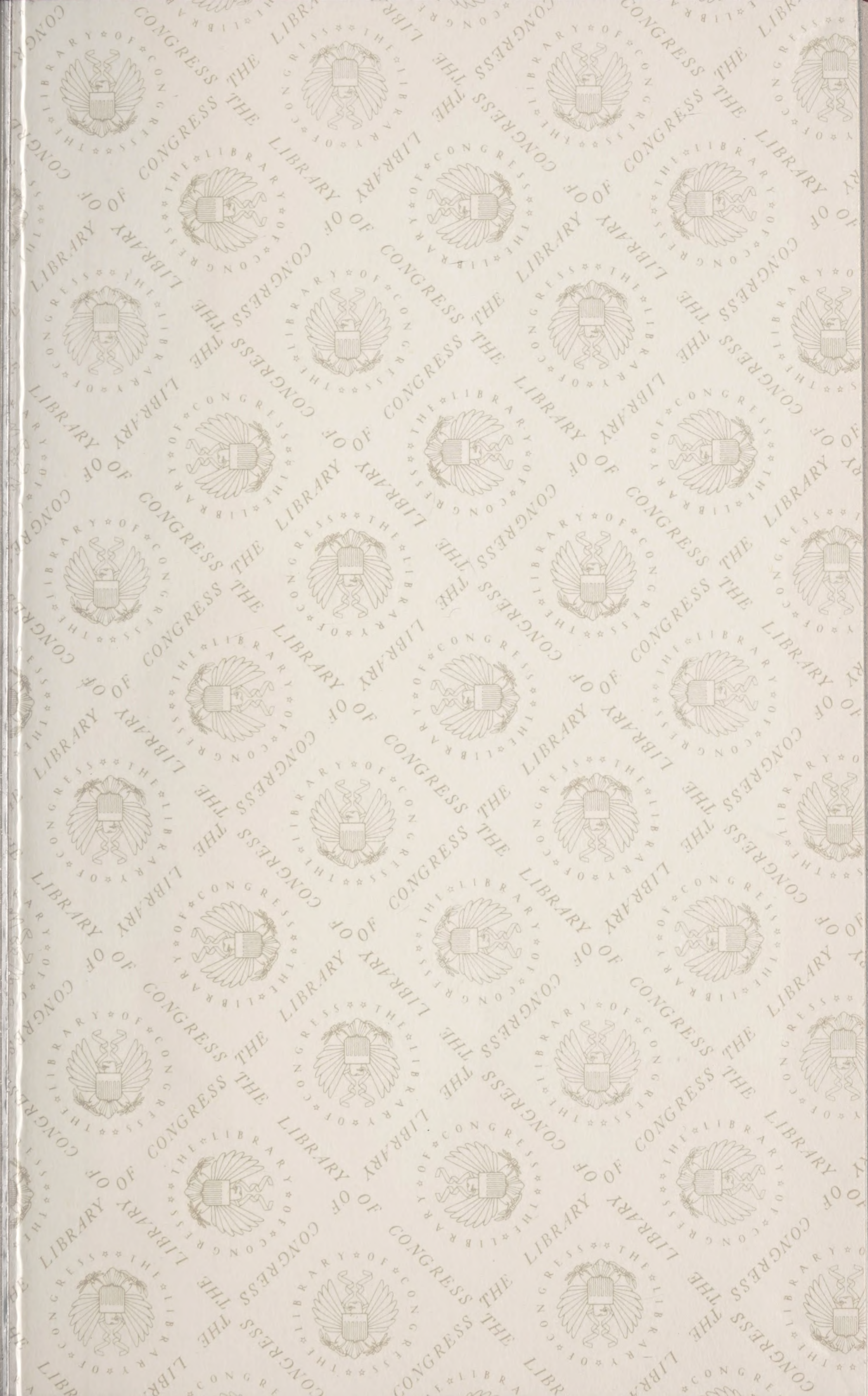
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ROMAIN KALBRIS

A Novel

BY HECTOR MALOT

TRANSLATED BY

MARY J. SERRANO

NEW YORK
HARPER & BROTHERS, PUBLISHERS
AUGUST, 1891

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ROMAIN KALBRIS

THE ADVENTURES OF

A RUNAWAY BY LAND AND SEA

By HECTOR MALOT

Translated by

MARY J. SERRANO

NEW YORK
HARPER & BROTHERS, PUBLISHERS
1891

ROMAIN KALBRIS.

I.

It must not be supposed from the position I now occupy that I had Fortune for a fairy godmother; my ancestors, if the word be not too pretentious, were fishermen; my father was the youngest of eleven children, and my grandfather had a hard struggle to bring up his family, for in his occupation, less than in any other, is the reward proportioned to the labor; danger and toil are to be counted upon with certainty, while of the slender profits to be gained there is but a chance.

At eighteen my father was drawn in the maritime conscription. This is a species of conscription by means of which the State may obtain the services of seamen at some time between the ages of eighteen and fifty—a period of thirty-two years. When he left his native village he could neither read nor write; he came back first-mate, which is the highest grade that any one can attain who has not passed through the Government schools.

Port Dieu, our native place, being near the Channel Islands, the Government keeps a gunboat stationed there for the double purpose of preventing the inhabitants of Jersey from fishing in our waters and of com-

pelling our own fishermen to observe the laws; it was on board this gunboat that my father was sent to complete his period of service. This was a favor, for, however accustomed a sailor may be to regard his ship as his home, it is always a happiness to return to one's native land.

Fifteen months after his return I came into the world, and as I was born in the month of March and on a Friday, when there was a new moon, every one predicted that I should lead an adventurous life, that I should make many voyages by sea, and that I should be very unfortunate, unless the influence of the Friday were counteracted by that of the new moon. Adventures I have had in plenty, and these are what I am now going to relate to you; journeys by sea I have made; as for the struggle between the two opposing influences, it has been fierce; at the end of my story you will decide which of them it was that finally prevailed.

To predict adventures and voyages for me was as much as to say that I was a true descendant of my ancestors, for from father to son all the Kalbris had followed the sea. If tradition speak truly, they had done so ever since the time of the Trojan war. This origin, be it understood, is not claimed for us by ourselves, but by the *savants*, who say that there are some hundred families in Port Dieu, among the seafaring part of the population, who are the descendants of a Phœnician colony. What is certain is that, with our black eyes, dark complexions, and regular profiles, we bear no resemblance to the Norman or Breton type, and that the boat we use in fishing is an exact reproduc-

tion of the vessel of Ulysses as it is described by Homer—a single-master with a square sail; this rigging, common enough in the Archipelago, is unique in the Channel.

