Shealtiel* of Guernsey. The skipper noticed the Durande’s speed. It seemed to him, too, that she was not on the right course; he thought that she was bearing too much to the west. He was surprised to see her going full steam ahead in the fog.

By two o’clock the fog was so thick that the captain had to leave the bridge and stand near the helmsman. The sun had disappeared, and there was now nothing but fog. The Durande was enveloped in a kind of white darkness, and was sailing through a diffused pallor. Neither the sky nor the sea could now be seen.

There was not a breath of wind. The can of turpentine hanging from a ring below the bridge did not even quiver.

The passengers had all fallen silent. The man, from Paris, however, was humming under his breath Béranger’s song “*Un jour le bon Dieu s’éveillant.*”

One of the men from Saint-Malo asked him: “You come from Paris, sir?”

“Yes, sir. *Il mit la tête à la fenêtre.* ”

“What are things like in Paris?”

“*Leur planète a péri peut-être.*— Everything is going wrong in Paris, sir.”

“Then it’s the same on land as it is at sea.”

“That’s true. This is a terrible fog.”

“And it can lead to some calamity.”

“Why do we have all these calamities?” cried the man from Paris. “What’s the point of them? What purpose do they serve? It’s like the burning down of the Odéon,[145] which made whole families penniless. Is that right? I don’t know what your religious beliefs may be, but I can tell you that *I* am not happy with the way the world is.”

“Nor am I,” said the man from Saint-Malo.

“Everything in this world of ours,” said the Parisian, “seems to me to be out of order. My idea is that God isn’t there anymore.”

The man from Saint-Malo scratched the top of his head, like someone trying to understand.

The Parisian went on:

“God is absent from our world. They ought to pass a decree compelling him to stay in residence. He’s in his country house and doesn’t care about us. And so everything is going askew. It is clear, my dear sir, that God is no longer in charge; he is on holiday, and the business is being run by some deputy, some angel trained in a seminary, some imbecile with the wings of a sparrow.” The word *sparrow* was pronounced in the manner of a Paris street urchin.

Captain Clubin, who had come up to the two men, put his hand on the Parisian’s shoulder.

“Quiet, sir!” he said. “Take care what you are saying! We are at sea.”

The passengers were struck dumb.

After a silence of five minutes the Guernsey man, who had heard this exchange, whispered to the man from Saint-Malo: “A religious man, our captain!”

It was not raining, but everyone on board felt wet. They measured the progress the Durande was making only by their increasing discomfort. A feeling of melancholy came over them.

Fog creates a silence over the ocean; it calms the waves and stills the wind. In this silence the churning of the Durande's engines had a troubled and plaintive sound.

They met no more ships. Even if, away toward Guernsey or Saint-Malo, out of the fog, there were still a few vessels at sea, the Durande, fog-shrouded, would be invisible to them and her long trail of smoke, emerging from nowhere, would look like a black comet in a white sky.

Suddenly Clubin shouted:

"*Faichien!* You've gone wrong again! You are going to wreck the ship! You ought to be put in irons. Get out of there, you drunkard!"

And he seized the tiller.

The helmsman, shamefaced, slunk forward among the men.

"We'll be all right now," said the Guernsey man.

The Durande sailed on, full speed ahead.

About three o'clock the curtain of fog began to lift, and the sea could be seen again.

"I don't like the look of it," said the Guernsey man.

Fog can only be dispersed either by the sun or by the wind. By the sun is good; by the wind is not so good. But it was now too late for the sun. At three in the afternoon, in February, the sun is losing its strength. And if the wind rises at this critical point in the day, that is not a good sign: it will then often blow up into a hurricane.

But if there was any wind at all it was barely perceptible.

Clubin, with his eye on the binnacle, was holding the tiller and steering, muttering under his breath. The passengers heard him say: "No time to be lost. That drunkard has held us back."

His face was completely expressionless.

The sea under the fog was now less calm, and there was something of a swell. There were patches of cold light on the surface of the sea. Seamen are concerned when they see light patches of this kind: they show where the winds at higher levels have gouged out holes in the ceiling of fog. The fog lifted from time to time and then came down again thicker than before. Sometimes it was completely opaque. The Durande was caught up in a veritable ice floe of fog. Now and again this fearful circle opened up like pincers, revealing a little bit of the horizon, and then closed again.

The Guernsey man, with his telescope, was now standing in the bow of the vessel like a lookout.

The fog lifted, then came down again.

The Guernsey man turned around in alarm:

“Captain Clubin!”

“What’s the matter?”

“We’re heading straight for the Hanois.”

“You are wrong,” said Clubin coldly.

The Guernsey man persisted. “I’m sure we are.”

“We cannot be.”

“I’ve just seen a rock on the horizon.”

“Where?”

“There.”

“That is the open sea. There can’t be anything there.”

And Clubin continued on his course toward the point indicated by the passenger.

The Guernsey man took up his telescope again.

A moment later he came rushing aft:

“Captain!”

“Well?”

“You must go about.”

“Why?”

“I’m sure I saw high rocks, quite close. It’s the Great Hanois.”

“What you saw was a thicker patch of fog.”

“It *is* the Great Hanois. For God’s sake, go about!”

Clubin gave a pull on the tiller.

V

CLUBIN AT HIS MOST ADMIRED

There was a sharp grating sound. The rending of a ship’s side on a sunken rock in the open sea is one of the most sinister sounds that can be imagined. The Durande stopped short. Some of the passengers were thrown sprawling on the deck.

The Guernsey man threw up his hands.

“We’re on the Hanois! Just as I said!”

There was a general cry: “We’re lost!”

Clubin’s voice, sharp and decided, dominated the clamor:

“No one is lost! Keep quiet!”

The black figure of Imbrancam, naked to the waist, emerged from the engine-room hatch and said calmly: “Captain, we’re taking in water. The engine is about to stop.”

It was a moment of dread.

The crash had been like a suicide. Had it been brought about on purpose it could not have been more terrible. The Durande had thrown itself against the reef as if attacking it. A jagged point of rock had been driven into the vessel like a nail. More than a square toise[146] of the inside planking had been shattered, the stem was broken, the rake damaged, the bow stove in; and water was pouring into the hull with a dreadful bubbling sound. The ship had suffered a wound that had brought her to shipwreck. The shock had been so violent that it had broken the pendants of the rudder, which now hung loose, beating against the hull. The bottom had been knocked out of the vessel by the reef, and nothing could be seen around her but the dense, compact fog, now almost black. Night was falling.

The Durande was down by the head. She was like a bullfighter’s horse that had been gored by the bull. She was dead.

The sea was at half-tide and rising.

Tangrouille had now sobered up: no one is drunk in a shipwreck. He went down between decks and, coming up again, reported to Clubin: “Captain, the water is filling the hold. In ten minutes it will be up to the scuppers.”

The passengers were running frantically around the deck, wringing their hands, leaning overboard, looking at the engine, going through all the pointless motions of terror. The tourist had fainted.

Clubin held up his hand and they all fell quiet. He asked Imbrancam:

“How long can the engines go on working?”

“Five or six minutes.”

Then he asked the Guernsey man:

"I was at the tiller. You were looking at the rocks. Which of the Hanois are we on?"

"We are on the Mauve. A few minutes ago, when the fog lifted, I had a clear view of the Mauve."

"Since we are on the Mauve," said Clubin, "we have the Great Hanois to port and the Little Hanois to starboard. We are a mile from land."

The crew and the passengers listened anxiously and intently, their eyes fixed on the captain.

There was nothing to be gained by lightening the ship, and in any case it would have been impossible: in order to get rid of the cargo it would have been necessary to open the ports and allow more water to get in. Nor would it have helped to drop the anchor, for the vessel was already firmly attached to the rock. Besides, on a bottom on which it would be difficult to get a purchase, the chain would probably have fouled. The engines were not damaged and could have been used to work the ship until the fire was extinguished—that is, for a few minutes more. It would thus have been possible to reverse the paddle wheels and back off the rock; but the Durande would then have sunk immediately. The rock was partly stopping up the holes in the ship's hull and reducing the inflow of water. It served as an obstacle to the invading sea. If the gash in the hull had been cleared of the obstruction it would have been impossible to stem the rush of water and work the pumps. If you pull out the dagger that has been plunged into a man's heart, you will kill him at once. Getting clear of the rock would have meant sinking to the bottom.

The water had now reached the cattle in the hold and they were beginning to bellow.

Clubin snapped out an order:

"Lower the longboat."

Imbrancam and Tangrouille hastened to obey and undid the lashings on the boat. The rest of the crew looked on as if petrified.

“All hands to the work!” shouted Clubin.

This time they all obeyed.

Clubin continued, impassively, to issue orders in the old language of command that the seamen of the present day would not understand: “Haul taut!—Use a voyal if the capstan won’t work.—Stop heaving!—Slack there!—Keep the blocks clear!—Lower away!—Slack away at both ends, smartly, now!—All together!—Take care she doesn’t go down stern first.—It’s catching on there!—Get hold of the mast tackle falls!—Watch out!”

The longboat was launched.

At that moment the Durande’s wheels stopped turning and the funnel ceased belching smoke. The fires had been extinguished.

The passengers fell rather than climbed down into the boat, sliding down the ladder or clinging to the rigging. Imbrancam picked up the unconscious tourist, carried him into the boat, and returned to the ship.

After the passengers, the crew made a rush for the boat, knocking down the cabin boy and trampling on him. Imbrancam barred their way, saying: “The *moço* goes first.”

He thrust the seamen aside, picked up the boy, and handed him down to the passenger from Guernsey, standing in the boat.

Seeing the cabin boy safe, Imbrancam stood aside and said to the rest of the crew: “Now you can go.”

Meanwhile Clubin had gone to his cabin and gathered up the ship’s papers and instruments. He then took the compass from the binnacle, handed the papers and instruments to Imbrancam and the compass to Tangrouille, and told them to get into the boat.

They went down into the boat, following the other seamen. The longboat was now full, with water almost up to the gunwale.

“Now,” shouted Clubin, “off you go.”

There was a general cry from the boat:

“What about you, Captain?”

“I am staying here.”

People who suffer shipwreck have little time for thinking and still less time for sentiment; but those who were in the boat, and at least relatively safe, had feelings that were not entirely selfish. All of them joined in the cry: “Come with us, Captain.”

“I am staying here.”

The Guernsey man, who was familiar with ships and the sea, replied:

“No, no, Captain. You are on the Hanois. From here it is only a mile’s swim to Pleinmont. But for a boat the only landing is in Rocquaine Bay, and that is two miles away. We have heavy waves and fog. It will take us at least two hours to get to Rocquaine in the boat. It will be a pitch-black night. The tide is rising and the wind is freshening. There is going to be a squall. We want nothing better than to come back and fetch you, but if dirty weather blows up we shan’t be able to. You are done for if you stay here. Come with us.”

The man from Paris intervened:

“The boat is full—too full—and one man more will be one man too many. But there are thirteen of us, and that’s unlucky for the boat. It’s better to overload it with one man than one figure too many. Come along with us, Captain.”

Tangrouille added:

“It is all my fault, not yours. It’s not right that you should stay.”

“I am staying here,” said Clubin. “The ship will be torn to pieces by the storm tonight. I will not leave it. When a ship is lost the captain is dead. People will say of me, He did his duty to the end. I forgive you, Tangrouille.”

Folding his arms, he cried:

“Carry out my orders. Cast off. Off you go!”

The longboat got under way. Imbrancam was at the tiller. All the hands that were not pulling an oar were raised toward the captain. From every mouth came the cry, “Hurrah for Captain Clubin!”

“There goes a brave man!” said the American.

“The finest man that sails the seas,” said the Guernsey man.

Tangrouille was weeping. “If I had had the courage,” he muttered to himself, “I would have stayed with him.”

The boat disappeared into the fog and was lost to sight.

Nothing more was to be seen.

The sound of oars grew fainter and finally died away.

Clubin remained alone.

VI

LIGHT THROWN ON AN ABYSS

When this man found himself alone on this rock, in this fog, amid this waste of water, far from any contact with living beings, far from any sound of human life, left for dead—alone between the rising sea and the night that was now coming on—he had a feeling of intense joy.

He had succeeded.

He had realized his dream. The long-term bill of exchange that he had drawn on destiny was about to be met.

For him, to be abandoned was to be saved. He was on the Hanois, a mile from land, and he had seventy-five thousand francs. Never had any shipwreck been so skillfully arranged. No detail had been forgotten; everything had been planned. Since his earliest days Clubin had had one idea: to use honesty as his stake in the roulette game of life, to have the reputation of a man of integrity, to wait for the decisive moment, to allow his stake to accumulate, to find the winning streak, to choose the right moment; he would not fumble about but would seize his opportunity; he would make his coup, and make only one; he would scoop the pool and leave other poor fools behind him. He intended to achieve at one blow what stupid crooks failed to do twenty times in a row; and while they ended up on the gallows he would make his fortune. The meeting with Rantaine had given him the idea, and he had immediately formed his plan. He would relieve Rantaine of his money; he would frustrate any revelations by Rantaine by disappearing; to be believed dead was the best mode of concealment; and to achieve that he was prepared to destroy the Durande. The shipwreck was a necessary part of the scheme; and it had the additional advantage of leaving a good reputation behind him, making his whole life a masterpiece of contrivance. Anyone seeing Clubin in his present situation would have thought him a fiend, but a successful and contented fiend.

He had lived his whole life for this moment.

The whole of his character was summed up in the words “At last!” A frightful serenity settled palely on his dark brow. His expressionless eye, its inmost part seeming blanked off as if by a wall, became fathomless and terrible, reflecting the fire within his soul.

Man’s inmost being, like external nature, has its own electric tension. An idea is a meteor: in the moment of success the accumulated meditations that have prepared the way for that success half-open and emit a spark. A man who, like some evil predator, feels a prey within his claws enjoys a happiness that cannot be concealed. An evil thought that has triumphed lights up a face. The success of some scheme, the achievement of some aim, some fierce delectation will momentarily bring to men’s eyes somber flashes of illumination. It is like a joyful storm, a menacing dawn. It is an emanation of a man’s consciousness, become a thing of darkness and cloud.

This was the gleam in Clubin’s eye. It was like no gleam ever seen in the heavens or on earth. The villain who had been pent up within Clubin had now burst forth.

Looking into the vast darkness around him, he could not restrain a burst of low, sinister laughter.

Now he was free! Now he was rich!

His equation was coming out. He had solved his problem.

He had plenty of time. The tide was rising and supporting the Durande, and would eventually lift it off. In the meantime it was firmly lodged on the rock and in no danger of sinking. Besides he had to give the longboat time to get well away, and perhaps to be lost at sea, as Clubin hoped it would be.

Standing on the Durande, he folded his arms, savoring his isolation in the darkness.

For thirty years he had borne the burden of his hypocrisy. Being himself evil, he had coupled with integrity. He hated virtue with the hatred of a man who has married the wrong wife. All his life he had been meditating evil, but since he had reached man’s estate he had worn the rigid armor of outward appearance. In his hidden self he was a monster; within his outer semblance of an honest man was the heart of a bandit. He was a pirate with the appearance of a gentleman. He was a prisoner of honesty, shut up in the mummy’s casket of innocence; he was graced with the wings of an angel—a backbreaking encumbrance for a rascal. He had a heavy burden of public esteem. Keeping up the reputation of an honest man is a hard task. What a labor it is to maintain the balance between evil thoughts and fair words! He had been at the same time the phantom of uprightness and the specter of crime. This contradiction had been his destiny. He had had to maintain a good appearance, always appear presentable, while seething under the surface, concealing the grinding of his teeth under a smile. Virtue was a thing that stifled him. He had spent his life wanting to bite this hand that was held over his mouth; and, wanting to bite it, had been obliged to kiss it.

To have lied is to have suffered. A hypocrite is of necessity patient, in the double meaning of the term: he must plan the means of achieving his triumph, but while doing so he suffers torments. The long-continued premeditation of some evil deed, accompanied by and mingled with an appearance of austerity; internal infamy coupled with a good reputation; always to be pretending; never to be yourself; to be deceiving people all the time—all this is hard work. To compose an appearance of straightforwardness from all the black substances churning in your brain, to seek to devour those who respect you, to be affectionate, to restrain yourself, to repress your feelings, to be always on the alert, to watch yourself all the time, to put a fair face on your latent crime, to present your deformity as beauty, to fabricate an appearance of perfection from your vileness, to hold a dagger in your hand but use it to caress, to sugar the poison, to watch over the ease of every gesture and the tone of every word, never to have a natural glance: what can be harder than this, or more painful? The odiousness of hypocrisy is felt in some obscure way by the hypocrite himself. To be perpetually ingesting his own imposture brings on nausea. The sweetness that deceit gives to villainy is repugnant to the villain, who is continually forced to have this mixture in his mouth, and there are moments of retching when the hypocrite is on the point of vomiting up his thoughts. To swallow this saliva is revolting. Then, too, there is, deep down, the hypocrite’s feeling of pride. There are times when, curiously, he thinks well of himself.

Within a deceitful rogue there is an outsized ego. The worm has the same crawling motion as the dragon, and the same way of raising its head again. The traitor is a despot in trammels, able to achieve his aims only by accepting a secondary role. He is littleness capable of any enormity. The hypocrite is a titan, but a titan who is also a dwarf.