As for us Kalbris, our recollections do not extend so far back, and their very monotony serves to render them somewhat vague; the history of any one member of the family differed little from that of every other member—he had gone to sea when a boy, or travelled in distant lands among peoples whose names are difficult to remember, and he had been lost at sea or had died in battle or on the English pontoons. Crosses bearing the names of daughters or widows of sailors were numerous in the cemeteries; those bearing the names of boys or men were rare—these did not die at home. Like all families, however, we had our heroes; one of these was my maternal grandfather, who had been the companion of Sourcouf; the other was my granduncle Flohy. As soon as I was old enough to take notice of the talk of those around me, I heard his name mentioned a dozen times a day; he had entered the service of an Indian potentate who owned elephants; he commanded a body of soldiers who fought against the English, and he had a silver arm; elephants and a silver arm, these were not imaginary.

It was the innate love of adventure, innate in all the Kalbris, which made my father undertake another voyage, a few years after his marriage; he might have commanded, as second lieutenant, one of the schooners which leave Port Dieu every spring for the Iceland fisheries; but he had accustomed himself to the service of the State and he loved it.

I do not remember his departure. My only recollections of this period are of stormy days, tempestuous nights, and hours spent in waiting for letters outside the post-office door.

How many times, at night, did my mother make me kneel down to pray before a lighted taper! For a storm at Port Dieu meant, for us, a storm everywhere, and we thought the wind that shook our house must also shake my father's vessel. Sometimes it roared so loud at night that we had to get up to secure the windows, for our house was the house of poor people; although it was sheltered on one side by a ledge of the cliff and on the other by a cabin which had once been the saloon of a wrecked three-master, it could ill resist the violence of the equinoctial storms. One October night my mother wakened me from my sleep to pray; the hurricane was terrific, the wind howled, the timbers of the house creaked, and gusts blew from time to time down the chimney which made the flame of the candle flicker, until a gust fiercer than the others at last blew it out. In the lulls of the storm the sea could be heard dashing against the shore and forcing its way into the hollows of the cliff with a sound like the report of a gun. Notwithstanding the dreadful noise, before long I had fallen fast asleep upon my knees, when suddenly the window was torn from its fastenings, dashed into a thousand pieces on the floor of the room, and I thought I was being carried off in a whirlwind.

"Ah, my God!" cried my mother; "your father is lost!"

She believed in presentiments and in miraculous

warnings; a letter which she received from my father some months after the night on which this storm occurred strengthened her superstitious belief; by a curious coincidence his vessel had been assailed in the month of October by a whirlwind, and had been for a time in great danger. The sleep of a sailor's wife is an uneasy sleep; to dream of shipwrecks, to wait for a letter which does not come—between these two tortures her life is passed.

At the time of which I speak postal service was not conducted as it is now; letters were distributed only at the post-office, and when any one delayed long in coming to claim a letter addressed to him it was sent to his house by one of the school-boys. The day on which letters arrived from Newfoundland the post-office was besieged, for from spring until autumn all the fishermen are engaged in the cod-fishery, and a stranger arriving in the village might fancy himself in the island spoken of by Ariosto, from which men were excluded; consequently the women were eager to receive news of the absent. With their infants in their arms they stood waiting for the names to be called. Some of them smiled as they read their letters; others wept. Those who had not received letters questioned those who had. It is not when sailors are at sea that it can be said with truth, "No news is good news."

There was an old woman who had gone to the post-office every day for six years, and who, during all that time, had received no letter; she was called "Mother Jouan." The boat manned by her husband and her four sons had been lost in a squall, and neither the bodies of the men nor the boat had ever been recovered.

Since the news of the catastrophe had been brought to the village, she had gone every morning to the post-office. "There is nothing yet for you," the postmaster would say; "it will come to-morrow." "Yes, to-morrow," she would answer sadly, and she would go away to return again on the following day. They said she had lost her mind; if she were indeed mad, I have never seen madness as gentle and melancholy as hers.

When I went to the post-office I almost always found her there before me. As the postmaster was also the village grocer, he naturally attended first to those who desired to buy salt or coffee, and thus we had plenty of time for chat. Methodical and exact in the practice of both his callings, he delayed us still more by all sorts of preliminary ceremonies. While engaged in the exercise of his duties as grocer he wore a blue apron and a peaked cap; as postmaster he wore a cloth jacket and a velvet *toque*. Nothing in the world would have induced him to weigh out mustard for a customer with his *toque* on his head; and knowing he held a letter in his hand on which the lives of a dozen men depended, he would not have delivered it without first taking off his apron.

Every morning Mother Jouan repeated her story to me: "They went out fishing; a squall came up so that they were obliged to scud before the wind instead of rejoining the *Bien Aimé;* they passed the *Prudence* without being able to speak her. But you know that with a sailor like Jouan there could have been no danger. They must have fallen in with some vessel out at sea and been taken on board; that often happens; that is how Melanie's boy came home. They have

landed them in America, perhaps. When they come back how tall Jerome will be! He was fourteen. Fourteen years and six years—how many does that make?"

"Twenty years."

"Twenty years! Why, he will be a man."

She would never admit that they had been lost. She died, believing to the last that they were still alive. A few days before her death she intrusted three louis to the priest to deliver to Jerome on his return; amid all her own struggles and privations she had kept them for her youngest born.

II.

My father was to remain away three years; he remained six. The officers of the vessel were changed in turn, but the entire crew remained cruising in the Pacific until the frigate threatened to go to pieces.

I was ten years old at the time of his return.

It was on a Sunday, just after high mass. I was on the jetty waiting to see the revenue-cutter entering the harbor. Beside the man at the helm stood a national marine; he was all the more noticeable as he was in holiday dress, while the coast-guards were in their working clothes. As usual before the coming in of the tide, the jetty was crowded with old sailors, who, no matter what the weather, assembled there every day two hours before high tide, to remain there for two hours after.

"Romain," said Captain Houel to me, lowering his spy-glass, "that is your father. Run to the quay if you wish to be there before him."

I was eager enough to run, but my knees seemed to bend under me. When I reached the quay the tender was alongside the wharf and my father had landed; the people crowded around him, all shaking hands with him. They wanted to carry him off to the café to treat him to a mug of cider.

"Wait until evening," he responded; "I am longing to embrace my wife and my little lad."

"Your lad? See, there he is!"

During the night the weather turned stormy, but no one in the house got up to light a candle.

In his six years' cruising my father had seen a great many things to talk about, and in me he always found a willing listener. Apparently impatient and harsh, he was in reality a most patient man, and he described to me with invariable good-humor, not those scenes and events which he himself remembered with most pleasure, but those which were most calculated to please my childish imagination.

Among his stories there was one which I never tired of listening to, and which I asked him to tell me over and over again; it was the story of my uncle Jean. While his ship was lying at anchor at Calcutta, my father had heard a General Flohy spoken of who was then on an embassy at the court of the English governor. They related wonderful stories about him. He was a Frenchman who had entered the service of the King of Berar as a volunteer; in an engagement with the English he had, by a bold manœuvre, saved the Indian army from destruction, which exploit had earned for him the title of general; in another battle a bullet had shattered one of his hands; he had replaced it by

a silver hand, and when he re-entered the capital, holding the reins of his horse with the silver hand, the priests had prostrated themselves before him in adoration, saying that in one of their holy books it was written that the Kingdom of Berar was to reach the summit of its greatness when its armies should be commanded by a stranger coming from the West whom they would recognize by his silver hand. My father presented himself to this General Flohy and was received by him with open arms. During eight days my uncle treated him like a prince; he wished to take him back with him to the capital, but the rules of the service were inexorable, and my father was obliged to remain at Calcutta.

This story strongly impressed my imagination; my uncle filled all my thoughts. I dreamed only of elephants and palanquins; I saw continually in fancy the two soldiers who accompanied him, carrying his silver hand—previous to this I had cherished no little admiration for the beadle of our church, but the two soldiers, who were my uncle's slaves, made me look with scorn on the iron halberd and laced hat of our beadle.

My father was pleased at my enthusiasm; it made my mother very unhappy, however, for with maternal clear-sightedness she saw the effect that these stories were producing upon me.

"All these things," she said, "will give him a taste for roving and a seafaring life."

"Well, what then?" my father would answer; "he will only do as I did, and why not as his uncle has done?"

Do as my uncle had done! My poor father did not know what a fire he was kindling.

My mother had always known that she must resign herself to the idea of my being a sailor, but she wished at least to smooth the path for my first steps in this hard career. She persuaded my father to leave the service of the Government; when he should have the command of a vessel sailing for Iceland I could serve my apprenticeship under him.

By this means she hoped to keep us on land during the winter, when the fishing-vessels return to lay up. But what avails human foresight or human calculation against the decrees of Fate?

III.

My father returned home in August. In the month of September the weather, which had been uninterruptedly fine for three months, changed; there was a succession of stormy as there had been a succession of calm days. Nothing was talked about but shipwrecks off our coasts—a steamer had been lost, with crew and freight, off Cape Blanchard; several boats from Granville had not been heard from, and it was said that the sea around Jersey was covered with wreckage. On land the roads were strewn with broken branches; unripe apples, blown down by the wind, lay on the ground as thick as if they had been beaten down with a pole; apple-trees had been uprooted or had had their trunks broken off in the middle, while the leaves hung from the branches, as brown and seared as if they had been scorched at a fire.

Every one lived in a state of constant terror, for this was the time for the return of the Newfoundland fishermen.

This condition of things had lasted for nearly three weeks, when all at once one evening there was a complete lull both on land and sea. I thought the storm was now over, but my father laughed at me when I asked him at supper if we should not go on the following day to take up the nets that had remained spread since the beginning of the tempestuous weather.

"To-morrow," he said, "there will be a more furious storm than ever from the west; the sun set in a red fog, there are too many stars in the sky, the sea moans, the earth is warm. We shall see worse weather than any we have yet seen."

On the following day, accordingly, instead of going to the sea, we set ourselves to cart stones for the roof of the cabin. A wind had sprung up from the west at daybreak; there was no sun, only a dirty sky, brightened here and there by long streaks of greenish light, and, although it was low-tide, there came from the distant sea a hollow, rumbling sound, like the roaring of a wild beast.

Suddenly I saw my father, who was on the roof of the cabin, pause in his work, and I climbed up beside him to see what it was that had attracted his attention. Far away on the horizon could be descried a small, white speck. It was a ship.

"Unless it is a disabled vessel," he said, "they are bent on running on destruction."

For when the wind blows from the west it is impossible to effect a landing at Port Dieu.

A sudden flash of light had showed us the ship, which disappeared from our sight almost immediately. Black clouds were accumulating thickly in the west; they rose rapidly, confusedly, like clouds of smoke from a conflagration, from the extreme verge of the horizon.

We went down to the village. People were already running towards the jetty, for every one knew that a vessel was in sight—that is to say, in danger.

Far as the eye could reach the sea looked like a vast sheet of foam, of moving snow; the tide came in more swiftly than usual with a rumbling sound that, mingling with the noise of the storm, was deafening; heavy clouds, driven along by the furious gale, shrouded the horizon. The vessel had increased in size; it was a brig, and was running almost under bare poles.

"See, they are hoisting her bunting," said Captain Houel, who was looking through his spy-glass; "she belongs to the Leheu Brothers."

The Leheu Brothers were the richest ship-owners in our part of the country.

"She is asking for a pilot."

"Ah, yes, a pilot; but how is one to get to her?"

It was the pilot himself, Father Housard, who asked this question, and as all present were sailors, no one answered him; they knew very well that he was right, and that it would be almost impossible to get to the brig. At the same instant we saw the elder of the Leheu brothers coming towards us from the village. He was evidently not prepared for so violent a wind, for scarcely had he turned the corner of the last house in the street when he was whirled about and thrown to the ground

as if he had been a bundle of rags. But, in one way or another, staggering, spinning around, buffeting the wind as a swimmer buffets the waves, he at last reached the battery behind which we had taken shelter. He had lost his hat on the way without making any effort to recover it, and every one knew from this that he must be greatly disturbed, for he was noted for never losing anything.

We learned in a moment that the brig belonged to him, that it had been built at Bayonne, was manned by a crew of Biscayans, and that this was its first voyage; it was not insured.

"Twenty sous the ton if you succeed in reaching her," said Mr. Leheu to Father Housard, pulling him by the jacket.

"To reach her it would first be necessary to be able to leave the harbor."

The waves dashed high above the jetty, the wind swept everything before it—the froth on the waves, the sea-weed, the sand on the parapet, the tiles on the watch-house, the torn clouds hanging low on the horizon, looking still blacker in contrast with the whiteness of the sea-foam.