Clubin really believed that he had been ill-used. Why had he not been born rich? He would have liked nothing better than to inherit from his parents an income of a hundred thousand pounds a year. Why had he not? It was not *his* fault. Why, because he had not been given all the pleasures of life, was he compelled to work: that is, to deceive, and betray, and destroy? Why had he thus been condemned to this torture of flattering, toadying, and trying to please others, of struggling to make himself liked and respected, and of having all the time to wear a false face over his own? Dissimulation is an act of violence against yourself. A man hates those to whom he lies. But now the time had come, and Clubin was taking his revenge.

On whom? On everyone, and on everything.

Lethierry had always treated him well. This was another grievance, and now he was avenging himself on Lethierry.

He was avenging himself on all those in whose presence he had been obliged to constrain himself. Now he was getting his own back. Anyone who had thought well of him was his enemy; he had been captive to such men.

Now he was free. He had made his escape; he had left mankind. What would be seen as his death was in reality his life; he was going to begin again. The real Clubin was shedding the likeness of the false one. He had dissolved everything at a stroke. He had kicked Rantaine into space, Lethierry into ruin, the world's justice into oblivion, men's minds into error, the whole of humanity away from himself. He had just eliminated the world.

As for God, that word of three letters meant little to him. He had been regarded as a religious man; but what did that matter?

Within the hypocrite there are hidden caverns; or rather a hypocrite is nothing but a cavern. When Clubin found himself alone his cavern opened up. He had a moment of exquisite pleasure; it was oxygen to his soul. He savored his crime to the full.

The depths of evil became visible on Clubin's face. His full personality was now revealed. At that moment, compared with the look on his face, Rantaine would have seemed as innocent as a newborn child.

What a release it was to tear off the mask! He delighted to see himself in all his hideous nakedness and to bathe ignobly in evil. The constraint of keeping up appearances over the years finally excites an intense appetite for shamelessness, a lascivious enjoyment of villainy. In these fearful moral depths, so rarely plumbed, there is a kind of appalling and pleasurable ostentation that is the very obscenity of crime. The insipidity of a false reputation for respectability creates a longing for shame. A man in this situation disdains other men so much that he wants to be despised by them. He is tired of being respected, and enjoys the freedom of action that degradation brings. He hankers after the turpitude that is so much at ease in ignominy. Eyes that have to be kept cast down often have sidelong glances of this kind. Marie Alacoque is not far removed from

Messalina. Consider also Cadière and the nun of Louviers.[147] Clubin, too, had lived under a veil. Effrontery had always been his ambition. He envied the whore and the brazen brow of the declared villain; he felt himself to be more of a whore than the whore herself, and had only disgust at having passed for a virgin. He had been the Tantalus of cynicism. And at last, on this rock, in this solitude, he could be frank; and now he was so. What a pleasure it was to feel himself wholeheartedly vile! At this moment Clubin enjoyed all the ecstasies that are possible in Hell. The arrears of debt due to dissimulation had been paid in full. Hypocrisy is a loan, and Satan had paid it back. Now that there was no one else there and he was alone with the sky, Clubin gave himself up to the intoxication of his shamelessness. Saying to himself, “I am a villain!” he was content.

No human consciousness had ever conceived such a state of mind as this. No opening up of a volcanic crater is comparable to the eruption of a hypocrite.

Clubin was delighted that there was no one there, but he would not have been sorry if there had been someone. He would have liked to appear abominable in presence of a witness. He would have been happy to tell the human species to its face: “You are all fools!”

The absence of any other human being ensured his triumph, but at the same time diminished it. The only spectator of his glory was himself.

To wear the iron collar of a galley-slave has a charm of its own. It advertises to all the world that you are vile.

To compel the crowd to look at you is a manifestation of power. A galley slave standing on a trestle at a street corner with his iron collar around his neck is a despot controlling all the glances that he compels to turn toward him. The scaffolding on which he stands is a kind of pedestal. What finer triumph is there than to be the point on which all eyes converge? To compel the public to look at you is one form of supremacy. For those who see evil as their ideal, opprobrium is a halo. It is a position of dominance. They are on a summit on which they can luxuriate in their sovereignty. A pillory exposed to universal view has some likeness to a throne.

To be exposed is to be looked at.

An evil reign, too, offers the same pleasures as the pillory. Nero setting fire to Rome, Louis XIV treacherously occupying the Palatinate, the Prince Regent condemning Napoleon to a slow death, Tsar Nicholas destroying Poland under the eyes of the civilized world must have enjoyed something of the same voluptuous pleasure as Clubin was luxuriating in. The immensity of the world's contempt seems to the object of that contempt to confer greatness on him.

To be unmasked is a defeat, but to unmask oneself is a victory. It is an intoxication, an insolent and self-satisfied act of imprudence, a reckless display of nakedness calculated to insult all who behold it. It is supreme happiness.

These ideas in a hypocrite seem a contradiction, but are not so. All infamy is consistent.

Honey is gall. Escobar is close to the Marquis de Sade. The proof? Léotade.[148] The hypocrite is the complete figure of wickedness, combining within himself both extremes of perversity: he is both priest and courtesan. He is a demon of double sex, the abominable hermaphrodite of evil. He fertilizes himself; he engenders himself and transforms himself. Seen from one side, he is charming; seen from the other, he is horrible.

Clubin had within him all this dark turmoil of confused ideas. He did not perceive them very clearly, but he gloried in them. The thoughts passing through his soul were like a shower of sparks from Hell flashing in the night.

He remained for some time deep in thought, looking back on his past honesty as a snake looks at the skin it has sloughed off. Everyone had believed in his honesty, and even he had come to believe in it a little. Again he burst into laughter.

People were going to think he was dead, and he was rich. They were going to think him lost, and he was saved. What a trick to play on the universal stupidity of mankind!

And included in this universal stupidity was Rantaine. Clubin thought of Rantaine with limitless disdain: the disdain of the weasel for the tiger. Rantaine had bungled his escape; he had succeeded in his. Rantaine had departed sheepishly; he was disappearing triumphant. He had taken Rantaine's place in his criminal act, and it was he who had won the spoils.

As for the future, he had no definite plan. In the iron box concealed in his belt he had his three banknotes, and this certainty was sufficient for the moment. He would change his name. There are countries where sixty thousand francs are worth six hundred thousand. It would not be a bad idea to go to one of them and live honestly with the money taken from that robber Rantaine. To speculate, to go into big business, to increase his capital, to become a millionaire in earnest: these were also worth thinking about. In Costa Rica, for example, where coffee was becoming big business, there were tons of gold to be won. That was a possibility.

But he did not need to make his mind up yet: he had plenty of time to think about it. The most difficult part was over. The main thing had been to strip Rantaine of his money and disappear with the Durande, and that had been accomplished. The rest was simple. No obstacles now lay ahead; there was nothing to fear; nothing could go wrong. He would swim to the coast, arrive at Pleinmont after dark, climb the cliff, and make straight for the haunted house. He would have no difficulty in getting into the house with the help of the knotted rope that he had hidden in a crevice in the rock, and would find there his traveling bag containing dry clothes and provisions. He could wait there in comfort, knowing that within a week Spanish smugglers—probably Blasquito—would put in at Pleinmont, and at the cost of a few guineas he would be conveyed, not to Torbay, as he had said to Blasco to conceal his real intention, but to Pasajes or Bilbao. From there he would go on to Vera Cruz or New Orleans. But now it was time to take to the water: the longboat was far away, an hour’s swim was nothing to him, and here, on the Hanois, he was only a mile from the mainland. At this point in Clubin’s reflections a gap opened up in the fog, and he saw the dreaded Douvres reef.

VII

AN UNEXPECTED TURN OF FATE

Clubin gazed wildly at the reef. It was indeed these terrible isolated rocks.

It was impossible to mistake their misshapen outline. The twin Douvres reared up in all their hideousness, with the passage between them like a trap, a sinister back alley of the ocean. They were quite close. They had been concealed by their accomplice, the fog.

In the fog Clubin had been on the wrong course. In spite of all his care he had suffered the same fate as two great navigators—González, who discovered Cape Blanco, and Fernández, who discovered Cape Verde. The fog had led him astray. It had seemed to serve him well in the execution of his project, but it had its dangers. He had changed course toward the west, but this had been a mistake. The passenger from Guernsey, claiming that he had recognized the Hanois, had led Clubin to change direction, in the belief that he was heading for the Hanois.

The Durande, wrecked on a sunken reef near the main rock, was only a few cable-lengths from the two Douvres.

Some two hundred fathoms farther away was a massive cube of granite. On the steep rock faces could be seen grooves and projections that would make it possible to climb to the top. The straight, right-angled corners of these rugged walls suggested that there might be a level area on the summit.

This was the Homme, which was still higher than the Douvres. The platform on the top overlooked their inaccessible twin peaks. This platform, crumbling at the edges, had a tablelike surface and a kind of sculptural regularity. It was a place of the utmost desolation and menace. The waves coming in from the open sea lapped placidly against the square sides of this huge black block of stone, which seemed a kind of pedestal for the huge specters of the sea and the night.

There was a great stillness: scarcely a breath of wind, scarcely a ripple on the sea. Under the silent surface of the water could be sensed the teeming life in its hidden depths.

Clubin had frequently seen the Douvres from a distance, and he was sure that that was where he was. There was no room for doubt.

It was sharp and devastating change of fortune. The Douvres instead of the Hanois; instead of a mile from land, five leagues. Five leagues of sea was an impossible distance for a swimmer. For a man shipwrecked and alone the

Douvres are the visible and palpable presence of his last hour. From here there is no way to reach land.

Clubin shuddered. He had, by his own act, brought himself into the very maw of darkness.

There would probably be a storm in the course of the night, and the boat from the Durande, overloaded as it was, would founder. No news of the wreck would reach the mainland. No one would even know that Clubin had been left on the Douvres. There was nothing before him but death from cold and hunger. His seventy-five thousand francs would not bring him a mouthful of bread. All his carefully contrived plans had ended in this disaster. He had labored to bring about his own catastrophe. There was no way out, no hope of salvation.

His triumph had become a precipice. In place of deliverance, capture. In place of a long and prosperous future, he was faced with death. In a moment, in a lightning's flash, the whole structure he had built up had collapsed. The paradise that this fiend had dreamed of had taken on its true aspect: it was a tomb.

Meanwhile the wind had risen. The fog, driven before it and torn to pieces, was rapidly disappearing over the horizon in great shapeless masses. The whole expanse of the sea could now be seen again.

The cattle in the hold, with water flowing in ever faster, were continuing to bellow.

Night was approaching, and probably also a storm.

The Durande, lifted by the rising tide, was swinging from right to left and then from left to right and was beginning to turn on the reef as if on a pivot. It could not be long before a wave swept it off the rock and cast it adrift.

It was now not so dark as when the vessel had struck the rock. Although it was later in the day, the air was clearer. The fog in its retreat had carried off some of the darkness. There was not a cloud in the sky to the west. Twilight brings with it a vast white sky, and this was now lighting up the sea.

The Durande had run aground sloping downward toward the bow. Clubin went up to the stern, which was almost clear of the water, and stared fixedly at the horizon.

It is characteristic of hypocrisy that it clings persistently to hope. The hypocrite is always waiting for something to turn up. Hypocrisy is a vile form of hope, and the falseness of the hypocrite is based on that virtue, which in him has become a vice.

Strangely, there is a certain confidence in hypocrisy. The hypocrite trusts in some obscure element in the unknown that permits evil.

Clubin looked out on the expanse of sea. The situation was desperate, but this sinister being was not. He said to himself that after the long period of fog, vessels that had been lying to or at anchor would be resuming their course and that one of them might pass within sight of the rock.

And a sail did appear on the horizon, traveling from east to west. As the boat drew nearer Clubin could make out its rig. It had only one mast and was schooner-rigged. The bowsprit was almost horizontal. It was a cutter.

In half an hour it would be passing close to the Douvres. Clubin said to himself: “I am saved!”

At a moment such as Clubin was experiencing a man at first thinks only of the prospect of life.

The cutter was perhaps a foreigner. Might it not be a smuggler’s boat heading for Pleinmont? Might it even be Blasquito himself? In that case not only would his life be saved but his fortune as well; and his stranding on the Douvres, by bringing a quicker end to his predicament, by cutting out the period of waiting in the haunted house and by concluding his adventure out at sea, would turn out to have been a stroke of luck.

All Clubin’s former certainty of success returned. It is curious how ready villains are to believe that success in their enterprises is no more than their due.

There was only one thing to be done. The Durande, aground amid the rocks, mingled her outlines with theirs and was difficult to distinguish from them. In the little daylight that remained she might not be visible to the vessel that was approaching. But a human figure on the summit of the Homme, standing out in black against the wan twilight and making distress signals, would certainly be seen, and a boat would be sent out to pick up the shipwrecked mariner.

The Homme was only two hundred fathoms away. It was an easy swim, and the rock was not difficult to climb.

There was not a moment to be lost.

Since the bow of the Durande was caught in the rock, it was from the stern, where Clubin was standing, that he would have to dive into the sea. He took soundings, and found that there was plenty of depth under the stern. The microscopic shells of foraminifera and polycystinea picked up by the tallow on the sound were intact, indicating that there were underwater caverns in which the water was always calm, however rough the sea might be on the surface.

He undressed, leaving his clothes on the deck. He would be able to get something to wear on the cutter. He kept only his leather belt.

When he had stripped he took hold of the belt, buckled it on again, checked that the iron box was still there, took a quick glance at the direction he would have to take through the rocks and the breakers to reach the Homme, and dived head first into the sea.

As he was diving from a height, he went deep, touched bottom, briefly skirted the underwater rocks, and then kicked off to return to the surface.

At that moment he felt something catching hold of his foot.

BOOK VII

THE UNWISDOM OF ASKING QUESTIONS OF A BOOK

I

THE PEARL AT THE FOOT OF THE PRECIPICE

A few minutes after his brief conversation with Sieur Landoys, Gilliatt was in St. Sampson.

He was troubled and anxious. What could have happened?

St. Sampson was buzzing with talk like a hive of bees that had been disturbed. The whole population was at the doors of their houses. Women were talking excitedly. Some people seemed to be relating some event, with much gesticulation, to groups of listeners. The words "What a misfortune!" could be heard. On some faces there were smiles.

Gilliatt did not ask anyone what was the matter. It was not in his nature to ask questions; and in any case he was too upset to speak to strangers. He mistrusted secondhand accounts, preferring to know the whole story at once. He made straight, therefore, for Les Bravées.

His anxiety was such that he was not even afraid to enter the house. In any case the door of the ground-floor room opening off the quay was wide open and there was a swarm of men and women on the threshold. Everyone was going into the house, and he went in with them.

Standing at the door was Sieur Landoys, who whispered to him:

"You know now what's up, I suppose?"

"No."

“I didn’t want to shout the news to you on the road. You don’t like to be like a bird of ill omen.”

“What has happened?”

“The Durande is lost.”

There was a crowd in the room, with knots of people speaking in low voices as if they were in a sickroom.

All these people—neighbors, passersby, busybodies, anyone and everyone—were huddled near the door, as if afraid to go any farther, leaving clear the far side of the room, where Déruchette was sitting in tears, with Mess Lethierry standing beside her.

He had his back to the rear wall. His seaman’s cap came down over his eyebrows. A lock of gray hair fell on his cheek. He was silent. His arms hung motionless by his sides; his mouth seemed to have no breath left. He looked like some inanimate object that had been set against the wall.

He had the air of a man within whom life had collapsed. With the loss of the Durande he had no longer any reason for his existence. His soul lived at sea, and now that soul had foundered. What was left to him now? To get up every morning and go to bed every night.

He would no longer be able to watch for the Durande, no longer see her leaving the harbor, no longer see her returning. What would the rest of his life be worth without an object? He could eat and drink; but beyond that, nothing. This man had crowned his life’s work with a masterpiece, and his efforts had brought about progress. Now this progress had been destroyed, and the masterpiece was dead. What was the use of living on for a few more empty years? There was nothing left for him to do. At his age a man cannot start life again; and now, too, he was ruined. Poor old fellow!

Déruchette, sitting weeping on a chair beside him, held one of his hands between her two hands. Her hands were joined; his fist was clenched. It was an expression of their different sorrows. In joined hands there is hope; in a clenched fist, none.

Mess Lethierry had abandoned his arm to her to do as she pleased with it. He was completely passive. He had only the small quantity of life that might be left to a man struck by a thunderbolt.

There are certain descents into the abyss that withdraw you from the world of the living. The people coming and going in your room are confused and indistinct; they are close to you but make no contact with you. To them you are unapproachable; to you they are inaccessible. Happiness and despair do not breathe the same air. A man in despair participates in the life of others from a great distance; he is almost unaware of their presence; he has lost any consciousness of his own existence; he is a thing of flesh and blood but feels that he is no longer real; he sees himself only as a dream.

Mess Lethierry had the look of such a man.

The people in the room were whispering among themselves, exchanging such information as they had about the catastrophe. This was the substance of the story:

The Durande had been wrecked on the Douvres in the fog on the previous day, about an hour before sunset. All those on board with the exception of the captain, who had refused to leave his ship, had escaped in the ship’s boat. A southwesterly squall that blew up after the fog lifted had almost brought them to shipwreck a second time and had driven them out to sea beyond Guernsey. During the night they had had the good fortune to encounter the *Cashmere,* which had picked them up and brought them to St. Peter Port. It was all the fault of the helmsman, Tangrouille, who was now in prison. Clubin had behaved nobly.