When the brig saw that the pilot was not putting off from shore, she put about in order to try to tack while waiting.

To wait was certain destruction; to make for the harbor destruction more certain still.

People kept running from the village; at any other time it would have been an amusing spectacle to see the wind scattering them in every direction, lifting them from their feet and jostling them against one

another; some of the women threw themselves on the ground and tried to drag themselves along on their knees.

Mr. Leheu did not cease to call out, "Twenty sous the ton—forty sous!" He ran hither and thither distractedly, and in a breath passed from entreaty to abuse.

"You are all alike—ready to go to sea when you are not needed; in your beds when there is any danger."

No one answered; they shook their heads or turned them aside.

He grew exasperated.

"You are all good-for-nothings!" he cried. "A loss of three hundred thousand francs! You are cowards!"

My father advanced from among the crowd.

"Give me a boat," he said; "I will go."

"You are a brave man, Kalbris."

"If Kalbris goes, I will go too," said Father Housard.

"Twenty sous the ton—I will not go back on my word," said Mr. Leheu.

"Nothing," said Father Housard; "it is not for you. But if I do not return and my old woman asks you for a couple of sous of a Sunday, do not refuse them to her."

"Kalbris," said Mr. Leheu, "I will adopt your boy."

"There is more than that to be thought of," returned my father; "we must have Gosseaume's boat."

This boat, which was called the *St. John*, was famous all over the coast for carrying her sail well in all weathers.

"I will lend it," said Gosseaume, yielding to the silent persuasion of the eyes fixed upon him; "but it is to Kalbris I lend it; he must bring it back to me."

My father had taken me by the hand; we ran towards the cove where the *St. John* was drawn up on the beach; in an instant it was rigged out with sail and rudder.

Besides my father and the pilot, another man was needed. A cousin of ours offered himself; they tried to dissuade him from going.

"Kalbris is not afraid to go," he said.

My father took me in his arms, and in a voice whose tones I still remember,

"One can never tell what may happen," he said, kissing me; "take this kiss to your mother for me."

To leave the harbor with the wind blowing towards the shore was the great difficulty. The men who were hauling at the cable of the *St. John* made no progress in their task; gusts would come suddenly which obliged them to loosen their hold upon the rope and scattered them about or flung them violently against one another. The end of the jetty was swept by the waves, but it was necessary to haul the *St. John* outside this point to get her before the wind. The keeper of the light-house fastened a tow-line about his waist, and while those who were hauling the *St. John* did their best to keep her in her place, he lowered himself down the parapet, and, holding on with both hands to the iron balustrade which protected it, propelled himself slowly forward. He did not expect, as you may well suppose, to launch by himself a boat which fifty men could scarcely haul, but only—and it was no easy task—to pass the cable around the brass pulley at the end of the jetty, so that the boat, finding there a point of support, might move forward in response to the efforts of the men who were

hauling her. Three times he was drenched by the waves, but he was accustomed to these watery avalanches; he stood firm against them, and at last succeeded in making fast the tow-line. The *St. John* again began to advance slowly, plunging so heavily in the waves that it seemed as if she must be swamped. Suddenly the cable moved freely; it no longer offered any resistance to the force exerted upon it, and the *St. John* swung around the end of the jetty.

I jumped on the glacis of the battery, and climbing up the signal-mast clung to it with hands and knees. It swayed and creaked under my weight as if it were still a living tree swaying to the breeze in its native forest.

I could see my father standing at the helm; the other two men were close beside him, leaning, with their backs to the wind, against the side of the boat. The *St. John* advanced by leaps: now she stopped, now she bounded forward like a bullet ricochetting from wave to wave, now she disappeared from view, enveloped in clouds of spray.

The brig, when she perceived the boat, changed her course and steered straight for the light-house. As soon as the *St. John* was well in the wind, she, too, put about and steered so as to cross the brig. In a few minutes they met; the boat passed under the bowsprit of the larger vessel, and almost at the same instant swung around and the two vessels were made fast to each other.

"The rope will not hold," said some one in the crowd. "And even if it should hold, they will never be able to board the brig."

It seemed, in truth, impossible that the *St. John* should be able to get close enough to the brig to allow of Father Housard's boarding her—as if the *St. John* must be dashed to pieces or Father Housard precipitated into the sea. Fastened to each other, impelled by the same wind, borne on the same wave, the ship and the boat came towards us. When the bowsprit plunged into the waves we could see the deck rising in the air, and the sailors, unable to keep their footing, clinging to the support nearest hand.

"Board her! board her!" cried Leheu.

Father Housard had already made three or four different attempts to board the brig, but on each occasion the two vessels had been violently forced apart; the boat, dashed to a distance of twenty or thirty yards—the length of the tow-line—now preceded, now followed the larger vessel, at the caprice of the waves. At last the brig gave a lurch towards the *St. John*, and when the wave sank, on the crest of which she had risen, the pilot was on her deck, clinging to the chain-wales.

It seemed as if the wind had now conquered all opposition to its fury—levelling, demolishing, sweeping away everything before it. It blew above our heads and around us with irresistible force, giving us not a moment's rest or respite in which to recover our breath. We had only one sensation, that of being pushed violently along, always in the same direction; we heard one sound to the exclusion of every other—a whistling which deafened our ears. Under the pressure of the wind the waves rose before they were fully formed, to sink down again in whirling eddies. The brig approached us with the swiftness of the hurricane itself, carrying

barely sail enough to steady her. Although the waves were not high, the vessel pitched and rolled so violently at times that it seemed as if she must go to pieces. In one of these shocks her top-sail was carried away, her sails were torn to ribbons, and having no steerageway she came broadside on; she was now within two or three hundred yards of the harbor.

At this moment a cry was heard from the assembled crowd.

The *St. John*, on which my father and my cousin had remained, was a short distance from the brig; in order to avoid a collision with the larger vessel, the boat stood out to sea. But at this instant a storm-jib was rigged on the brig; the latter fell back in her course, cutting off the further progress of the boat, and hiding it completely from our view with her black hulk. Two seconds afterwards she struck the channel.

I had been observing the movements of the boat rather than those of the brig; when I sought it with my gaze after the brig had entered the channel, it was no longer to be seen. Almost immediately afterwards, however, I perceived it outside the jetty; embarrassed by the manœuvre of the larger vessel it had missed the channel, which was somewhat narrow, and was making for a sort of cove to the right of the jetty, where the water in stormy weather was generally less rough than in the open sea.