The pilots, of whom there were many among the groups of people, had a particular way of pronouncing the name of the Douvres. “A bad port of call,” said one of them.

On the table were a compass and a bundle of papers—no doubt the compass and the ship’s papers that Clubin had handed to Imbrancam and Tangrouille when the ship’s boat left the wreck. They were evidence of the magnificent self-denial of a man who thought of saving even these bits of paper at a time when he was remaining on the wreck to die—a small detail showing greatness of mind and sublime forgetfulness of self.

All those present were unanimous in admiring Clubin, and unanimous also in believing that he might yet be safe. The cutter *Shealtiel* had arrived a few hours after the *Cashmere,* bringing the latest intelligence. She had just spent twenty-four hours in the same waters as the Durande; she had lain to in the fog and tacked about during the storm. The skipper of the *Shealtiel* was among those present.

When Gilliatt arrived the skipper had just been telling his story to Mess Lethierry. It was a full and detailed account. Toward morning, when the squall had blown itself out and the wind had become manageable, he had heard the bellowing of cattle in the open sea.

Surprised by this rural sound amid the waves, he had headed in that direction and had seen the Durande aground on the Douvres. The sea was now calm enough to allow him to go closer. He had hailed the wreck, but the only reply was the bellowing of the cattle drowning in the hold. The skipper was sure that there was no one left on the Durande. The wreck had held together well, and in spite of the violence of the squall Clubin could have spent the night on board. He was not a man to give up easily; and since he was not on the Durande he must have been rescued. A number of sloops and luggers from Granville and Saint-Malo, getting under way again on the night before after the fog lifted, must certainly have passed close to the Douvres, and one of them must have picked up Captain Clubin. It will be remembered that the Durande’s boat had been full when it left the wreck, that one man more would have overloaded it and perhaps caused it to sink, and that this must have been Clubin’s main reason for staying on the wreck; but, having thus done his duty as captain, when a rescue ship appeared he would certainly have made no difficulty about taking advantage of it. You may be a hero, but you are not a fool. For him to commit suicide would have been absurd, particularly since he had nothing to reproach himself with. The guilty man was Tangrouille, not Clubin. This all seemed conclusive. The skipper of the *Shealtiel* was clearly right, and everyone expected Clubin to reappear at any moment. There was talk of giving him a triumphant reception.

Two things seemed certain from the skipper’s account: Clubin was saved, and the Durande was lost.

As for the Durande, it had to be accepted that the catastrophe was irremediable. The skipper of the *Shealtiel* had seen the final stage of the shipwreck. The jagged rock on which the Durande was impaled had held on to her throughout the night, resisting the violence of the storm as if it wanted to keep her as its prey; but in the morning, when the *Shealtiel,* having ascertained that there was no one on board to be saved, had begun to move away, there had come one of those sudden heavy seas that are like the last angry outbursts of the storm. The Durande had been lifted violently upward, torn off the reef, and thrown, with the speed and directness of an arrow, between the two Douvres rocks. There had been a "devil of a crash," said the skipper of the *Shealtiel.* The Durande, raised higher by the wave, had lodged between the two rocks as far as her midship frame. She was again held fast, but more firmly than on the underwater reef. She would remain haplessly suspended there, at the mercy of the wind and the sea.

The Durande, according to the crew of the *Shealtiel,* was already three parts broken up. She would certainly have sunk during the night had she not been caught up and held on the reef.

The skipper of the *Shealtiel* had examined the wreck through his glass and reported on its condition with seamanlike precision. The starboard quarter had been stove in, the masts snapped off, the sails blown off the bolt ropes, the shrouds torn away, the cabin skylights crushed by the falling of a yard, the uprights broken off level with the gunwale from abreast of the mainmast to the taffrail, the dome of the cuddy house beaten in, the chocks of the longboat struck away, the roundhouse dismantled, the rudder hinges broken, the trusses wrenched off, the bulwarks demolished, the bitts carried away, the cross beam destroyed, the handrail gone, the sternpost broken. All this devastation had been caused by the frenzy of the storm. Of the derrick on the foremast nothing at all was left; not a trace; it had been completely swept away, with its hoisting tackle, its blocks and falls, its snatch block and its chains. The Durande had broken her back; the sea would now begin to tear her to pieces. Within a few days there would be nothing left of her.

Remarkably, however, the engines of the Durande had remained almost unscathed—proof of the excellence of Lethierry's work. The skipper of the *Shealtiel* was sure that they had not suffered any serious damage. The masts had given way, but the funnel had held firm. The iron guards on the bridge had merely been twisted. The paddle boxes had been damaged; the casings had been crushed, but the paddle wheels had apparently not lost a single blade. The engines themselves were intact. The skipper of the *Shealtiel* was sure of it. Imbrancam, the stoker, who had mingled with the groups, was equally sure. This Negro, more intelligent than many whites, was a great admirer of the engines. He held up his arms, with black fingers spread wide, and said to Lethierry, who still stood silent: "Master, the machinery is still alive."

Since Clubin was thought to be safe and the hull of the Durande was known to be lost, conversation in the various groups turned to the engines. People were as concerned about them as if they had been a person. They were amazed by how well they had performed. "There's a stout old lady for you!" said a French seaman. "She's a good one!" said a Guernsey fisherman. "There must be good stuff in her," said the skipper of the *Shealtiel*, "to get away with two or three scratches."

Gradually the engines came to be the sole subject of conversation. There were warmly held views both for and against them; they had their friends and their enemies. Some of those present—owners of good old-fashioned sailing cutters who hoped to win back customers from the Durande—were not sorry to hear that the Douvres had put the new invention out of action. The whispering grew louder and the discussions threatened to become noisy. In general, however, conversation was restrained, and every now and then there was a sudden lowering of voices, shamed by Lethierry's sepulchral silence.

The general view that emerged from the discussions was this. The essential thing was the engines. The ship could be rebuilt; the engines could not. The engines were unique. There would not be the money to make others like them; nor would there be anyone to make them; their original builder was dead. They had cost forty thousand francs, and no one would now risk that amount of money in such a venture. Moreover, it had been shown that steamships could be lost like any other vessel; the accident to the Durande had wiped out all her earlier success. But it was terrible to think that this piece of machinery, still entire and in good condition, would be torn to pieces within five or six days as the ship had been. So long as it existed the shipwreck could not be said to be complete. Only the loss of the engines would be irreparable. Saving the engines would make good the disaster.

It was easy enough to talk of saving the engines; but who would do it? Was it indeed possible? To conceive a project and to carry it out are two different things: it is easy to have a dream but difficult to turn it into reality. And if ever a dream was impracticable and senseless it was this one—to save the Durande's engines, aground on the Douvres. To send a ship and crew to work on these rocks would be absurd; it was not to be thought of. It was the time of year when there were heavy seas; and in the first squall the anchor chains would be sawn through by the sharp edges of the underwater reef and the ship would go to pieces on the rocks. It would be sending a second wreck to the aid of the first. In the cavity on the summit of the rock on which the legendary shipwrecked mariner had died of hunger there was barely room for one man. In order to salvage the engines, therefore, a man would have to go to the Douvres, and he would have to go alone— alone in that waste of sea, alone in that solitude, alone at five leagues from the coast, alone in that place of terror, alone for weeks at a time, alone in face of dangers both foreseen and unforeseen, without hope of receiving supplies if his food ran out, without help in any emergency, without any trace of human life apart from the memory of the seaman who had starved to death there, without any other companion than the dead man. And how would he set about saving the engines? He would have to be not only a seaman but a smith as well. And what hardships he would have to put up with! Any man who ventured on the task would be more than a hero: he would be a madman. For in certain enterprises of disproportionate magnitude in which superhuman power is called for, there is a higher level above bravery—madness. And indeed would it not be folly to devote so much effort to the recovery of a collection of old iron?

No: no one should go to the Douvres. The engines must be abandoned along with the rest of the ship. No such savior as was required would present himself. Where was such a man to be found?

This, expressed in different words, was the gist of the murmured conversations among those present.

The skipper of the *Shealtiel*, who had once been a pilot, expressed the general view:

"No, there's nothing more to be done. There is no one who will go out there and bring back the Durande's engines."

“Since I am not going,” added Imbrancam, “it means that no one can go.”

The skipper shook his left hand in a gesture expressing his conviction that the thing was impossible, and went on:

“If there were such a man—”

Déruchette turned round:

“—I would marry him,” she said.

There was a silence.

A man came forward, his face ashy pale, and said:

“You would marry him, Miss Déruchette?”

It was Gilliatt.

All eyes were turned on him. Mess Lethierry had drawn himself up to his full height. There was a strange light in his eye. He took off his seaman’s cap and flung it on the ground, looked solemnly in front of him without seeing any of those who were present, and said:

“Déruchette would marry him. I give my word of honor to God.”

II

GREAT ASTONISHMENT ON THE WEST COAST

The moon was due to rise at ten that night; but however favorable the night, the wind, and the sea, no fishermen meant to go out either from La Hougue la Perre, nor from Bordeaux harbor, nor from Houmet Benet, nor from Le Platon, nor from Port Grat, nor from Vazon Bay, nor from Perelle Bay, nor from Pezeries, nor from Les Tielles, nor from Saint’s Bay, nor from Petit-Bô, nor from any port or harbor on Guernsey. The reason was very simple: the cock had crowed at midday.

When the cock crows at an unusual time there are no fish to be had that day.

That evening, however, as night was falling, a fisherman returning to Omptolle had a surprise. As he came past Houmet Paradis, with the Platte Fougère buoy, which is in the form of an inverted funnel, on his left and the St. Sampson buoy, in the form of a man, on his right, he thought he detected a third buoy. What was this buoy, he wondered? Who had set it at that particular point? What hidden shoal was it marking? The buoy provided an immediate answer to his questions: it was moving; it was a mast. This by no means lessened the fisherman's astonishment. A buoy would have been cause for wonder; a mast even more.

No one could be fishing that day. When everyone was coming in, someone was putting out.

Who could it be? And why was he going out to sea?

Ten minutes later the mast, moving slowly, came within a short distance of the fisherman from Omptolle. He was unable to recognize the boat. He heard the sound of oars. He could make out only two oars, so there was probably only one man on board. The wind was northerly, and the man was evidently rowing out to catch the breeze beyond Fontenelle Point. There, probably, he would put on sail. So he was intending to round L'Ancresse and Mont Crevel. Whither was he bound?

The mast passed on its way, and the fisherman returned to port.

That same night, at different points along the west coast of Guernsey and at different times, a number of people observed a boat moving out at sea.

Just as the fisherman from Omptolle was mooring his boat, a man carting seaweed half a mile farther on was whipping his horses along the lonely Les Clôtures road, near the standing stones between Martello towers 6 and 7, when he saw a sail being hoisted some distance out at sea, in an area toward the Roque Nord and the Sablonneuse, which was little frequented because it required familiarity with these dangerous waters. He paid little heed to it, being more interested in carts than in boats.

Perhaps half an hour later a plasterer returning from his work in the town and skirting the Mare Pelée saw almost in front of him a boat daringly maneuvering amid the Quenon, Rousse de Mer, and Gripe de Rousse rocks. It was a dark night but it was light over the sea—an effect that commonly occurs—and it was possible to distinguish movements out at sea. The only craft visible was this boat.

A little later, and a little farther down the coast, a man setting his crayfish pots on the sandbank between Port Soif and Portinfer wondered why a boat was picking its way between the Boue Corneille[149] and the Moulrette. You had to be a good pilot and in a great hurry to get somewhere to venture on that passage.

As eight o'clock was striking on the Câtel church the landlord of the tavern in Côbo Bay was astonished to see a sail beyond the Boue du Jardin and the Grunettes, close to the Suzanne and the Grunes de l'Ouest.

A little way beyond Côbo Bay, on the lonely Hommet promontory that bounds Vazon Bay, two lovers were taking a lingering farewell of each other. At the moment when the girl was saying to the boy: "I've got to go; it's not because I want to leave you but because I've house-work to do," they were distracted from their parting kiss by a large boat that passed close to them, making for the Messellettes.

About nine o'clock that evening Monsieur Le Peyre des Norgiots, of Le Cotillon Pipet, was examining a hole made by marauders in the hedge around his field, La Jennerotte, and his little plantation of trees. While investigating the damage he could not help noticing a boat rounding Crocq Point—a reckless thing to do at that time of night.

The course followed by the boat was a risky one on the day after a storm, when the sea had still not settled down. It was an unwise venture except for a man who knew by heart the channels between the rocks.

At half-past nine, at the Équerrier, a trawler hauling in its net paused briefly to watch what appeared to be a boat making its way between Colombelle and the Souffleresse. It was a hazardous thing to do, for in that area there are sometimes sudden gusts of wind that are very dangerous. The Souffleresse, the Blower, is so called because it directs these sudden bursts of wind against passing boats.

At the moment when the moon was rising, the tide being fully in and slack in the little strait of Lihou, the solitary watchman on Lihou Island was much alarmed by the sight of a long black shape passing between the moon and him, a tall, narrow black shape that looked like a shroud standing erect and moving forward. It glided along above the wall-like ridges of rock. The watchman thought it was the White Lady.

The White Lady inhabits the Tas de Pois d'Amont, the Gray Lady inhabits the Tas de Pois d'Aval, the Red Lady inhabits the Silleuse, to the north of the Banc Marquis, and the Black Lady inhabits the Grand Étacré, to the west of the Hommet. These ladies come out at night, in the moonlight, and sometimes meet one another.

The black shape could, of course, be a sail. The long barrier of rocks along which it seemed to be walking might be concealing the hull of a boat sailing along beyond the rocks, showing only its sail. But the watchman wondered what boat would risk the passage between Lihou and the Pécheresse and between the Angullières and L'Érée Point. And why was she sailing that way? It seemed to the watchman more likely that it was the Black Lady.

Just after the moon passed the tower of St. Peter-in-the-Wood, the sergeant in Rocquaine Castle, while pulling up the inner half of the drawbridge, saw at the mouth of the bay, beyond the Haute Canée but not so far out as the Sambule, a sailing vessel that seemed to be dropping down from north to south.

On the south coast of Guernsey, beyond Pleinmont, in a bay fringed by cliffs and rock faces falling steeply down to the sea, is a curious little harbor that a Frenchman who has lived on the island since 1855—perhaps indeed the author of these lines—has christened the "harbor on the fourth floor," a name that is now in general use. This harbor, which was originally called the Moye, is a rocky plateau, partly natural and partly shaped by man, some forty feet above the sea, communicating with the waves by two heavy beams forming an inclined plane. Boats are hauled up from the sea and launched into it on the beams, which are like two rails, with the help of chains and pulleys. For men there is a flight of steps. In those days the harbor was much used by smugglers. Being difficult of access, it suited their purposes.

About eleven o'clock a number of smugglers—perhaps the very men with whom Clubin had been expecting to travel—were gathered, along with their bales of goods, on the summit of the Moye plateau. Those who live by dishonesty need to be always on the alert; and the smugglers were keeping a good lookout. They were surprised to see a sail suddenly emerging from behind the black outline of Pleinmont Point. It was moonlight. The smugglers watched it closely, fearing that it might be a party of coastguardsmen on their way to lie in ambush behind the Great Hanois. But the sail passed beyond the Great Hanois, leaving the Boue Blondel behind it to the northwest, and disappeared into the pallid mists on the horizon.

“Where the devil can that boat be heading for?” the smugglers wondered.

That evening, just after sunset, someone was heard knocking at the door of the house at the Bû de la Rue. It was a boy dressed in brown with yellow stockings, indicating that he was a junior clerk employed by the parish. The house was closed up and shuttered. An old woman prowling about the beach with a lantern in quest of shellfish called to the boy:

“What do you want, boy?”

“The man of the house.”

“He isn’t there.”

“Where is he?”

“I don’t know.”

“Has he gone away?”

“I don’t know.”

“The new rector of the parish, the Reverend Ebenezer Caudray, wants to come and see him.”

“I don’t know.”

“The reverend has sent me to ask if the man who lives at the Bû de la Rue will be in tomorrow morning.”

“I don’t know.”

III

DO NOT TEMPT THE BIBLE

For the next twenty-four hours Mess Lethierry neither slept nor ate nor drank. He kissed Déruchette on the forehead, asked after Clubin, of whom nothing had been heard, signed a declaration that he did not intend to lodge a complaint against anyone and had Tangrouille released from prison.

For the whole of the following day he remained in the Durande’s office, half leaning on the table, neither standing nor sitting, answering quietly when anyone spoke to him. People’s curiosity now being satisfied, no one came to Les Bravées. There is a fair measure of curiosity involved in the urge to offer sympathy. The door of the house remained closed, and Lethierry was left alone with Déruchette. The gleam that had flickered in Lethierry’s eyes had been extinguished, and the gloomy air he had worn when he first heard of the catastrophe had returned.

Déruchette, anxious for him, had, on the suggestion of Grace and Douce, put beside him on the table, without saying a word, a pair of socks he had been knitting when the bad news arrived.

He gave a bitter smile, saying: “So they think I’m childish.”

After a quarter of an hour’s silence he added:

“These things are all very well when you are not in trouble.”

Déruchette had removed the socks, and at the same time had taken away the compass and the ship’s papers, on which he had been brooding too much.

That afternoon, a little before teatime, the door opened and two men dressed in black came in; one was old, the other young.

The younger man, it may be remembered, has already appeared in the course of our story.

Both men had an air of gravity, but of different kinds of gravity. The old man had what might be called the gravity of his position, the young one the gravity of his nature. One comes from a man’s dress, the other from his mind.

As their garments indicated, both were clergymen belonging to the established church. The first thing in the appearance of the younger man that might have struck an observer was that his air of profound gravity, evidently springing from his mind, was not reflected in his person. Gravity is not inconsistent with passion, which it purifies and exalts; but the most striking characteristic of this young man was his personal beauty. As he was a priest he must have been at least twentyfive, but he looked like eighteen. He showed the harmony, and also the contrast, between a soul that seemed made for passion and a body made for love. He was fair-haired, pink-complexioned, fresh, neat, and lithe in his severe attire, with the cheeks of a girl and delicate hands. He had a lively and natural manner, though repressed. He was all charm, elegance, and almost sensuousness. The beauty of his expression redeemed this excess of grace. His frank smile, revealing the small teeth of a child, was thoughtful and devout. He had the gracefulness of a page and the dignity of a bishop.

Under his full head of fair hair, so golden that it seemed overattractive for a man, was a high, frank, and well-shaped forehead. A double wrinkle between his eyebrows created something of the appearance of a bird—the bird of thought—hovering with outspread wings on his forehead.

He had the appearance of one of those generous, pure, and innocent natures that develop in the opposite direction from the ordinary run of men, gaining wisdom from illusion and enthusiasm from experience.

His appearance of youth was transparent, allowing his inner maturity to shine through. Compared with his companion, the older clergyman, he seemed at first sight the son, at a second glance the father.

His companion was none other than the Reverend Dr. Jaquemin Hérode. Dr. Hérode belonged to the High Church, which is a kind of popish system without a pope. In those days the Church of England was agitated by the trends that have since been confirmed and condensed in the form of Puseyism. Dr. Hérode was of that school of thought, which is almost a variant of the Church of Rome. He was tall, very proper, stiff, and commanding. There was little sign of his inner vision in his outward appearance. He was more concerned with the letter than with the spirit of his faith. He had a rather haughty demeanor and an imposing presence. He was more like a monsignore than an Anglican clergyman; his frock coat had something of the cut of a cassock. His true spiritual home would have been Rome: he was a born prelate of the antechamber. He seemed to have been created on purpose to adorn a papal court, to walk behind the gestatorial chair, with all the pontifical train, in abito paonazzo.[150] The accident of having been born an Englishman and a theological training directed more toward the Old than the New Testament had put that great destiny beyond his reach. All his splendors amounted only to being rector of St. Peter Port, dean of the island of Guernsey, and suffragan to the bishop of Winchester. This, to be sure, was glory enough.

This glory did not prevent Mr. Jaquemin Hérode from being, all in all, a good man.

As a theologian he stood high in the estimation of experts in this field, and was a man of weight in the Court of Arches, the English equivalent of the Sorbonne.[151]

He had the air of a scholar, an authoritative way of screwing up his eyes, hairy nostrils, prominent teeth, a thin upper lip and a thick lower one, several academic degrees, a good living, titled friends, the confidence of the bishop, and a Bible always in his pocket.

Mess Lethierry was so completely absorbed that his only reaction to the arrival of the two clergymen was an imperceptible frown.

Dr. Hérode came forward, bowed, said a few words about his recent promotion in a tone of sober pride, and explained that he had come, in accordance with custom, to introduce to the leading men of the parish, and to Mess Lethierry in particular, his successor, the new rector of St. Sampson, the Reverend Ebenezer Caudray, who would now be Mess Lethierry’s pastor.

Déruchette rose.

The younger clergyman, who was the Reverend Ebenezer, bowed.

Mess Lethierry looked at him and muttered under his breath: “Not much of a seaman.”

Grace set out chairs and the two clergyman sat down near the table.

Dr. Hérode now embarked on a speech. He had heard that a great misfortune had occurred. The Durande had been wrecked. He had therefore come, as pastor, to offer consolation and counsel. This shipwreck was unfortunate, but was also beneficial. Let us look in our hearts: were we not puffed up with prosperity? The waters of felicity are dangerous. Misfortunes must be taken in good part. The ways of the Lord are mysterious. Mess Lethierry was ruined, no doubt; but to be rich is to be in danger. You have false friends; they leave you when you fall into poverty, and you remain alone. Solus eris.[152] The Durande was said to have brought in a thousand pounds sterling a year. That is too much for a wise man. Let us flee temptation and disdain mere gold. Let us accept with gratitude ruin and abandonment. Isolation brings much of good; it wins us the favor of the Lord. It was in solitude that Ajah found the hot waters while leading the asses of his father Zibeon.[153] Let us not rebel against the impenetrable decrees of Providence. The holy man Job had increased in wealth after his misfortunes. Who knows but that the loss of the Durande might have compensations, even temporal compensations? For example he, Dr. Jaquemin Hérode, had invested some money in a very promising affair that was under way in Sheffield, and if Mess Lethierry were to join in the enterprise with what money remained to him he would recover his fortune: it was a large order for the supply of arms to the Tsar, who was then engaged in the repression of the revolutionary movement in Poland. There would be a profit of 300 percent.

The mention of the Tsar seemed to rouse Lethierry from his abstraction. He interrupted Dr. Hérode:

“I want nothing to do with the Tsar.”

The clergyman replied:

“Mess Lethierry, princes are part of God’s plan. It is written: Render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar’s. The Tsar is Caesar.”

Lethierry, falling back into his reverie, muttered:

"Caesar? Who is Caesar? I know nothing about him."

The Reverend Dr. Hérode resumed his exhortation. He did not pursue the Sheffield plan. A man who would have nothing to do with the Tsar must be a republican, and he realized that some people might be republicans. In that case Mess Lethierry should think of going to live in a republic. He would be able to restore his fortunes in the United States even more easily than in England. To multiply his remaining money tenfold he need only take shares in the great company that was developing plantations in Texas, employing more than twenty thousand slaves.

"I want nothing to do with slavery," said Lethierry.

"Slavery," replied Dr. Hérode, "was instituted by divine authority. It is written: If a master smites his slave he shall not be punished, for it is his money."

Grace and Douce, standing at the door, were drinking in the reverend doctor's words in a kind of ecstasy.

Dr. Hérode continued with his discourse. As we have said, he was, all in all, a good man, and in spite of all social and personal differences between him and Mess Lethierry, he had come with the sincere desire to offer him all the spiritual, and indeed also temporal, aid within his power.

If Mess Lethierry was so completely ruined that he was unable to contemplate any financial speculation, whether Russian or American, why should he not take up salaried employment under government? There were some good places to be had, and the reverend doctor was ready to put forward Mess Lethierry's name for one of them. As it happened, there was a vacancy in the office of deputy viscount[154] on Jersey. Mess Lethierry was popular and respected, and the Reverend Dr. Hérode, dean of Guernsey and suffragan of the bishop, was sure that he could secure this post for him. The deputy viscount was an officer of considerable standing; he was present, as the representative of His Majesty, at meetings of the Court of Chief Pleas, at the deliberations of the Cohue, and at executions.

Lethierry looked Dr. Hérode in the eye. "I am against hanging," he said.

The reverend doctor had hitherto spoken in the same level tone, but now his voice took on a new and sharper intonation:

"Mess Lethierry, the death penalty has been divinely ordained. God has given man the sword. It is written: An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth."

The Reverend Ebenezer drew his chair imperceptibly closer to the Reverend Jaquemin's chair and said, in a whisper that could be heard by no one else:

"What this man says is put in his mouth."

"By whom? By what?" asked the Reverend Jaquemin in the same tone.

"By his conscience," whispered the Reverend Ebenezer.

Dr. Hérode felt in his pocket, brought out a small, thick volume closed with clasps, laid it on the table, and said:

"*There* is your conscience."

The book was the Bible.

The reverend doctor's voice now took on a gentler tone. His wish, he said, was to help Mess Lethierry, for whom he had a great respect. As a pastor, he had the right and the duty to give counsel; but Mess Lethierry was free to decide for himself.

Mess Lethierry, who had sunk back into his absorption and depression, was not listening. Déruchette, who was sitting near him and was also deep in thought, did not raise her eyes, bringing to this conversation, not very lively in itself, the additional embarrassment of her silent presence. A witness who does not speak is a burden on any encounter. The reverend doctor, however, did not appear to notice it.

When Lethierry did not reply, Dr. Hérode continued with his exhortations. Counsel comes from man, he said, but inspiration comes from God. In the counsel given by a priest there is an element of inspiration. It is wise to accept counsel and dangerous to reject it. Sochoth was seized by eleven devils for scorning the exhortations of Nathaniel. Tiburianus was stricken by leprosy for driving the apostle Andrew from his house. Barjesus, magician though he was, was struck blind for laughing at Saint Paul's words. Elkesai and his sisters Martha and Marthena are in Hell for rejecting the admonitions of Valentianus, who proved, as clear as daylight, that their thirty-eight-league-high Jesus Christ was a demon. Aholibamah, who is also called Judith, obeyed the counsel given her. Reuben and Peniel listened to advice from on high, as their names indicate: Reuben means "son of the vision," Peniel "face of God."[155]

Mess Lethierry struck the table with his fist.

"Of course!" he cried: "it was my fault!"

"What do you mean?" asked Dr. Jaquemin Hérode.

"I mean that it was my fault."

"Why was it your fault?"

"Because I let Durande return on a Friday."

Dr. Hérode whispered in Ebenezer Coudray's ear: "The man is superstitious."

Then, raising his voice, he continued, in a didactic tone:

"Mess Lethierry, it is childish to believe that Friday is unlucky. You ought not to credit such fables. Friday is a day like any other. It is often a lucky day. Meléndez founded the town of San Agustín on a Friday; Henry VII gave John Cabot his commission on a Friday; the pilgrim fathers on the *Mayflower* landed at Provincetown on a Friday; Washington was born on Friday, the twenty-second of February, 1722; Columbus discovered America on Friday, the twelfth of October, 1492."

He stood up, and Ebenezer, whom he had brought with him, also rose.

Grace and Douce, seeing that the reverend gentlemen were about to take their leave, opened the double doors.

Mess Lethierry saw nothing and heard nothing of all this.

Dr. Hérode said, aside, to Ebenezer Caudray:

“He does not even acknowledge our presence. This is not just his distress: it is sheer mindlessness. He must be mad.”

He took his pocket Bible from the table and held it clasped between his two hands, as one holds a bird to prevent it from flying away. His attitude created a feeling of expectancy among those present. Grace and Douce craned forward.

His voice took on all the solemnity he could muster:

“Mess Lethierry, let us not part without reading a page from the Holy Book. We can obtain enlightenment on the various situations in life from books. For the profane there are the *sortes vergilianae;* believers take their instruction from the Bible. The first book that comes to hand, opened at random, may give us counsel; but the Bible, opened at random, offers us a revelation. It affords benefit particularly to those in affliction. Unfailingly the holy scriptures will offer balm for their troubles. In presence of the afflicted we should consult the sacred book, not selecting any particular passage but reading with an open heart whatever page it opens at. What man does not choose, God chooses. God knows what we need. His invisible finger is on the passage that we find by chance. Whatever the page, it will unfailingly bring us enlightenment. Let us not seek any other light, but hold fast to Him. It is a message received from on high. Our destiny is mysteriously revealed to us in the text thus sought for with confidence and respect. Let us listen and obey. Mess Lethierry, you are in sorrow, and this is the book of consolation; you are sick, and this is the book of health.”

Dr. Hérode undid the clasp of his Bible, slipped a finger at random between two pages, laid his hand for a moment on the open book, paused as if in prayer, and then, lowering his eyes, began to read with an air of authority.

This was the passage he had chanced on:

“And Isaac came from the way of the well Lahairoi; for he dwelt in the south country.

“And Isaac went out to meditate in the field at the eventide; and he lifted up his eyes and saw, and, behold, the camels were coming.

“And Rebekah lifted up her eyes, and when she saw Isaac she lighted off the camel.

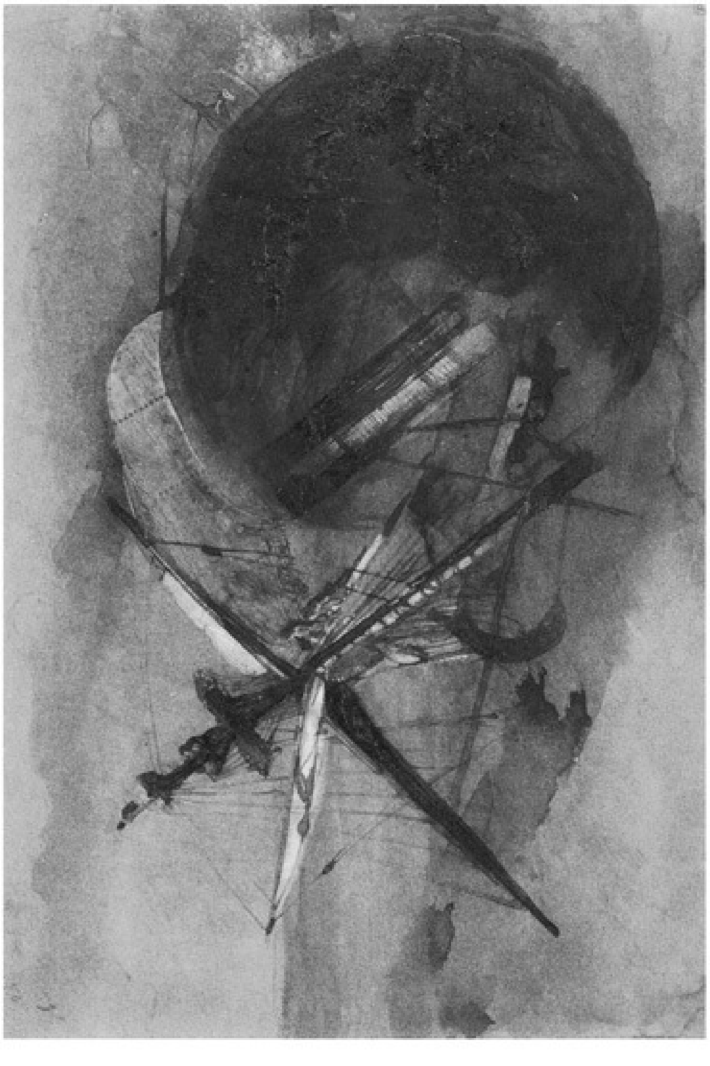
“For she had said unto the servant, What is this man that walketh in the field to meet us? . . .

“And Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah’s tent, and she became his wife; and he loved her.”[156]

Ebenezer and Déruchette looked at each other.

PART II

GILLIATT THE CUNNING



The Squall (1865).

PART III

DÉRUCHETTE

BOOK III

THE SAILING OF THE *CASHMERE*

I

THE CHURCH NEAR HAVELET BAY

When there is a crowd in St. Sampson, St. Peter Port is sure to be deserted. Any event of interest in one place acts as a pump, sucking people in from elsewhere. News travels fast in small places, and since the first light of dawn the great concern of the people of Guernsey had been going to see the Durande's funnel under Mess Lethierry's windows. Any other event paled into insignificance compared with that. The death of the dean of St. Asaph's had been quite forgotten; there was no further talk about the Reverend Ebenezer Caudray, nor his sudden wealth, nor his departure on the *Cashmere*. The recovery of the Durande's engines from the Douvres was the great subject of the day. People did not believe it. The wreck of the ship had seemed extraordinary enough, but its salvage seemed impossible. Everyone was anxious to confirm with their own eyes that the story was true. All other preoccupations were suspended. Streams of townsfolk with their families, from the rank of "Neighbor" to that of "Mess"—men, women, gentlemen, mothers with their children, and children with their dolls—were coming by every road and track to see the great attraction of the day at Les Bravées and were turning their backs on St. Peter Port. Many shops in St. Peter Port were closed. In the Commercial Arcade all business was at a standstill, and attention was centered on the Durande. Not a single shopkeeper had sold anything except a jeweler who, to his great surprise, had sold a gold wedding ring to "a man who had seemed to be in a great hurry and had asked where the dean's house was." Any shops that had remained open were centers of gossip where there were lively discussions of the miraculous rescue. Not a passerby was to be seen on L'Hyvreuse, nowadays known for some reason as Cambridge Park; there was no one on High Street, then called the Grand-Rue, nor on Smith Street, then called the Rue des Forges; no one in Hauteville; and the Esplanade itself was deserted. It was like a Sunday. A visiting royal highness reviewing the militia at L'Ancresse would not have emptied the town more effectively. All this fuss about a nobody like Gilliatt caused much shrugging of the shoulders among sober citizens and persons of propriety.

The church of St. Peter Port, with its three gable-ends, its transept, and its spire, stands at the water's edge on the inner side of the harbor, almost on the landing stage, offering a welcome to those arriving and a farewell to those departing. It is the capital letter of the long line formed by the town's front on the ocean. It is both the parish church of St. Peter Port and the church of the dean of Guernsey. Its officiating priest is the suffragan dean, a clergyman in full orders. St. Peter Port's harbor, now a large and handsome port, was in those days, and as recently as ten years ago, smaller than the harbor of St. Sampson. It was formed by two great curved cyclopean walls reaching out from the shoreline to starboard and port and coming together almost at their ends, where there was a small white lighthouse. Below the lighthouse was the narrow entrance, still preserving two links of the chain that had closed the harbor in medieval times. Imagine a lobster's pincer, slightly open, and you have the harbor of St. Peter Port. This outstretched claw took from the abyss a portion of sea that it compelled to remain calm. But when an east wind was blowing there was a considerable swell at the mouth of the harbor, the water inside it was disturbed, and it was wiser not to enter. On this particular day the *Cashmere* had decided not to attempt an entry and had anchored in the roads.