But on this day, there, as everywhere, far as the eye could reach, the sea was a sheet of foam, and to get the boat before the wind to run her into the cove seemed little less than an impossibility. The sail was taken in, the anchor cast, and the boat presented her bow to

the waves that dashed against her from the offing. Between the boat and the coast rose a line of rocks which would not be covered with water for an hour to come. Would the anchor hold? Would the rope cut? Could the *St. John* ride the billows in safety?

I was only a child, but I knew enough of all that pertains to the sea to appreciate fully the terrible suspense of those moments of waiting. I heard, too, the remarks of those around me, for we had all hurried to the beach, where we stood grouped together for protection against the fury of the wind.

"If they hold on their course they may run aground; if the *St. John* comes into the open sea she will be dashed to pieces."

"Kalbris is a strong swimmer."

"A strong swimmer! As if any one could swim in such a sea as that!"

Even a board would have been ingulfed in those whirlpools of mingled sea-weed, pebbles, and froth which rushed upon the beach, working it into holes. The waves, repulsed by the rocks, fell back in foam to meet the waves coming from the open sea, and thus hemmed in, climbed one upon another and broke in clouds of spray.

As I was standing gazing breathlessly at the *St. John*, I felt my arm seized from behind. I turned round; it was my mother, who had run to me distractedly; she had witnessed all from the summit of the cliff.

Captain Houel and some of the others present gathered around us, trying to reassure us. My poor mother, her eyes fixed on the offing, answered not a word.

Suddenly a cry rose loud above the noise of the storm: "The anchor has given way!"

My mother dropped on her knees, dragging me with her.

When I raised my eyes again, I saw the *St. John* coming towards us on the crest of a gigantic wave. Lifted up and borne along by it, it passed the rocky barrier; but the wave fell, the boat stood on her beam ends, whirled swiftly around, and then nothing was to be seen but a sheet of white foam.

It was not until two days afterwards that they recovered my father's body, horribly mangled; my cousin's body was never recovered.

IV.

For six years my father's place at the head of the table had been vacant, but it was not the dreadful and gloomy void which followed this catastrophe.

His death did not reduce us to absolute want, for we had our house and a piece of ground, but my mother was now obliged to work for our maintenance.

She had formerly been the best laundress in the country, and as the Port Dieu cap is one of the prettiest head-dresses on the coast, she soon found customers again.

The Messieurs Leheu thought it their duty to come to our assistance.

"My brother will take you once a fortnight," said the elder of the two to my mother, "and I will take

you once a fortnight, also; one day secure in every week is something."

And this was all. It was not a great price to pay for a man's life.

The length of the working-day, at the time of which I speak, was regulated by the sun; I had then, in the morning and in the evening, before and after school, some hours during which, in my mother's absence, I was free to do as I liked.

What I liked best to do was to loiter on the jetty or on the beach, according as it was high or low tide. All my poor mother's efforts to keep me at home were of no avail. I had always some excuse ready to get away or to account for my absences, fortunate when I had not to invent one for playing truant—that is to say, when the ships were delayed in their return from Newfound-land, when there was neither a high-tide nor squally weather.

It was on one of these days when there was a high-tide, and I was playing truant, that an event occurred which exercised an important influence on my character and decided my fate in life.

We were at the end of September, and the outgoing tide on Friday would leave some rocks uncovered that I had not seen for a long time. On Friday morning, then, instead of going to school I ran off to the cliff, where, while waiting for the tide to go out, I sat down to eat my breakfast; I had more than two hours to wait.

The tide was coming in like an inundation, and if I removed my gaze from a rock for an instant when I turned to look for it again it had disappeared under the

surface of the water, which rose so silently and swiftly that one might fancy it was the rock itself that had sunk into the depths of the ocean. Not a wave was to be seen, only a line of foam between the blue sea and the yellow sand; in the distance, where sky and ocean met, the gaze lost itself in the gray depths of space. Distant objects could be seen with unusual clearness; from the cliff Cape Vauchel and Point d'Aval were visible —a thing which happens only when some great change in the weather is at hand.

The sea, to my impatient eyes, remained for a long time apparently motionless, then it began to retire with the same swiftness with which it had come in. I followed the receding tide; I had hidden my basket and my *sabots* in the hollow of a rock, and I walked barefooted along the sand, in which my footprints quickly filled with water.

Our beach is in general sandy, but here and there groups of rocks are to be met with which the sea, in its work of erosion, has not yet worn away, and which form, at low-tide, blackish islets. I was on one of these islets hunting for crabs among the sea-weed when I heard myself called.

When one knows one is doing wrong, one is not apt to be very brave; for an instant I was frightened, but on raising my eyes I saw that I had no cause for alarm, for the person who had called to me was certainly not going to send me back to school; it was an old gentleman with a white beard whom we called in the village "Mr. Sunday," because he had a servant whom he called "Saturday." His real name was De Bihorel, and he lived on a little island a quarter of an hour's journey

from Port Dieu. This island had formerly been an isthmus, but he had had the granite causeway which connected it with the land cut through, and had transformed it into a real island which at high-tide was washed on all sides by the sea. He had the reputation of being the most eccentric person within a circuit of twenty leagues; a reputation which he owed to an immense umbrella that he always carried open, to the absolute solitude in which he lived, and, more than either, to his manner—a mixture of harshness and kindness—in dealing with the country people.

"Hey, boy!" he cried; "what are you doing there?"

"I am hunting for crabs, as you see."

"Well, leave your crabs and come with me; carry my net and you will not repent it."

I did not answer, but my face spoke for me.

"Ah, ah! you don't want to do as I ask you?"

"I—"

"Stop; I am going to tell you why you do not want to do so—but first, what is your name?"

"Romain Kalbris."

"You are the son of the Kalbris who lost his life to save a brig last year? Your father was a man!"

I was proud of my father; these words made me regard Mr. De Bihorel with less suspicion than before.

"You are nine years old," he continued, placing his hand on my head and looking into my eyes with a piercing gaze; "to-day is Friday; it is noon, and you are playing truant."

I looked down and blushed.

"You are playing truant," he resumed, "that is not difficult to guess; now I am going to tell you why you

are doing so. Do not tremble, foolish child, I am not a sorcerer. Come, look at me! You want to take advantage of the tide in order to fish?"

"Yes, sir, and to see the Dog's Head."

The Dog's Head is a rock which is rarely left uncovered by the tide.

"Well, I, too, am going to the Dog's Head; take my net and come with me."

I went with him without a word; I was astounded that he should have read me so easily. Although I knew him very well by sight we had never before exchanged so many words, and I did not know that it was a sort of hobby with him to study the secret motives of the actions of those around him. Great shrewdness and much knowledge of human nature frequently enabled him to guess these motives aright, and as he feared no one he always gave free expression to his opinion, whether flattering to his hearers or otherwise.

Although I had little inclination for it, I could do no less than reply to the questions which he put to me without intermission. I had not been in his company a quarter of an hour before he knew all that I could tell him about myself, my father, my mother, and my other relations. What I told him of my uncle, the East-Indian, seemed to interest him.

"Inquisitive," he said, as if he were thinking aloud, "of an adventurous spirit—a mixture of Norman and Phœnician. What is the origin of Calbris, or Kalbris?"

His questions, however, did not prevent him from examining the coast as we walked along and gathered shells and plants from time to time, which I put in the net.

"What do you call that?" he would ask me every time he picked up a new plant or shell.

I almost always remained silent, for, although I knew these plants and shells very well by sight, I was unacquainted with their names.

"You are a true son of the coast," he said, impatiently, "for you the sea is good only to plunder and to ransack; it is the enemy against which you have to defend yourselves unceasingly. Will you never see, then, that it is, besides, as fruitful as the land, and that the forests which cover its plains and its mountains are peopled with a greater variety of animals than are the forests of the land. That boundless horizon, those clouds, those waves—will they never speak to you, then, but of storm and shipwreck?"

He expressed himself with a vehemence which, child as I was, frightened me, and it is rather the impression his words produced upon me than the words themselves (of which, as I hardly understood them at the time, I retain but an indistinct recollection) that I reproduce here, but this impression was so vivid that I fancy I can see him now, his head shaded by his umbrella, his right arm extended, looking towards the sea, drawing my fascinated gaze along with his.

"Come here," he continued, pointing to a hollow in a rock where the water had remained, "and let me give you some idea of what the sea really is. What is that?"

He pointed with his finger to a sort of fawn-colored stalk, attached at its base to a rock and terminating at its upper extremity in a species of yellow corolla, the fringed edges of which were white as snow.

"Is this a plant or is it an animal? You do not know;

is it not so? Well, it is an animal; if you were to remain here long enough you would, perhaps, see it detach itself from the stem, and you know very well that flowers do not walk. Look at it closely and you will see the part that resembles a flower expand and contract and sway from side to side. It is what *savants* call a sea-anemone. But in order that you may convince yourself that it is an animal, see if you can find me a shrimp. You know that flowers do not eat, do you not?"

Saying this, he took the shrimp which I gave him and dropped it into the corolla of the anemone; the corolla closed, and the shrimp disappeared from view.

In a hollow filled with water I found a little ray; it had buried its fins in the sand, but its brown and white spots attracted my attention. I carried it to Mr. De Bihorel.

"You discovered this ray," he said, "because of its spots, and the peculiarity that caused you to discover it betrays it also to the fishes hunting for prey; but as, at the bottom of the sea, there reigns a constant warfare, in which its inhabitants destroy one another, as too often happens on the land, simply for pleasure and glory, these poor rays, which are bad swimmers, would soon be exterminated if nature had not made provision for their preservation. Look at the tail of your ray and you will see that it bristles with sharp points which protect it on that side in its flight, and the enemies whom its spots attract retreat discomfited before its coat of mail. There is here a law of compensation which you may make a note of now, and which you will understand later on."

I was amazed; you may imagine the effect produced by this object lesson upon a boy naturally inquisitive and who had never before found any one able to answer his questions. Timidity, which at first had kept my mouth closed, soon vanished.

Following the receding tide we soon reached the Dog's Head. How long did we remain there? I cannot tell. I had lost count of time. I ran from rock to rock, bringing back to Mr. De Bihorel shells and plants different from any I had ever seen before. I filled my pockets with a number of things which I thought very curious at the moment I picked them up, but which I soon threw away to replace them by others that had over them the incontestable advantage of being newer.

Suddenly, on raising my eyes, I could no longer see the shore, it was hidden under a light mist; the sky was of a uniform pale-gray; the sea was so calm that we could scarcely hear its murmur behind us.

If I had been alone I should have retraced my steps at once, for I well knew how difficult it is to find one's way on the beach in a fog, but as Mr. De Bihorel said nothing I did not venture to say anything either.

The fog, however, which now shrouded all the coast, advanced towards us like a cloud of smoke rising straight up from the earth to the sky.

"Ah, ah! there is the fog," said Mr. De Bihorel. "If we do not wish to play a rather serious game of blind-man's-buff, we had better return. Take the net."

But almost at the same instant the cloud reached us, enveloping us in its folds, and we could no longer distinguish either the shore or the sea, which was fifty steps behind us; we were wrapped in a gray obscurity.

"The sea is there behind us," said Mr. De Bihorel, without showing any signs of disquietude; "we have only to walk straight on."

To walk straight on over the sand, with nothing to guide us, neither path nor footprint, nor even any inequality in the ground which should tell us whether we were ascending or descending, was indeed to play a rather dangerous game; it was like playing a game of the Green Carpet of Versailles, which consists in walking with blindfolded eyes from the parterre of Latona to the fountain of Apollo, without deviating from the path or stepping on the gravel, with this aggravating circumstance in our case, that we had at least half a league to walk before reaching the cliffs.

We had not walked ten minutes before we came upon a group of rocks.

"They are the Green Rocks," I said.

"It is the Pouldu," said Mr. De Bihorel.

"They are the Green Rocks, sir."

He tapped me lightly on the cheek.

"Ah, ah! so it seems we have a stubborn little pate on our shoulders," he said.

If they were the Green Rocks we must turn to the right to reach the Pouldu; if, on the contrary, it was the Pouldu we must turn to the left, or we should be walking away from the village.

In broad daylight nothing is easier than to tell these two groups of rocks apart; even at night, if the moon were shining, I should have no difficulty in recognizing them; but veiled as they were by the fog, we could see nothing more than that they were a group of rocks covered with sea-weed.

"Let us listen," said Mr. De Bihorel; "the noise of the waves washing the beach will serve to guide us."

We could hear nothing, however, neither the dashing of the waves against the beach, nor even the murmur of the sea. There was not a breath of air. We were enveloped in white cotton, as it were, which stopped our ears as well as our eyes.