This was the course followed by most ships when there was an east wind, and it had the additional advantage of saving them harbor dues. On these occasions boatmen licensed by the town—a fine breed of seamen whom the new harbor has deprived of their livelihood— picked up passengers at the landing stage or at other points on the coast and conveyed them and their luggage, often through heavy seas and always without mishap, to the vessels about to sail. The east wind is an offshore wind that is good for the passage to England; vessels roll but they do not pitch.

When a vessel about to depart was moored in the harbor, passengers embarked there. When it was anchored in the roads they had the choice of leaving from any point on the coast conveniently near the place of anchorage. In all the creeks around the coast there were boatmen ready to offer their services.

Havelet Bay was one of these creeks. This little haven (*havelet*) was quite close to the town but so isolated that it seemed a long way away. Its isolation was the result of its situation at an opening in the tall cliffs of Fort George, which loom over this discreet little inlet. There were several paths leading to Havelet Bay. The most direct ran along the water's edge; it had the advantage of leading to the town and the church in five minutes, and the disadvantage of being under water twice a day. Other paths, in varying degrees of steepness, led down to the bay through gaps and irregularities in the cliffs. Havelet Bay lay in shadow even in broad daylight. Overhanging cliffs on all sides and a dense growth of bushes and brambles cast a kind of gentle twilight on the confusion of rocks and waves below. Nothing could be more peaceful than this spot in calm weather, nothing more tumultuous in heavy seas. The tips of branches were perpetually bathed in foam. In spring the bay was alive with flowers, nests, fragrances, birds, butterflies, and bees. As a result of recent improvements this wild nook no longer exists, replaced by fine straight lines. There are now stone walls, quays, and gardens; there has been much earth-moving, and modern taste has got rid of the eccentricities of the cliffs and the irregularities of the rocks.

II

DESPAIR CONFRONTING DESPAIR

It was just short of ten o'clock in the morning—a quarter to, as they say on Guernsey. The crowds in St. Sampson, to all appearance, were still increasing. The mass of the population, consumed with curiosity, had flocked to the north of the island, and Havelet Bay, lying to the south, was even more deserted than usual.

But there was one boat in the bay, and one boatman. In the boat was a traveling bag. The boatman seemed to be waiting for someone.

The *Cashmere* could be seen at anchor in the roads. Since it was not due to sail until noon, it was making no preparations for departure.

Anyone passing by on one of the stepped footpaths in the cliffs would have heard the murmur of voices, and if he had looked down over the overhanging cliffs he would have seen, at some distance from the boat, in a nook amid the rocks and branches, out of the boatman's sight, two people: a man and a woman. It was Ebenezer Caudray and Déruchette.

These quiet little corners on the coast, which tempt women bathers, are not always as lonely as they seem. Anyone frequenting them can sometimes be observed and overheard. Thanks to the multiplicity and complication of the cliff paths, those who seek refuge and shelter there can easily be followed. The granite and the trees that conceal a private encounter may also conceal a witness.

Déruchette and Ebenezer were standing face-to-face, looking into each other's eyes, and holding each other by the hand. Déruchette was speaking. Ebenezer was silent. A tear that had gathered on his lashes hung there but did not fall.

The priest's forehead bore the imprint of grief and passion. There, too, was a poignant air of resignation—hostile to faith, though springing from it. On his face, until then of an angelic purity, were the beginnings of an expression of submission to fate. A man who had hitherto meditated only on dogma was now having to meditate on fate: an unhealthy meditation for a priest. Faith breaks down in such meditations. Nothing is more disturbing than surrendering to the unknown. Man is at the mercy of events. Life is a perpetual succession of events, and we must submit to it. We never know from what quarter the sudden blow of chance will come. Catastrophe and good fortune come upon us and then depart, like unexpected visitors. They have their own laws, their own orbits, their own gravitational force, all independent of man. Virtue does not bring happiness, crime does not bring unhappiness; our consciousness has one logic, fate another, and the two never coincide. Nothing can be foreseen. We live in uncertainty and from moment to moment. Consciousness is a straight line, but life is a whirlwind, which casts down on man's head, unpredictably, black chaos or blue skies. Fate is not skilled at transitions. Sometimes the wheel turns so rapidly that man can barely distinguish the interval between one event and another or the link between yesterday and today. Ebenezer Caudray was a believer with an admixture of reasoning and a priest whose life had been complicated by passion. Religions that impose celibacy know what they are about. Nothing so unmans a priest as loving a woman. Ebenezer's mind was darkened by all sorts of clouds.

He was looking at Déruchette—looking too long. These two beings worshiped each other. In Ebenezer's eye there was the mute adoration of despair.

Déruchette was saying:

“You mustn’t go. I can’t bear it. I thought I would be able to say good-bye to you, but I just can’t. It’s too much to ask. Why did you come yesterday? You shouldn’t have come if you wanted to go away. I had never spoken to you. I loved you, but I didn’t know I did. Only, that first day when Mr. Hérode read the story of Rebecca and your eyes met mine I felt my cheeks on fire and I thought, ‘Oh! how Rebecca must have turned red!’ But even so, the day before yesterday, if anyone had said to me, ‘You are in love with the rector,’ I would have laughed. That is the terrible thing about love: it comes on you unawares. I paid no heed. I went to church, I saw you there, and I thought that everyone was like me. I don’t blame you: you did nothing to make me love you; you didn’t do anything but look at me; it’s not your fault if you look at people; but you did look at me, and so I fell in love with you. I didn’t know I had. When you took up the book it was a flood of light; when others did it was just a book. You sometimes raised your eyes to look at me. You spoke of archangels; but you were my archangel. Whatever you said I believed in at once. Before I saw you I didn’t know whether I believed in God or not. Since I have known you I have learned to pray. I used to say to Douce: ‘Dress me quickly so that I shan’t be late for the service.’ And I hurried to the church. So that is what being in love with a man means. I did not realize it. I used to think, How devout I am becoming! It was you who taught me that I wasn’t going to church to worship God: I was going for you, I know. You are handsome, you speak well; and when you raised your arms to heaven I felt that you were holding my heart in your two white hands. I was foolish; I didn’t know it. You were wrong to come into the garden yesterday and speak to me. If you had said nothing I should have known nothing. You might have gone away, and I might have been sad; but now if you go I shall die. Now that I know I love you, you can’t possibly go away. What are you thinking of? I don’t believe you are listening to me!”

Ebenezer answered:

“You heard what was said yesterday.”

“Alas!”

“How can I help it?!”

They were silent for a moment. Then Ebenezer went on:

“There is only one thing for me to do. I must leave.”

“And for me there is nothing left but to die. Oh, how I wish that there was no sea—that there was nothing but the sky! That would make everything right, and we should both leave at the same time. You shouldn’t have spoken to me. Why did you speak to me? Well, then, since you did you mustn’t go away. What will become of me? I tell you, I shall die. What will you feel like when I’m in my grave? Oh, my heart is broken! I am so wretched! Yet my uncle isn’t unkind.”

It was the first time that Déruchette had spoken of Mess Lethierry as her uncle. Hitherto she had always said “my father.”

Ebenezer stepped back and made a sign to the boatman. There was the sound of the boat hook on the shingle and the man’s footstep on the gunwale of his boat.

“No, no!” cried Déruchette.

Ebenezer drew closer to her.

“I must go, Déruchette.”

“No, never! Because of a bit of machinery! How can it be? Did you see that horrible man yesterday? You cannot abandon me. You are clever, you will find some way. You cannot have asked me to meet you this morning with the idea of leaving me. I have done nothing to deserve this. You cannot complain about me. You want to leave on that ship? I don’t want you to go. You mustn’t leave me. You cannot open up heaven and then close it so soon. I tell you, you must stay. Anyway it’s not time to go yet. Oh! I love you!”

And, pressing against him, she clasped her hands together around his neck, as if to hold on to him with her arms and to join her hands in a prayer to God. He freed himself from this gentle embrace, which resisted as strongly as it could. Déruchette sank down on an ivy-clad projection of the rock, mechanically pulling up the sleeve of her dress to the elbow to show her charming bare arm, with a pale diffused light in her fixed eyes. The boat was drawing near.

Ebenezer took her head in his two hands; this virgin had the air of a widow, this young man the air of a grandfather. He touched her hair with a kind of religious caution, looked fixedly at her for some moments, and planted on her forehead one of those kisses that it seems would cause a star to shine forth and, in a voice trembling with supreme anguish that reflected the devastation of his soul, said the word that is instinct with the deepest emotion: “Good-bye!”

Déruchette burst into sobs.

At this moment they heard a slow, grave voice saying:

“Why don’t you get married?”

Ebenezer turned his head. Déruchette raised her eyes. It was Gilliatt, who had approached on a path from the side.

Gilliatt was no longer the same man as on the previous night. He had combed his hair and shaved, and was wearing a white sailor’s shirt with a turned-down collar and his newest seaman’s clothes. On his little finger was a gold ring. He seemed profoundly calm. His sunburned face was pale, with the hue of sickly bronze.

They looked at him, bewildered. Although he was almost unrecognizable, Déruchette recognized him. But the words he had just spoken were so remote from what was passing in their minds that they had left no impression.

Gilliatt went on:

“Why do you need to say good-bye? Get married, and you can leave together.”

Déruchette trembled from head to foot.

Gilliatt continued:

“Miss Déruchette is twenty-one. She is her own mistress. Her uncle is only her uncle. You love each other—”

Déruchette interrupted in a gentle voice:

“How did you come here?”

“Get married,” repeated Gilliatt.

Déruchette was beginning to realize what this man was saying to her. She stammered out:

“My poor uncle—”

“He would object if you went to him and said you wanted to get married,” said Gilliatt, “but if you were actually married he would give his consent. Besides, you are going away: when you come back he will forgive you.”

He added, with a touch of bitterness: “Anyway, now he’s thinking only of rebuilding his boat. That will occupy him while you are away. He has the Durande to console him.”

“I don’t want to leave unhappiness behind me,” murmured Déruchette, still in a state of stupor but with a gleam of joy.

“It won’t last long,” said Gilliatt.

Ebenezer and Déruchette had been bewildered, but were now recovering. As their agitation diminished they began to grasp the meaning of Gilliatt’s words. There was still something of a cloud hanging over them, but it was not for them to resist. We yield easily to those who offer to save us. Objections to a return to Eden are not strongly pressed. There was something in the attitude of Déruchette, as she leaned imperceptibly on Ebenezer, that made common cause with what Gilliatt was saying. As for the enigma of this man’s presence and his words, which in Déruchette’s mind in particular gave rise to various kinds of astonishment, these were secondary questions. He was telling them to get married: that at least was clear. He was taking all responsibility. Déruchette had a confused feeling that, for various reasons, he had the right to do so. What he said about Mess Lethierry was true.

Ebenezer, plunged in thought, murmured: “An uncle is not a father.” He was suffering the corruption of an unexpected stroke of good fortune. The scruples that a priest might be expected to feel were melting and dissolving in this poor love-struck heart.

Gilliatt’s voice became short and hard, with something like the throbbing of a fever:

“You must be quick. The *Cashmere* sails in two hours. You still have time, but only just. Come with me.”

Ebenezer, who had been observing him attentively, suddenly exclaimed:

“I know who you are. It was you who saved my life.”

Gilliatt replied:

“I don’t think so.”

“Over there, at the tip of the Banks.”

“I don’t know that place.”

“It was on the day I arrived here.”

“We have no time to lose,” said Gilliatt.

“And I’m sure you were the man we saw last night.”

“That’s as may be.”

“What’s your name?”

Gilliatt raised his voice:

“Boatman, wait for us here. We shall come back. Miss Déruchette, you asked me how I came here. The answer is very simple: I was walking behind you. You are twenty-one. In this country, when people are of age and dependent only on themselves, they can get married in a quarter of an hour. Let us take the path along the shore. It is quite safe: the sea will not cover it until midday. We must go at once. Follow me!”

Déruchette and Ebenezer were exchanging glances as if in consultation. They were standing close together, motionless; it was as if they were drunk. There are strange hesitations on the edge of that abyss that is happiness. They understood without understanding.

“His name is Gilliatt,” Déruchette whispered to Ebenezer.

Gilliatt spoke with a kind of authority:

“What are you waiting for? You must follow me.”

“Where to?” asked Ebenezer.

“There.” And Gilliatt pointed to the spire of the church.

They followed him. Gilliatt went in front, walking with a firm step. The others were unsteady on their feet.

As they drew nearer the church spire an expression dawned on these two pure and beautiful faces that would shortly turn into a smile. As they approached the church their faces lit up. In Gilliatt’s hollow eyes was the darkness of night. It was like a specter leading two souls to paradise.

Ebenezer and Déruchette were barely conscious of what was happening. This man’s intervention was the straw at which a drowning man clutches. They followed Gilliatt with the docility of despair, as they would have followed anyone. A man who feels himself dying is ready to accept whatever may befall him. Déruchette, more ignorant of life, was more confident. Ebenezer was thoughtful. Déruchette was of age. The formalities of marriage in England are very simple, particularly in self-governing areas where the rector of a parish has an almost discretionary power; but still, would the dean agree to celebrate the marriage without even enquiring whether her uncle agreed? They could not be sure. But at any rate they could try. They would have to wait and see.

But who was this man? If he was the man whom Mess Lethierry had declared last night to be his son-in-law, how was his present behavior to be explained? He who had seemed to be an obstacle was turning into a providence. Ebenezer was prepared to accept his help, but it was the hasty and unspoken acceptance of a man who feels that he has been rescued.

The path was uneven, and sometimes wet and difficult. Ebenezer, absorbed in his thoughts, was not watching for the pools of water and the rocks on the path. From time to time Gilliatt looked around to him, saying: “Look out for the stones. Give her your hand.”

III

THE FORETHOUGHT OF ABNEGATION

The clock was striking half-past ten as they entered St. Sampson’s church. Because of the time, and also because of the abandonment of the town by its inhabitants on this particular day, the church was empty.

At the far end, however, near the table which in Protestant churches replaces the altar, were three people—the dean, his curate, and the registrar. The dean, the Reverend Jaquemin Hérode, was seated; the curate and the registrar stood beside him.

A Bible lay open on the table. On a side table was another book, the parish register, which was also open; an observant eye might have noticed that one page was freshly written, the ink not yet dry. A pen and a writing case lay beside the register.

Seeing the Reverend Ebenezer Caudray entering the church, the Reverend Jaquemin Hérode rose.

“I have been expecting you,” he said. “Everything is ready.” He was already wearing his vestments.

Ebenezer looked at Gilliatt.

The dean said, “I am at your service, sir.” He bowed. His bow strayed neither to right nor to left. It was evident from the direction of his eyes that for him Ebenezer alone existed. Ebenezer was a clergyman and a gentleman. The dean did not include in his bow either Déruchette, who was standing on one side, or Gilliatt, who stood behind. In his glance there was a parenthesis that included only Ebenezer. The maintenance of such distinctions is an essential part of good order in human relations, and it consolidates a society.

The dean went on, gracefully and with dignity:

“I have to congratulate you on two things, sir. Your uncle has died and you are taking a wife; you are blessed with wealth on the one hand and happiness on the other. Moreover, thanks to this steamship that is to be rebuilt, Miss Lethierry is also rich, which is as it should be. Miss Lethierry was born in this parish, and I have checked her date of birth from the register. She is of age and her own mistress. In any case her uncle, who is the only family she has, has given his consent. You want to get married at once because of your departure. I understand this, though since this is the marriage of the rector of a parish I should have liked a little ceremony. I will not detain you any longer than necessary. The essentials are soon complied with. The form of marriage has already been drawn up in the register, and only the names remain to be filled in. In terms of law and custom the marriage may be celebrated immediately after it has been entered in the register. The necessary declaration for a license has been made in due form. I take upon myself a slight irregularity, for the application for a license should have been registered seven days in advance; but I yield to necessity and the urgency of your departure. Be it so, then: I shall now proceed with the ceremony. My curate will be witness for the bridegroom; as for the bride’s witness—” He turned to Gilliatt.

Gilliatt nodded.

“Good,” said the dean.

Ebenezer still stood motionless. Déruchette was petrified in ecstasy.

The dean continued:

“There is still, however, an obstacle.”

Déruchette started.

He went on:

“Mess Lethierry’s representative, here present, who asked for the license and signed the declaration in the register”—he indicated Gilliatt with the thumb of his left hand, thus avoiding the necessity of mentioning his outlandish name—“told me this morning that Mess Lethierry, being too busy to come in person, desired that the marriage should be performed at once. But a mere verbal expression of this desire is not sufficient. In consequence of the dispensations required and the irregularity I am taking on myself I cannot overlook this difficulty without asking Mess Lethierry himself, or at least having his signature. However accommodating I am prepared to be, I cannot be content with a statement at second hand. I must have something in writing.”

“There is no difficulty about that,” said Gilliatt, handing the dean a sheet of paper.