"It is the Pouldu," said Mr. De Bihorel.

I did not dare to contradict him again, and I followed in his steps, turning, like him, to the left.

"Come near, my child," he said, in a gentle voice; "give me your hand so that we may not lose each other—one, two, let us keep step."

We walked on for some ten minutes longer, when I felt his clasp tighten on my hand. We heard a faint plashing. We had taken the wrong path, they were the Green Rocks; we were walking straight towards the sea, from which we were only a few steps distant!

"You were right," he said; "we should have turned to the right. Let us go back."

Go back where? How direct our course? We knew in what direction the sea lay, because we heard the waves breaking gently on the beach; but as we receded from it this sound died away, and we no longer knew whether we were walking towards the shore or had turned our backs upon it.

The darkness increased at every moment, for in addition to the obscurity caused by the fog, night was falling. For some moments past we had been unable to distinguish even the toes of our boots, and it was with difficulty that Mr. De Bihorel could see what the

hour was by his watch. It was six o'clock; the tide was beginning to come in.

"We must hurry," he said. "If the sea overtakes us, it will travel faster than we; it wears seven-league boots."

He knew by the trembling of my hand in his that I was frightened.

"Have no fear, my child," he resumed; "a land-breeze is springing up which will blow the fog out to sea; besides, we shall see the light-house, which will soon be lighted up."

There was little in this to reassure me. As for the light-house, I well knew that we should not be able to see its light. For some time past my thoughts had been occupied by the fate of three women who, the year before, had been surprised, like us, on this coast by the fog and drowned. Their bodies were not recovered until a week afterwards. I had seen them as they were carried to Port Dieu, and I fancied I could see them now before me—a horrible sight in their poor rags, green with the sea-weed.

Although I tried hard to restrain my tears, I could not prevent them from bursting forth. Without showing any impatience, Mr. De Bihorel tried to soothe me with kind words.

"Let us shout," he said. "If there should happen to be a coast-guard on the cliff he will hear us and answer. Those rascals ought to be good for something."

We shouted; he loudly, I in a voice broken by sobs. There was no response, not even an echo, and the gloomy silence increased my terror; it seemed to me

as if I were already lying dead at the bottom of the sea.

"Let us walk," he said. "Can you walk?"

He took my hand, and we walked on at random. From the tone of his voice, as from time to time he said something hopeful to cheer me, I knew well that he, too, was anxious and had no faith in his own words.

After we had walked for fully half an hour in this way despair took complete possession of me, and loosening my hand from his grasp I threw myself on the sand.

"Leave me here to die, sir," I cried, sobbing.

"This is pretty conduct," he said. "Now we have another sort of flood. Dry your tears, I say. Is one to think of dying when one has a mother? Come, get up, and follow me."

But his words had no effect upon me; I remained where I was, unable to stir.

Suddenly I uttered a cry.

"Sir!"

"Well, my child?"

"See! see! Stoop down!"

"Do you wish me to carry you, my poor child?"

"No, sir. Feel."

And taking his hand I placed it, palm downward, beside mine upon the sand.

"Well?"

"Feel; there is water here."

Our beach is formed of a very fine sand, deep-lying and porous. At low-tide this sand, which has absorbed water like a sponge, gives it back in little streams that, following the descent of the beach, run down into the

sea. It was one of these little streams whose course my hand had stopped.

"The land is there," I said, pointing in the direction whence the water flowed.

At the same time I rose to my feet; hope had restored to me the use of my limbs; Mr. De Bihorel had no need to drag me now.

I walked on, stooping down from time to time to press my hand on the sand, in order to be sure, by following an opposite direction to that in which the water ran, that we were leaving the sea behind us.

"You are a brave boy," said Mr. De Bihorel. "If it had not been for you we should both have been drowned, I truly believe."

Scarcely five minutes after we had thought ourselves already safe, I fancied I could no longer feel the water. We went on a few steps farther; the sand that met my touch now was almost dry.

"There is no more water," I said.

He stooped and touched the ground with both hands. We felt only the damp sand, which adhered to our fingers.

At the same time I thought I heard a faint plash. Mr. De Bihorel had heard it also.

"You must have been mistaken," he said; "we are walking towards the sea."

"No, sir; I am sure of what I say. Besides, if we were going towards the sea the sand would be moister than it is."

He stood up without answering. We remained thus for a time, hesitating which way to turn, lost once more. He took out his watch; it was too dark to see

the hands, but he made it strike the hour; it was a quarter to seven.

"The tide has been coming in for more than an hour," he said.

"So you see, sir," I replied, "that we have been walking inland."

As if to confirm my words, a hollow roar sounded at our backs. There could be no room for doubt; the tide was advancing upon us.

"It is a *nau*, then, we have before us," he said.

"I think it is, sir."

The beach on this part of the coast, formed as it is of shifting sands, is never perfectly level; here and there rise little hillocks, separated from each other by little valleys. All this is almost flat to the eye when the tide is out, so slight are the elevations and depressions, but is made quite perceptible by the water, the incoming tide filling the valleys, while the hills remain dry, forming islands, washed on the one side by the rising tide, surrounded on all the other sides by currents, which flow along the valleys like rivers flowing along their beds. Before us was one of these currents, or *naus*. Was it deep? That was the only question.

"We must cross the *nau*," said Mr. De Bihorel. "Hold fast to me."

And as I hesitated,

"Which are you most afraid of wetting," he said, "your head or your feet? You must choose between them. As for me, I prefer to wet my feet."

"No, sir; we should be drowned," I replied.

"Would you rather remain where you are, then, and be overtaken by the sea?"

"No; but cross you first, sir. I will stay here and shout; follow you the sound of my voice; when you are on the opposite side, you will shout to me in your turn, and I will go in the direction from which the sound comes."

"No; you cross first."

"No; I can swim better than you."

"You are a brave boy; come and let me embrace you."

He embraced me as if I had been his own son; this touched my heart.

There was now no time to be lost; the sea was advancing rapidly upon us; at every instant its roar grew louder. He entered the water and I began to shout.

"Do not shout," said Mr. De Bihorel, whom I could no longer see; "sing, rather, if you know how."

"Yes, sir;" and I began to sing:

"He was born in Normandy,
There he was baptized Rageau;
From his cradle his beauty
Was the envy of high and low.
Tra la, la! tra la, la!"

I paused to say,

"Can you keep your footing, sir?"

"Yes, my child; I think I am beginning to get out of the current. Sing."