The dean took the paper, glanced quickly through it, appeared to pass over the first few lines, which seemed to be of less consequence, and then read aloud:

“You must go to see the dean about a license. I want the marriage to take place as soon as possible: immediately would be best.”

He put the paper down on the table, and went on:

“Signed Lethierry. It would have been more respectful to address the letter to me; but since it is the marriage of a colleague I am satisfied with this.”

Ebenezer looked at Gilliatt again. There are moments of understanding between two souls. Ebenezer sensed that there was some deceit; but he had not the strength, and perhaps not the desire, to expose it. Perhaps from respect for a latent heroism of which he had gained some inkling or because his conscience was deadened by the lightning stroke of happiness, he said nothing.

The dean took up the pen and, with the help of the registrar, filled in the blanks on the page written in the register. Then he stood up and, with a gesture of his hand, invited Ebenezer and Déruchette to come up to the table.

The ceremony began.

It was a strange moment. Ebenezer and Déruchette were standing side by side in front of the minister. Anyone who has had a dream of being married will have experienced what they were experiencing.

Gilliatt was standing back in the obscurity of the pillars.

On rising that morning Déruchette, in despair, with her mind on graves and grave clothes, had dressed in white. White, the color of mourning, was also right for a marriage. A white dress at once turns a girl into a bride. The grave is also a betrothal.

Déruchette emitted a kind of radiance. She had never before been as she was at this moment. Her fault was perhaps to be too pretty and not sufficiently beautiful. The defect of her beauty, if it is a defect, was an excess of grace. In a state of repose—that is, disturbed neither by passion nor by grief—her charm lay mainly in her sweetness. A charming girl, transfigured, becomes the ideal virgin. Déruchette, matured by love and suffering, had—if the phrase be permitted—undergone this promotion. She still had the same candor, with more dignity, and the same freshness, with more fragrance. It was like a daisy turning into a lily.

The moisture of the tears that were no longer flowing had dried on her cheeks, though there was perhaps still a tear in the corner of her smile. Dried tears, barely visible, are a sweet, somber adornment of happiness.

The dean, standing by the table, laid a finger on the open Bible and asked in a loud voice:

“Does any man know of any impediment to this marriage?”

There was no reply.

“Amen,” said the dean.

Ebenezer and Déruchette advanced toward the table.

The dean said:

“Joseph Ebenezer Caudray, wilt thou have this woman to thy wedded wife?”

Ebenezer responded:

“I will.”

The dean continued:

“Durande Déruchette Lethierry, wilt thou have this man to thy wedded husband?”

Déruchette, in the agony of her soul from excess of joy, like a lamp with too much oil in it, murmured rather than spoke:

“I will.”

Then, following the beautiful Anglican marriage service, the dean looked around him and asked solemnly, in the darkness of the church:

“Who giveth this woman to be married unto this man?”

“I do,” said Gilliatt.

There was a silence. Ebenezer, in the midst of their delight, felt a vague sense of oppression.

The dean put Déruchette’s right hand in Ebenezer’s right hand, and Ebenezer said to Déruchette:

“I take thee, Déruchette, to my wedded wife, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish until death us do part, and thereto I plight thee my troth.”

The dean put Ebenezer’s right hand in Déruchette’s right hand, and Déruchette said to Ebenezer:

“I take thee, Ebenezer, to my wedded husband, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to obey until death us do part, and thereto I plight thee my troth.”

The dean asked:

“Where is the ring?”

This was a request they had not been prepared for. Ebenezer had no ring.

Gilliatt took off the gold ring that he had on his little finger and presented it to the dean.

It was probably the wedding ring that had been bought that morning from the jeweler in the Commercial Arcade.

The dean laid the ring on the Bible, and then handed it to Ebenezer.

Ebenezer took Déruchette’s little left hand, now trembling, and put the ring on her fourth finger, saying:

“With this ring I thee wed.”

“In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost,” said the dean.

“Amen,” said the curate.

The dean raised his voice:

“You are now man and wife.”

“Amen,” said the curate.

The dean said:

“Let us pray.”

Ebenezer and Déruchette turned toward the table and knelt.

Gilliatt remained standing, with bent head.

They were kneeling before God. He was bending under destiny.

IV

“FOR YOUR WIFE, WHEN YOU MARRY”

When they left the church they saw that the *Cashmere* was making preparations for departure.

“You are in time,” said Gilliatt.

They took the same path back to Havelet Bay. Ebenezer and Déruchette walked in front, with Gilliatt following behind. They were two sleepwalkers. It was as if they had moved from one daze to another. They did not know where they were or what they were doing; they hurried mechanically on their way, forgetting the existence of everything else, feeling only that they belonged to each other, and incapable of stringing two ideas together. One no more thinks when in ecstasy than one would try to swim in a torrent. From the midst of shadows they had suddenly fallen into a Niagara of joy. It could be said that they were in process of being emparadised. They did not speak to each other, having too much to communicate with their souls. Déruchette hung on Ebenezer’s arm.

Gilliatt’s footsteps behind them reminded them from time to time that he was there. They were deeply moved, but said no word to each other: an excess of emotion brings on a kind of stupor. Their stupor was delightful, but overwhelming. They were married: everything else could wait. They would see Gilliatt again; meanwhile all that he was doing was for the best. From the bottom of their hearts they thanked him, ardently but vaguely. Déruchette thought to herself that there was something that needed to be cleared up, later. In the meantime they accepted the situation. They felt themselves under the control of this man, so decisive and so sudden, who was conferring happiness on them with such an air of authority. To ask him questions, to talk to him, was impossible. Too many impressions were crowding in on their minds at the same time. Their absorption could be excused.

Facts are sometimes like a hailstorm. They bombard you; they deafen you. Events falling unexpectedly into existences that are normally calm soon make the events unintelligible to those who suffer by them or benefit from them. You cannot keep up with the adventure of your life. You are crushed without suspecting why; you are crowned without understanding why. In the last few hours Déruchette in particular had undergone every kind of shock: first delight, Ebenezer in the garden; then the nightmare, that monster declared her husband; then despair, the angel spreading his wings and preparing to depart; and now it was joy, a joy such as she had never known before, originating from something inexplicable; the monster giving her the angel; anguish giving place to marriage; this Gilliatt, yesterday a catastrophe, today her salvation. She could make nothing of all this. It was clear that since this morning Gilliatt had had no other concern than to see them married; he had done everything; he had answered for Mess Lethierry, seen the dean, applied for the license, signed the necessary declaration; and this was how the marriage had come about. But Déruchette did not understand it; and even if she had understood how it had happened she would not have understood why.

All that was left to her was to close her eyes, give thanks mentally, allow herself to be carried off to heaven by this good demon. An explanation would have taken too long; an expression of thanks was too little. She remained silent in a gentle daze of happiness.

What little power of thought the couple retained was sufficient only to carry them on their way. Under water there are parts of a sponge that remain white. They had just the degree of lucidity necessary to allow them to distinguish the sea from the land and the *Cashmere* from any other vessel.

In a short time they were in Havelet Bay.

Ebenezer got into the boat first. Then, just as Déruchette was following him, she felt a gentle pull on her sleeve. It was Gilliatt laying a finger on a fold in her dress.

“Madame,” he said, “you did not expect to be going away. I thought that you might perhaps need something to wear. On the *Cashmere* you will find a trunk containing some woman’s things. It came to me from my mother. It was meant for the woman I married. Will you accept it from me?”

Déruchette, half roused from her dream, turned toward him. In a low, barely audible voice, Gilliatt went on:

“I don’t want to hold you back, but I think I must explain something to you. On the day the misfortune happened you were sitting in the ground-floor room, and you said something. You don’t remember: it is easy to forget. You can’t be expected to remember every word you say. Mess Lethierry was in great distress. It was a fine boat, that’s certain, and one that had served him well. A catastrophe had occurred, and everyone was upset. These are things, of course, that are afterward forgotten. It wasn't the only vessel to be lost on the rocks. You cannot keep thinking about accidents that happen. Only I wanted to tell you that, when people were saying that no one would go there, I went. They said that it was impossible; but it wasn't. Thank you for listening to me for a moment. You must understand that in going there I had no idea of displeasing you. Besides, it was long ago. I know that you are in a hurry. If we had time, if we could talk about it, you might remember; but what's the use? The thing goes back to a time when there was snow on the ground. And one day when I passed you I thought that you smiled. That's how it all came about. As for last night, I hadn't had time to go home; I had come straight from my labors and was all torn and ragged; I frightened you, and you fainted. It was my fault: you shouldn't turn up like that in someone's house—please forgive me. That's about all I wanted to say. You are about to leave. You will have good weather: the wind is in the east. Good-bye! You don't mind my saying a few words to you, do you? This is the last moment."

"I am thinking about the trunk," said Déruchette. "Why don't you keep it for your wife when you get married?"

"I shall probably never marry," said Gilliatt.

"That would be a pity, for you are so good and kind. Thank you!"

Déruchette smiled. Gilliatt returned her smile, then helped her into the boat.

In less than a quarter of an hour the boat carrying Ebenezer and Déruchette was alongside the *Cashmere.*

V

THE GREAT TOMB

Gilliatt took the path along the shore, passed quickly through St. Peter Port and then turned toward St. Sampson along the coast, and, anxious to avoid meeting anyone, kept off the roads, which were crowded with people on his account.

He had long had his own way of moving about the countryside in all directions without being seen. He knew all the footpaths and had worked out solitary, winding routes for himself. He had the retiring habits of a man who felt himself to be unloved, and remained a being apart. While still a child, seeing few welcoming looks in people's faces, he had developed this habit of isolating himself that had now become instinctive.

He passed the Esplanade, and then the Salerie. From time to time he turned around and looked back to see the *Cashmere* in the roads, now beginning to set sail. There was very little wind, and Gilliatt made faster progress than the *Cashmere,* walking with bent head on the rocks at the water's edge. The tide was beginning to come in.

At one point he stopped and, turning his back on the sea, looked for some minutes at a clump of oak trees beyond some rocks that concealed the road to the Vale. These were the oaks at the Basses Maisons. There, under these trees, Déruchette had once written Gilliatt's name in the snow—snow that had long since melted.

He continued on his way.

It was a beautiful day—the finest that year so far. The morning had something of a nuptial air. It was one of those spring days when May pours forth all its profusion, when the creation seems to have no other thought than to rejoice and be happy. Under all the sounds of forest and village, of sea and air, could be heard a murmur like the cooing of doves. The first butterflies were settling on the first roses. Everything in nature was new—the grass, the moss, the leaves, the perfumes, the rays of light. The sun shone as if it had never shone before. The very pebbles were freshly washed. The deep song in the trees was sung by birds born only yesterday. Probably their shells, broken by their little beaks, were still lying in the nest. Amid the quivering of the branches was the fluttering of their newfound wings. They were singing their first songs and launching on their first flights. It was a sweet jargoning, all together, of hoopoes, tits, woodpeckers, goldfinches, bullfinches, sparrows, and thrushes. Lilacs, lily-of-the-valley, daphnes, and wisterias made a varied show of color in the thickets. A very pretty kind of duckweed that grows in Guernsey covered ponds and pools with emerald green. Wagtails and tree-creepers, which make such graceful little nests, came down to bathe in them. Through all the interstices in the vegetation could be seen the blue of the sky. A few wanton clouds pursued one another in the azure depths with the undulating movements of nymphs. There was a feeling of kisses from invisible mouths passing through the air. No old wall but had, like a bridegroom, its bouquet of wallflowers. The plum trees and the laburnums were in blossom, their white and yellow masses gleaming through the interlacing branches. Spring showered all its silver and gold into the immense openwork basket of the woods. The new shoots were green and fresh. Cries of welcome could be heard in the air. Summer was hospitably opening its doors to birds from afar. It was the swallows’ time of arrival. The banks edging sunk lanes were lined by the inflorescences of the furze, to be followed soon by those of the hawthorn. The beautiful and the merely pretty rubbed shoulders; grandeur and grace complemented each other; small things were not put out of countenance by large ones. Not a note in the great concert was lost; microscopic splendors had their place in the vast universal beauty; and everything could be clearly distinguished as in a pool of limpid water. Everywhere a divine fullness and a mysterious swelling betokened the panic[216] and sacred working of the sap. What shone, shone more brightly; who loved, loved more tenderly. There was something of the quality of a hymn in a flower, something of brilliance in a noise. The great diffuse harmony of nature was manifest everywhere. What was beginning to shoot provoked what was ready to burst forth. Hearts, vulnerable to the scattered subterranean influences of germinating seeds, were troubled by a vague feeling of unsettlement, coming from below but also from above. Flowers gave promise of the coming fruit; maidens dreamed; the reproduction of life, premeditated by the immense soul of the shadow world, was being accomplished in the irradiation of things. There were betrothals everywhere, marriages without end. Life, which is the female, was coupling with the infinite, which is the male. It was fine, it was bright, it was warm. In the fields, through the hedges, could be seen laughing children. Some of them were playing at hopscotch. The apple trees, peach trees, cherry trees, and pear trees were covering the orchards with their tufts of white and pink blossom. In the grass were primroses, periwinkles, yarrow, daisies, amaryllis, bluebells, violets, and speedwells. There was a profusion of blue borage, yellow irises, and the beautiful little pink stars that always flower in great masses and are accordingly known as companions. Little creatures, all golden, scurried between the stones. Thatched roofs were gay with flowering houseleeks. The women working with the hives were out and about, and the bees were foraging. Everywhere there was the murmur of the sea and the buzzing of flies. All nature, lying open to permeation by spring, was moist with desire.

When Gilliatt arrived at St. Sampson the incoming tide had not yet reached the far end of the harbor, and he was able to walk across it dryshod, unperceived behind the hulls of boats under repair. He was helped by a series of flat stones set at intervals across the harbor bottom.

He was unnoticed. The crowd was at the other end of the harbor, near the entrance, at Les Bravées. There his name was in every mouth. People were talking so much about him that they paid no attention to the man himself. Gilliatt passed on his way—hidden, as it were, by the excitement he was causing.

He caught a distant sight of the paunch, still at the place where he had moored it, the funnel still held by its chains, a group of carpenters at work, the outlines of people coming and going, and he heard the loud and joyous voice of Mess Lethierry, giving orders.

He turned into the lanes behind Les Bravées. There was no one on this side of the house, the general curiosity being concentrated on the front. He took the path running along the low wall of the garden. He stopped at the corner where the wild mallow grew; he saw the stone on which he had once sat; he saw the wooden bench on which Déruchette had been sitting. He looked at the earth of the path on which he had seen two shadows embracing—shadows that had then disappeared.

He continued on his way. He climbed the hill on which stands Vale Castle, went down the other side, and headed for the Bû de la Rue.

Houmet Paradis was in solitude.

His house was just as he had left it that morning after dressing to go to St. Peter Port. One window was open, and through it he could see his bagpipes hanging from a nail on the wall. On the table could be seen the small Bible given to him in token of gratitude by an unknown man who had turned out to be Ebenezer Caudray.

The key was in the door. He went up to it, double-locked the door, put the key in his pocket, and left.

This time he walked not in the direction of the town but toward the sea. He cut across the garden by the shortest route, with little regard for the plants, though he was careful not to trample on the sea kale that he had planted because Déruchette liked it. Then, stepping over the garden wall, he made his way down to the rocks along the shore. Keeping straight ahead, he followed the long, narrow line of reefs that linked the Bû de la Rue with the great granite obelisk, standing erect in the middle of the sea, known as the Beast's Horn. This was where the Seat of Gild-Holm-'Ur was. He leapt from one rock to another like a giant walking from peak to peak. Stepping from one to another of these jagged rocks was like walking along the ridge of a roof.

A woman fishing with a hand net who was paddling barefoot in the sea pools some distance away and returning toward the shore shouted to him: "Watch out! The tide is coming in."

He went on, paying no heed.

Reaching the great rock on the point, the Beast's Horn, which rose like a pinnacle above the sea, he paused. The land came to an end here. It was the tip of the little promontory.

He looked around him. Off shore a few boats lay at anchor, fishing. From time to time there was a glitter of silver as the boats hauled in their nets and rivulets of falling water shone in the sun. The *Cashmere* was not yet off St. Sampson; she had now set her main topsail. She was between Herm and Jethou.

Gilliatt turned around the rock and came under the Seat of Gild-Holm-'Ur, at the foot of the kind of steep staircase down which he had helped Ebenezer Caudray less than three months before. He now climbed up.

Most of the steps were already under water. Only two or three were still dry. He managed to scale them.

These steps led up to the Seat of Gild-Holm-'Ur. He reached the seat, looked at it for a moment, and passed his hand over his eyes, letting it slip slowly from one eyebrow to the other, in the gesture that seems intended to wipe out the past; then he sat down in the hollow on the rock, with the steep cliff face at his back and the ocean at his feet.

The *Cashmere* was now passing the large, half-submerged round tower, guarded by a sergeant and one cannon, which marks the halfway point in the roads between Herm and St. Peter Port.

Above Gilliatt's head, in crevices in the rock, a few rock plants quivered. The water was blue as far as the eye could reach. The wind being in the east, there was very little surf around Sark, only the west coast of which is visible from Guernsey. In the distance could be seen the coast of France, marked by a line of mist and the long yellow strip of sand around Carteret. Now and then a white butterfly fluttered past. Butterflies like flying over the sea.

There was a very light breeze. All the expanse of blue, both above and below, was motionless. Not a tremor disturbed those snakelike markings of a lighter or darker blue that reflect on the surface of the sea the latent torsions in the depths.

The *Cashmere,* receiving little impulsion from the wind, had set her studding sails to catch the breeze. All her canvas was now spread, but, with a contrary wind, the effect of the studding sails forced her to hug the coast of Guernsey. She had passed the St. Sampson beacon and was just coming to the hill on which Vale Castle stands. She would shortly be rounding the point at the Bû de la Rue.

Gilliatt watched her approach.

The wind and the waves seemed to have been lulled to sleep. The tide was coming in, not in breakers but in a gentle swell. The water level was rising, but without any palpitation. The muffled sound of the open sea was like a child's breath.

From the direction of St. Sampson harbor could be heard dull knocking sounds—the strokes of hammers. It was probably the carpenters erecting the tackle and gear for hoisting the Durande's engines out of the paunch. The sounds barely reached Gilliatt because of the mass of granite at his back.

The *Cashmere* was approaching with the slowness of a phantom.

Gilliatt waited.

Suddenly a plashing sound and a sensation of cold made him look down. The sea was touching his feet. He looked up again.

The *Cashmere* was quite close.

The rock face from which rain had carved the Seat of Gild-Holm‘Ur was so sheer and there was such a depth of water that in calm weather ships could safely pass within a few cable lengths.

The *Cashmere* now came abreast of the rock. She reared up; she seemed to grow in the water. It was like a shadow increasing in size. The rigging stood out in black against the sky in the magnificent swaying motion of the sea. The long sails, passing for a moment in front of the sun, seemed almost pink, with an ineffable transparency. There was an indistinct murmuring from the sea. Not a sound disturbed the majestic passage of this silhouette. The deck could be seen as clearly as if you were on it.

The *Cashmere* almost grazed the rock.

The helmsman was at the tiller, a boy was aloft on the shrouds, a few passengers were leaning on the bulwarks enjoying the fine weather, the captain was smoking. But Gilliatt saw none of all this.

There was one spot on the deck that was bathed in sunshine, and it was this he was looking at. In this patch of sunlight were Ebenezer and Déruchette. They were sitting side by side, nestling close together, like two birds warming themselves in the noonday sun, on one of those benches sheltered under a tarpaulin awning that well-equipped vessels provide for their passengers, labeled, in the case of an English vessel, FOR LADIES ONLY. Déruchette’s head was on Ebenezer’s shoulder and his arm was around her waist; they held each other’s hands, the fingers intertwined. The difference between one angel and the other was reflected in these two exquisite faces informed by innocence. One was more virginal, the other more astral. Their chaste embrace was expressive: it held all the closeness of marriage, and all its modesty. The bench they were sitting on was a private nook, almost a nest. It was, too, a glory: the gentle glory of love fleeing in a cloud.

The silence was celestial.

Ebenezer’s eye was giving thanks and contemplating, Déruchette’s lips were moving; and in this charming silence, since the wind was blowing onshore, Gilliatt heard, in the fleeting moment when the sloop was slipping past the Seat of Gild-Holm-‘Ur only a few fathoms away, Déruchette’s tender, delicate voice saying:

“Look: isn’t there a man on the rock?”

The apparition passed.

The *Cashmere* left the point at the Bû de la Rue behind her and plunged into the deep, rolling waves. In less than a quarter of an hour her masts and sails were no more than a kind of white obelisk on the sea, gradually diminishing on the horizon. The water was now up to Gilliatt’s knees.

He watched the sloop sailing into the distance.

Out at sea the wind freshened. He could see the *Cashmere* running out her lower studding sails and staysails to take advantage of the rising wind. The *Cashmere* was already out of Guernsey waters. Gilliatt kept his eyes fixed on her.

The sea was now up to his waist.

The tide was rising. Time was passing.

The seagulls and cormorants flew about him, anxious, as if warning him. Perhaps among all these birds there was one from the Douvres that recognized him.

An hour passed.

The wind from the sea was barely felt in the roads, but the *Cashmere* was now diminishing rapidly in size. To all appearance she was making good speed. She was now almost opposite the Casquets.

There was no foam around the Gild-Holm-‘Ur, no waves beating against the granite. The sea was swelling gently. It was now almost up to Gilliatt’s shoulders.

Another hour passed.

The *Cashmere* was now beyond the waters around Alderney. She was hidden for a moment by the Ortach rock. After passing behind it she reemerged, as if from eclipse. She was now making rapidly northward, and had reached the open sea. She was no more than a speck on the horizon, scintillating in the sun like a light.

The birds hovered around Gilliatt, uttering sharp cries.

Only his head was now visible.

The sea continued to rise with sinister gentleness.

Gilliatt, motionless, watched the *Cashmere* disappearing.

The tide was now almost at the full. Evening was coming on. Behind Gilliatt, in the roads, a few fishing boats were returning to harbor.

His eye was still fixed on the distant sloop. This fixed eye was like nothing to be seen on earth. In its calm and tragic depths there was something inexpressible. It contained such consolation as can be found for a dream not realized; it was the mournful acceptance of something that was now over. The passing of a shooting star must surely be followed by glances like this. From moment to moment the darkness of the skies was increasing in these eyes, still fixed on a point in space. At the same time as the infinite sea was rising around the Gild-Holm-‘Ur rock, the immense tranquillity of the land of shadows was mounting in the depths of Gilliatt’s eye.

The *Cashmere,* now imperceptible, was no more than a speck hidden in the mist, distinguishable only by an eye that knew where it was.

Gradually the speck, now no more than a vague shape, grew pale.

Then it diminished.

Then it disappeared.

At the same moment the head disappeared under the water. There was now nothing but the sea.

NOTES

1. ananke: Greek term for necessity.

2. *Cuges or Gémenos:* villages on the Mediterranean coast of France.

3. *overfall:* a turbulent stretch of open water caused by a strong current or tide over a submarine ridge or by a meeting of currents.

4. *Tewdrig:* king of Gwent in the sixth and seventh centuries. *Emyr Lhydau:* father of Umbrafel and Amon Dhû, who was the father of the sixth-century saint Sampson of Brittany.

5. *Ribeyrolles:* a journalist and politician who shared Hugo’s exile in the Channel Islands.

6. *Madame de Staël:* Germaine de Staël (1766–1817), French novelist and woman of letters. *Chateaubriand:* François-René de Chateaubriand (1768–1848), French writer of the Romantic period and later a leading politician.

7. *Ernani and Astigarraga:* in the Basque country of northeastern Spain.

8. *marabout:* a shrine marking the burial place of a Muslim hermit or holy man.

9. *hobgoblins and auxcriniers:* witches and warlocks. The name *auxcriniers* was invented by Hugo.

10. *prince:* Albert, Queen Victoria’s Prince Consort.

11. *Premières:* a village near Dijon. The director of the manufactory was Dr. Lavalle, not Lasalle.

12. *Chausée d’Antin . . . Faubourg Saint-Germain:* the Chaussée d’Antin was the fashionable district of Paris; the Faubourg Saint-Germain was its aristocratic quarter.

13. *Zaatcha:* in Algeria.

14. soudards: an old word for a rough or ruffianly soldier—perhaps recalling Wellington’s own comments on the quality of his troops.

15. *doubles:* A double was a small copper coin worth one-eighth of a penny or one-sixth of a sou.

16. *Pollet:* the fishermen’s quarter of Dieppe.

17. *tower:* the Victoria Tower, commemorating the queen’s visit in 1846.

18. *Chouan:* participant in a royalist uprising in western France during the French Revolution, the Chouannerie.

19. unda *and* unde . . . ou *and* où: Latin *unda* = “wave,” *unde* = “whence”; French *ou* = “or,” *où* = “where.”

20. *Rollo*: the Norse chieftain who became first duke of Normandy.

21. Haro: originally a call to a dog to attack someone or something; *crier haro*, to launch a hue and cry.

22. *Du Guesclin:* Bertrand du Guesclin, constable of France in the fourteenth century.

23. *Pantagruel:* a variant version of Rabelais's genealogy of Pantagruel.

24. *Puseyism:* the nineteenth-century Catholic revival in England known as the Oxford movement.

25. *Dr. Colenso's book:* John Colenso (1814–83), the liberal bishop of Natal whose book *The Pentateuch and Book of Joshua Critically Examined* led to a charge of heresy.

26. *Calas, Sirven . . . count for nothing:* Voltaire campaigned vigorously against the persecution of the Protestants Sirven and Calas. The dragonnades involved the quartering of dragoons in Protestant households.

27. *his speech:* evidently a reference to a speech by Hugo himself seeking support for Garibaldi.

28. *de Maistre:* Joseph de Maistre (1753–1821), theoretician of the Christian counterrevolution of the early nineteenth century. *d'Eckstein:* Ferdinand d'Eckstein (1790–1861), Catholic thinker and mystical writer.

29. *Moulin-Quignon:* near Abbeville in northern France.

30. *Furetière:* Antoine Furetière (1619–88), French satirist and lexicographer.

31. *Valognes:* a little town near Cherbourg.

32. eremos: Greek, "solitude, wilderness." An inventive but unlikely etymology by Hugo.

33. *double: See note 15.*

34. *Pasquier . . . Royer-Collard:* French politicians of the Restoration period.

35. *Bagpipe! . . . Guernsey remained calm:* The reference is to Gilliatt's bagpipes (p. 67).

36. *I am not entitled to be called Mess:* For the Guernsey social hierarchy, see p. 107.

37. *Ribeyrolles: See note 5.*

38. *chapters of this book:* "The Bû de la Rue," pp. 60–64.

39. *Tancred . . . Mazeppa:* Tancred features in Tasso's poem "Jerusalem Delivered." Mazeppa was a seventeenth-century Cossack chief who was the subject of poems by Byron and Hugo.

40. *Île Saint-Louis . . . Quai des Ormes:* an isle and embankment in central Paris.

41. *"unknown Normandy":* a reference to a book published by Hugo's son François-Victor.

42. *John Brown:* the militant American abolitionist whose raid on the federal arsenal at Harpers Ferry in 1859 made him a martyr to the antislavery cause.

43. *Vadius and Trissotin:* in Molière's *Femmes Savantes* the pedant and the poet.

44. "J'ai pien . . . *conjugal scenes here.")*: The joke turns on the Alsatian's Teutonic pronunciation, which confuses *patois* with *badois* (the language of Baden).

45. *Montmorency:* the Montmorencys were one of France's greatest noble families.

46. *Cahaigne:* a writer and politician who, like Hugo, was exiled to Jersey.

47. . . . *whom it immortalizes:* In fact, there was no mystery about it: it represented George II, but Hugo deliberately ignores this.

48. *Beccaria:* the great eighteenth-century economist and criminologist. *Monsieur Dupin:* a minor French politician of the early nineteenth century.

49. *Tapner:* Tapner was hanged in 1854; Hugo had made an appeal for his reprieve.

50. Jambage . . . poulage: compulsory deliveries of hams and poultry.

51. "Elle a-z-une . . .": The intrusive *z* is a mispronunciation.

52. *Frobisher:* Sir Martin Frobisher, the sixteenth-century English navigator and explorer of Canada's northeast coast.

53. *Du Cange:* a seventeenth-century scholar who published a glossary of medieval Latin. *Barleycourt's:* Barleycourt was the pseudonym of a certain Abbé Hugo whom Hugo liked to claim as an ancestor. *Teutatès:* the Celtic god of war.

54. centeniers, vingteniers, *and* douzeniers: local officials at different levels. vingtaine *and* cueillette: subdivisions of the parish.

55. *the viscount:* a judge; also called the sheriff.

56. *Bishop Colenso: See note 25. Elliott:* John Elliott was a seventeenth-century doctor who made the remark about the sun in a private letter but was in fact brought before the court for attempted murder.

57. *Chateaubriand: See note 6.*

58. reminiscitur Argos: "Remembers Argos" is a quotation from Virgil's *Aeneid*, referring to a Greek nostalgic for his homeland.

59. *the Edict of Nantes:* edict that granted religious freedom to Protestants, which was revoked by Louis XIV in 1695, leading to a large-scale exodus of Huguenots from France.

60. *duc de Berry . . . Louvel:* The duc de Berry, heir to the French throne, was assassinated by a fanatic named Louvel in 1820.

61. . . . *the country he had lost:* Hugo arrived in Guernsey in 1855; *Les Travailleurs de la Mer* was published in 1866.

62. La clef . . . amourettes!: "The key of the fields, the key of the woods, the key of love affairs!" *Prendre la clef des champs* (to take the key of the fields) means escape to the country, to freedom.

63. Homo Edax: "Man the devourer"; an adaptation by Hugo of a phrase in a poem by Ovid.

64. *Brèche de Roland:* a narrow gorge in the Pyrenees, said by legend to have been cut by Charlemagne's paladin Roland with his sword.

65. *Xerxes:* During his war against the Greeks, the Persian king Xerxes cut a channel across the isthmus on which Mount Athos stands.

66. *Trinacria:* the “three-cornered” island; the original name of Sicily.

67. *Robert Wace:* a twelfth-century Anglo-Norman poet, author of two verse chronicles, the *Roman de Brut* and the *Roman de Rou. Pierson:* Major Pierson was killed while fighting off a French attack on Jersey in 1781.

68. *dromond* . . . monstrum!: The dromond was a large boat used in medieval times for either war or commerce. *Homo homini monstrum* (Man is a monster to man): an adaptation by Hugo of a tag from Plautus, *Homo homini lupus* (Man is a wolf to man).

69. *Bû de la Rue:* The name (“Bout de la Rue,” “End of the Street”) is symbolic of the remoteness of the place. Beyond it there is nothing but the sea: cf. the last words of the novel.

70. *Houmet Paradis:* a small offshore island.

71. Amant alterna catenae: “Chains like changes”: an adaptation by Hugo of a phrase in Virgil’s *Bucolics.*

72. *rods: vergées.* There are two and a half *vergées* to the acre.

73. *dénerel:* a sixth of a bushel.

74. *Rosier’s* Dictionary . . . Advice to the People on Heath: The names of the books point to “left wing” interests that would shock the Reverend Jaquemin Hérode and the émigré noble.

75. sarregousets . . . sins: apparently some kind of hobgoblins; the term *sin* is not otherwise known.

76. *the Sommeilleuses:* cliffs on the south coast of Guernsey.

77. *Catioroc:* off the northeast coast of Guernsey.

78. one St. Michael and the other: St. Michael’s Mount in Cornwall and Mont Saint-Michel in Normandy.

79. douzaine: the bench of twelve magistrates (*douzeniers*) that was the local governmental authority in each parish.

80. vingtaine: a subdivision of a parish.

81. *Gilliatt the Cunning One:* Gilliatt le Malin. *Malin* is ambiguous: it means “cunning,” but “le Malin” is an old name for the Devil.

82. *Mess:* short for Messire; see the description of Guernsey’s social hierarchy on p. 107.

83. *Martin:* Thomas Martin, a plowman who became famous for his visions in the early nineteenth century.

84. *Busios:* the first month of the year in the calendar of Delphi.

85. *bisquine:* a three-masted fishing boat used in Normandy for catching oysters.

86. *Bailli de Suffern:* the celebrated eighteenth-century French admiral who fought against the British in America and India.

87. *Portbail:* a little port on the Cotentin peninsula, south of Cherbourg.

88. *Jean Bart:* the celebrated seventeenth-century French admiral who fought against the British in America and India.

89. *Admiral Tourville:* seventeenth-century French admiral who fought British and Dutch naval forces in European waters.

90. *Ango:* a leading sixteenth-century shipowner.

91. *duc de Vivonne:* seventeenth-century French marshal and naval commander.

92. *Duquesne:* seventeenth-century French naval officer. *Duguay-Trouin:* eighteenth-century French naval officer and privateer.

93. *Duperré:* the French admiral who took Algiers in 1830.

94. *La Bourdonnais:* eighteenth-century French sailor and government official.

95. *". . . with powder":* The reference is to a firearm loaded with powder but not with ball. The old émigré was implying that Déruchette was unwittingly provocative.

96. *Bible . . . help of chloroform:* Genesis 3:16: "In sorrow thou shalt bring forth children."

97. *"Is it . . . work together?":* Cf. Genesis 1:6.

98. La Croix-de-Jésus: a work of popular piety.

99. cabeza de moro: a Moor's head, acting as a punchball or arcade game target.

100. *Oomrawuttee:* Amravati, on the east coast of India.

101. . . . *an immense white plume:* The whole description of Rantaine reveals him as a royalist. He could recite Voltaire's *Henriade,* a glorification of Henry IV. He knew by heart "Les Tombeaux de Saint-Denis," a lachrymose poem on the royal skeletons in the abbey of Saint-Denis. Souloque was a black slave who rose to become emperor of Haiti. The Verdets ("Greens") were bands of royalists who ran a campaign of terror in the south of France in 1815.

102. neboissed: the term is unexplained. No connection with Turkish can be detected. A derivation from Russian has been suggested but seems unlikely. *thaleb:* student of Islamic doctrine.

103. Montebello: an American warship launched in 1812.

104. *two leagues an hour:* six knots.

105. *galgal:* a combination of lime, oil, and tar.

106. *afloat: À flot,* "afloat," can also mean "doing well, prospering."

107. *"In the future . . . Lons-le-Saulnier?":* a play on words: Nancy and Lons-le-Saulnier are both towns in eastern France.

108. *"a husband and a donkey":* another play on words: A husband is *mari,* a donkey is *âne.*

109. Et vidit quod esset bonum: “And He saw that it was good” (Genesis 1:31).

110. *Edward the Confessor:* Hugo deliberately hyphenates the name Édou-ard.

111. *Savoyard vicar:* a character in Rousseau’s *Émile* who preached tolerance.

112. *philosopher:* The reference is to the eighteenth-century French *philosophes* like Voltaire.

113. *Montlosier:* the Comte de Montlosier, an opponent of the clericalism of the extreme right during the Restoration.

114. *“Bourmont . . . on purpose”:* Bourmont was one of Napoleon’s generals who went over to Louis XVIII four days before Waterloo. There is an untranslatable pun in Lethierry’s remark. It replaces the term *trait d’union* (hyphen, link) with *traître d’union* (traitor of union).

115. Raca: See Matthew 5:22.

116. *Chaussée d’Antin: See note 12.*

117. *Mariotte:* Edme Mariotte, a famous seventeenth-century French physicist who formulated what is known in English as Boyle’s Law (in France, Mariotte’s Law).

118. *Saint-Servan:* a little town just outside Saint-Malo.

119. *Villèle:* French prime minister, was forced to resign in 1828. *two towns on the River Plate:* Montevideo in Uruguay and Buenos Aires in Argentina, which are on opposite sides of the Rio de la Plata.

120. *Diebitsch:* a Russian general who passed through the Balkans on his way to defeating the Turkish army in 1828. *Leo XII:* Pope Leo XII died in 1829.

121. *Berton:* a French general who organized an insurrection in Saumur and was tried and executed in 1822. *the Bidassoa:* a Spanish river on the frontier with France, where a group of rebels tried to prevent French intervention in Spain.

122. *Restoration:* of the Bourbon monarchy in France, 1815–30.

123. . . . *the social order of the day:* The names in this paragraph are of various rebels and conspirators against the established order; the places that people avoided were the scenes of acts of repression by the Restoration government.

124. *The men . . . Champ d’Asile:* The men of the Loire were a group of French soldiers, demobilized on the Loire after Waterloo, who set out to establish a settlement on the Gulf of Mexico, the Champ d’Asile or Field of Refuge.

125. *the Convention:* the Revolutionary assembly that governed France between 1792 and 1795.

126. *Bourgain . . . Séguin:* financiers of the Revolutionary period.

127. *Mandrin:* a famous eighteenth-century bandit and smuggler. *Comte de Charolais:* a nobleman notorious for his violence and debauchery.

128. *Sagane:* a sorceress mentioned in a poem by Horace. *Mademoiselle Lenormand:* a clairvoyant and soothsayer.

129. *Brocken:* the mountain in the Harz that is the scene of the witches' sabbath in Goethe's *Faust. Armuyr:* identified by Hugo in *Les Misérables* (Part IV, Book XI, Chapter II) as the heath on which Macbeth encountered the witches in Shakespeare's play.

130. *This was what the ghosts were saying:* Hugo gives the conversation in Spanish (not reproduced here), followed by a French translation.

131. "Egurraldia gaïztoa?": "In bad weather?" (Basque).

132. *Pundonor:* "Point of honor" (Spanish).

133. *Noguette:* a bell brought from Brazil by the celebrated eighteenth-century privateer Duguay-Trouin.

134. *Lacenaire:* a notorious murderer of the early nineteenth century.

135. setier: an old measure of capacity that varied from region to region and according to the substance measured. *liard:* a quarter of a sou, which was five centimes.

136. *Talleyrand:* French statesman noted for his capacity for political survival, serving successive regimes from the Revolution to the July Monarchy (Louis Philippe). Dictionary of Weathervanes: The *Dictionnaire des Girouettes,* published in 1815, listed the many changes of allegiance among politicians since the French Revolution.

137. *"How d'you do?":* Hugo, who made a point of not knowing English, actually puts the greeting "Good-bye" in the old sea-captain's mouth.

138. *Douvres:* There is a group of rocks off Guernsey known as the Douvres, but not at the position assigned to them by Hugo.

139. *the Moines:* the Monks.

140. *the Canard:* the Duck.

141. *Malouins:* "Malouin, malin"; a play on words (*malin* means shrewd, cunning).

142. *the Maisons:* the Houses.

143. *Surcouf:* Robert Surcouf (1773–1827), a French seaman; originally a privateer who preyed on British shipping in the Indian Ocean, later a wealthy shipowner.

144. *Duguay-Trouin: See note 92.*

145. *Odéon:* the Théâtre de l'Odéon in Paris, which was twice destroyed by fire.

146. *a square toise:* about forty square feet.

147. *Marie Alacoque:* a seventeenth-century nun who had visions of the Sacred Heart. *Cadière and the nun of Louviers:* Catherine Cadière and Madeleine Bavent, the nun of Louviers, were seduced by their confessors and subsequently accused of witchcraft.

148. Escobar: A famous eighteenth-century casuist, Escobar was a Spanish Jesuit. *Léotade:* a French friar, found guilty in 1848 of the murder and attempted rape of a girl of fourteen.

149. *Boue Corneille:* A *boue* is an underwater rock.

150. gestatorial chair: a chair in which the pope was carried on certain occasions. in abito paonazzo: the purple robes of a monsignore (the honorific title of a prelate or officer of the papal court).

151. *the Sorbonne:* Paris's university, originally a theological college and ecclesiastical tribunal.

152. Solus eris: "You will be alone." From a poem by Ovid, written during his exile from Rome.

153. *It was . . . his father Zibeon:* the reference is to Genesis 36:24. The Authorized Version differs from the text cited by Dr. Hérode, which follows the Vulgate.

154. *deputy viscount:* a traditional title on Jersey, equivalent to deputy sheriff.

155. *Barjesus:* Acts 13:6–11. *Elkesai:* a first-century heretic. *Aholibamah . . . Judith:* Genesis 26:34 and 36:14. *Reuben:* the reference to Isaac's firstborn son is not explained in the Old Testament. *Peniel:* apparently an invented name.

156. Genesis 24:62–67.

157. *and then they bleat:* There seems to be an inventive pun here. The word *moutonner* (from *mouton*, sheep) that Hugo uses means, when applied to the sea, "to be flecked with foam"; but in the present context there is surely a reference to sheep bleating.

158. *Gulf of Stora:* in Algeria.

159. *strangury:* a medical term for retention of urine.

160. *the Eel Bank:* a submarine bank off the southern tip of Africa. *Dumont-d'Urville:* a celebrated early-nineteenth-century French navigator and explorer.

161. *Toluca:* in Mexico.

162. de Ruyter: the great seventeenth-century Dutch admiral.

163. *Lisbon earthquake:* the famous earthquake of 1755, which destroyed much of the city.

164. *Firth of Forth . . . Scotland:* What Hugo actually wrote is a prime example of his determination not to know the English language as well as his shaky knowledge of British geography. He gives the name of the cliff, in English, as the "First of the Fourth."

165. *Annweiler valley:* in the German Rhineland.

166. *confervae:* a species of alga.

167. Importunaeque Volucres: "And the birds of ill omen . . ." A quotation from Virgil's *Georgics.*

168. cagniardelle: an early-nineteenth-century invention, which used the principle of the Archimedean screw to produce a draft. trompe: a mechanism that produced a draft by the flow of water through a funnel.

169. gladiator: Hugo uses the term belluaire, a gladiator who fought against wild animals. Hence the reference in the next sentence to Gilliatt as a "tamer."

170. *Danaids:* In Greek mythology, the Danaids were condemned eternally to pour water into bottomless pots as punishment for murdering their husbands.

171. *syrinxes:* passages in ancient Egyptian rock-cut royal tombs.

172. *Enceladus:* in classical mythology, a Titan imprisoned under Mount Etna whose breath caused eruptions of the volcano.

173. *Amontons:* a seventeenth-century physicist. *Lahire:* a seventeenth-century astronomer and mathematician. *Coulomb:* an eighteenth-century physicist.

174. . . . *the man who performed this miracle:* There is some doubt about the authenticity of this story.

175. *Balmat:* Jacques Balmat, a Chamonix guide, climbed Mont Blanc in 1786, and in the following year climbed it again with the Swiss naturalist and physicist Horace-Bénédict de Saussure.

176. *Marly waterworks:* Marly was a small palace near Paris built for Louis XIV. The "waterworks" raised water from the Seine to supply the palace of Versailles.

177. Sub Re: Hugo seems to take this phrase (literally, "under the thing") to refer to the task with which Gilliatt was now faced.

178. Sub Umbra: "In the shadows."

179. *Thomas:* Alexandre Thomas was imprisoned on Mont Saint-Michel in 1840. *Boisrosé:* Captain Boisrosé and his men scaled a cliff near Fécamp in 1592 to take an enemy fort. *Trenck:* Baron von Trenck escaped from a Prussian fortress in 1746. *Latude:* Jean-Henri Latude was an eighteenth-century French adventurer who escaped once from the Bastille and twice from the prison of Vincennes.

180. *Jean Bart: See note 88.*

181. *groyne . . . dike:* The French term is *épi;* "groyne" seems the nearest English equivalent. "Dike" is presumably what Hugo intends with his word *dick.*

182. *syzygies:* conjunctions of the sun, moon, and earth.

183. Solem quis dicere falsum audeat?: "Who would dare to call the sun false?" (Virgil's *Georgics*).

184. *"an eel under a rock":* the French equivalent of a snake in the grass.

185. *Surcouf: See note 143.*

186. Napier: Admiral Sir Charles Napier (1786–1860).

187. Weepers' Tower: It was from the Weepers' Tower (Schreierstoren) in Amsterdam that sailors' wives watched their menfolk going off to sea.

188. *Ango: See note 90.*

189. Messier: Charles Messier (1730–1817).

190. *Ceto:* in classical mythology a Nereid, daughter of Earth and Sea.

191. Turba, Turma: “The crowd, the troop.”

192. *Lémery:* Nicolas Lémery (1645–1715), French physician and chemist.

193. Malo viento toma contra el sol: “An ill wind turns against the sun.”

194. *Cap de Fer:* on the coast of Algeria.

195. *Stevenson:* Robert Stevenson (1772–1850), the Scottish engineer famed for his lighthouses.

196. *Enceladus: See note 172.*

197. Thomas Fuller: English theologian and historian (1608–61).

198. *Piddington:* Henry Piddington (1797–1858), English meteorologist.

199. *devilfish:* an old name for the octopus. The word used by Hugo is *pieuvre,* the term for an octopus in the dialect of the Channel Islands. Thanks to the popularity of Hugo’s novel, *pieuvre* has largely displaced the older French term *poulpe.*

200. *jararaca:* a venomous snake of Brazil.

201. *buthus:* a particularly venomous yellow scorpion found in the south of France.

202. *ell:* English unit of measure; equals 45 inches.

203. *Buffon:* the celebrated eighteenth-century naturalist, author of a monumental *Natural History. Denys Montfort, Bory de Saint-Vincent, Péron, Lamarck:* eighteenth-and nineteenth-century French naturalists.

204. *The entrance is also the exit:* Not so: the octopus has in fact two orifices.

205. *radiates:* animals with radial structure, like polyps and sea anemones: one of the great divisions of the animal world under Cuvier’s now discarded system.

206. De Profundis ad Altum: “From the depths to the height”: a reference to Psalm 129:1 in the Vulgate (Psalm 130 in the Authorized Version).

207. *There Is an Ear in the Unknown:* The title of the previous chapter referred to Psalm 129:1 in the Vulgate (Psalm 130 in the Authorized Version). The title of this chapter refers to verse 2, the answer to the appeal in verse 1.

208. *Arnal’s:* Étienne Arnal was a famous comic actor of the early nineteenth century.

209. *Hudson Lowe:* governor of St. Helena during Napoleon’s confinement on the island.

210. *the treaty of Campo Formio:* treaty between France and Austria in 1797 that preserved most of Napoleon’s conquests and marked the completion of his victory over the First Coalition.

211. *Vendôme Column:* in the Place Vendôme in Paris. Topped by a statue of Napoleon, it was pulled down in 1871 during the Commune and re-erected under the Third Republic.

212. *The Harbor Bell Again:* The title is designed to suggest a parallel between Lethierry’s vision of the Durande in the previous chapter and Gilliatt’s vision of Déruchette in this chapter.

213. *Marly waterworks: See note 176.*

214. *prince of Hohenlohe:* a German prince who fought in the émigré army against the French revolutionary forces, took French nationality, and was later appointed marshal and a peer.

215. *La Salette:* the apparition of the Virgin to two shepherds at La Salette (Isère) in 1846.

216. *of panic:* associated with the god Pan.

[1] Charles Asplet, Beresford Street. (Note by Hugo.)

[2] Here, for Guernsey and for the French victims of the 1856 floods, the proportions of money subscribed: France gave, per head of population, thirty centimes; England six centimes; Guernsey thirty-eight centimes. (Note by Hugo.)

A NOTE ON THE DRAWINGS OF VICTOR HUGO

Throughout his life and illustrious career, Victor Hugo, somewhat surreptitiously, produced thousands of extraordinary drawings. From the unconscious meanderings of a brown ink pen that prefigure the abstract experiments of modernism, to skillfully executed landscapes and seascapes of uncommon beauty, Victor Hugo's drawings, little known to his contemporaries, have increasingly captured the public's attention over the past century. In keeping with the ongoing discovery of these masterly creations, the Modern Library has reproduced five of Hugo's brown ink renderings, executed with brush and pen on cream paper, in this new edition of *The Toilers of the Sea*. Though not specifically created to illustrate the text, the drawings were nonetheless in such perfect harmony with Hugo's novel of sea, storm, and shipwreck that he pasted them into the manuscript to illuminate particular passages and scenes. The five works available to us of the thirty-six Hugo had originally selected have been positioned in keeping with the author's original design.

ABOUT THE TRANSLATOR

JAMES HOGARTH was educated at Edinburgh University and the Sorbonne. While serving in the army during World War II he became a codebreaker at Bletchley Park, and was later undersecretary in the Scottish Office. His recent translations include works from German and French.

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VICTOR HUGO

Victor-Marie Hugo was born in 1802 at Besançon, where his father, an officer (eventually a general) under Napoleon, was stationed. In his first decade the family moved from post to post: Corsica, Elba, Paris, Naples, Madrid. After his parents separated in 1812, Hugo lived in Paris with his mother and brothers. His literary ambition—"to be Chateaubriand or nothing"—was evident from an early age, and by seventeen he had founded a literary magazine with his brother. At twenty he married Adèle Foucher and published his first poetry collection, which earned him a small stipend from Louis XVIII. A first novel, *Han of Iceland* (1823), won another stipend.

Hugo became friends with Charles Nodier, a leader of the Romantics, and with the critic Sainte-Beuve, and rapidly put himself at the forefront of literary trends. His innovative early poetry helped open up the relatively constricted traditions of French versification, and his plays—especially *Cromwell,* whose preface served as a manifesto of Romanticism, and *Hernani,* whose premiere was as stormy as that of Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring*—stirred up much protest for their break with dramatic convention. His literary outpouring between 1826 and 1843 encompassed eight volumes of poetry; four novels, including *The Last Day of a Condemned Man* (1829) and *Notre-Dame de Paris* (1831); ten plays (among them *Le Roi s'amuse,* the source for Verdi's *Rigoletto*); and a variety of critical writings.

Hugo was elected to the Académie Française in 1841. The accidental death two years later of his eldest daughter and her husband devastated him and marked the end of his first literary period. By then politics had become central to his life. Though he was a Royalist in his youth, his views became increasingly liberal after the July revolution of 1830: "Freedom in art, freedom in society, there is the double goal." Following the revolution of 1848, he was elected as a Republican to the National Assembly, where he campaigned for universal suffrage and free education and against the death penalty. He initially supported the political ascent of Louis-Napoleon, but turned against him when Louis-Napoleon established a right-wing dictatorship.

After opposing the coup d'état of 1851, Hugo went into exile in Brussels and

Jersey, launching fierce literary attacks on the Second Empire in *Napoleon the Little*, *Chastisements*, and *The Story of a Crime*. Between 1855 and 1870 he lived in Guernsey in the Channel Islands. There he was joined by his family, some friends, and his mistress, Juliette Drouet, whom he had known since 1833, when as a young actress she had starred in his *Lucrezia Borgia*. His political interests were supplemented by other concerns. From around 1853 he became absorbed in experiments with spiritualism and table tapping. In his later years he wrote the *Contemplations* (1856), considered the peak of his lyric accomplishment, and a number of more elaborate poetic cycles derived from his theories about spirituality and history: the immense *The Legend of the Centuries* (1859–83) and its posthumously published successors *The End of Satan* (1886) and *God* (1891). In these same years he produced the novels *Les Misérables* (1862), *The Toilers of the Sea* (1866), *The Laughing Man* (1869), and *Ninety-Three* (1873).

After the fall of the Second Empire in 1870, Hugo returned to France and was reelected to the National Assembly, and then to the Senate. He had become a legendary figure and national icon, a presence so dominating that upon his death in 1885 Émile Zola is said to have remarked with some relief: “I thought he was going to bury us all!” Hugo’s funeral provided the occasion for a grandiose ceremony. His body, after lying in state under the Arc de Triomphe, was carried by torchlight—according to his own request, on a pauper’s hearse—to be buried in the Pantheon.

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