I sang the second, and I was going to begin the third stanza of this *rondeau* when Mr. De Bihorel called to me,

"It is your turn now; the water reaches only to my knees. Come."

And he chanted an air without words which was as mournful as a dirge.

I entered the water in my turn, but I was not as tall as Mr. De Bihorel, and it was not long before I lost my footing; this did not matter to me, however, for I could swim like a fish. Only as there was a current I had some difficulty in keeping in the right course, and it took me more than a quarter of an hour to reach him.

Once together it was not long before we emerged from the water and found ourselves on the sand.

He drew a breath of relief which showed me how keen his anxiety had been.

"Let us take a pinch of snuff," he said; "we have well earned it."

But as soon as he opened his snuffbox he cried, shaking the snuff from his fingers,

"My snuff turned to coffee-grounds, and the wheels of my watch ploughing the water, no doubt, like mill-wheels! What will Saturday say?"

I did not know what he meant by this, but I was no longer in the least afraid. I thought the danger was now past.

This was not the case, however; half our trials were not yet over. We were surrounded by the same dangers, and we had the same difficulty as before to find our way.

The fog seemed to have grown thicker; night had fallen, and although we were nearer to the cliff, no sound came to us from that direction, saying to us, "Land is here;" neither the lowing of a cow, nor the cracking of a whip, nor the creaking of an axle-tree—

nothing; before us a dead silence; behind the roar of the incoming tide.

This was the only compass we had now to steer by, and it was in truth a treacherous and uncertain one; if we went forward too quickly we might lose our way; if too slowly, the tide might overtake and ingulf us before we could reach the firm land, where the ascent would retard its course.

We resumed our march, then, hand in hand. I stooped down frequently to feel the sand, but my hand no longer came in contact with running water; we were on a sand-bank furrowed with little hollows, in which the water either stood motionless or flowed parallel with the shore.

The hope we had cherished of being in safety when we should have crossed the *nau* was beginning to abandon us, when suddenly we both stood still at once. The sound of a bell had penetrated the fog in which we were enveloped.

After an interval of a few seconds we heard another stroke and then another.

It was the angelus at Port Dieu. We had only to walk in the direction whence the sound came and we were saved.

Without exchanging a single word we began with one accord to run.

"Let us make haste," said Mr. De Bihorel. "The angelus does not last long; it is too short a prayer; they ought to add the litanies to it to guide us."

With what anxiety did we count the strokes of the bell as we ran on without pausing to take breath! Neither of us spoke, but I knew very well that if the

bell should cease ringing before we had reached the land, we might find ourselves in safety for a few moments only to lose our way again.

It ceased ringing, and we were still on the sands. Perhaps the land was only a few yards distant; perhaps we had but a step to take to reach it. But how know in what direction to take this step? Our next step might, with equal probability, put us on the way to safety or remove us still farther from it, throwing us back into the midst of the dangers we had just escaped.

"Let us stop to consider," said Mr. De Bihorel, "and not take a single step at random. Feel the sand, my child. Have you noticed how many *naus* we have crossed?"

"No, sir."

"Then you do not know whether there are any others to be crossed or not? If we have crossed them all, we have only to wait. When the tide comes in we will feel our way before it."

"Yes; but how if we should not have crossed them all?"

He did not answer, for he could only tell me what I already knew as well as he did—that is to say, that if there were still a *nau* between us and the land and we remained where we were, the incoming tide would fill it without giving us warning; we should have to swim across it, running the risk of being carried out to sea by the current, or thrown among rocks from which it would be impossible for us to escape.

We had a moment of terrible anxiety, as we stood uncertain what to do, not venturing to take a single

step, either forward or backward, to the right hand or to the left, for, standing where we had just heard the sound of the bell, at least, we were as certain as if it had been revealed to us by a flash of light that the village was in front of us, whereas, if we took but a single step, in whatever direction, we should again find ourselves a prey to the tortures of uncertainty.

Our only hope now was that a gale might spring up, which would dispel the fog and enable us to see the light-house, for we could not count upon the noise of the sea to guide us; we judged that we were to the south of the village, in front of a solitary cliff whence, at this hour, no noise could come. But the atmosphere was so calm, so heavy, the fog was so thick, so solid, that to hope for a breeze to spring up it was necessary to be in a situation as desperate as ours, in which one hopes for the impossible and expects a miracle to happen.

And this miracle happened. The bell, which had ceased ringing, once more began to peal.

A baptism was taking place, and on this occasion we were sure the sound would last long enough to give us time to reach the land, for the chimes for baptism often last for half an hour or even longer, if the godfather has taken the precaution to strengthen the arms of the ringer.

In less than ten minutes we had reached the land, and, winding our way along the base of the cliff, we reached the causeway which unites Mr. De Bihorel's island to the main-land. We were saved.

Mr. De Bihorel would have had me accompany him to his house, but notwithstanding the urgency of his

invitation I refused. I was impatient to be at home, where, perhaps, my mother had already arrived.

"Well, then," he said, "tell your mother that I will go to see her to-morrow evening."

I could very well have excused his making us this visit, from which my mother would learn how I had spent my day. But how prevent it?

My mother had not yet returned home. When she came in she found me in dry clothes, seated before the fire, which I had lighted.

I delivered Mr. De Bihorel's message to her.

On the following evening he came, as he had promised. I had been watching for him. When I heard his step, I had a mind to run away and hide myself.

"Has this boy told you of what he did yesterday?" our visitor said to my mother, when he had seated himself.

"No, sir."

"Well, he played truant all day."

My poor mother looked at me, grieved and uneasy, thinking she was going to hear a long series of complaints against me.

"Ah, Romain!" she said, sadly.

"Do not scold him," said Mr. De Bihorel, quickly, "for he also saved my life. There, don't tremble like that, my child; but come here. You have a brave son, Madame Kalbris; you have reason to be proud of him."

He then related to her how he had met me on the day before and how we had been overtaken by the fog.

"You see, my dear madame, do you not," he continued, "that if it had not been for him I should have

been lost, beyond a doubt? I was vexed at his ignorance in the morning, in not knowing the name of a sea-anemone. But when the moment of danger came, my science was all of no use to me; and if I had not had the instinct of this child to guide me the sea-anemone, the crabs, and the lobsters would now be studying my anatomy. I owe your son a debt, then, of which I wish to acquit myself."

My mother made a gesture of refusal.

"Make your mind easy," he said, without heeding the interruption. "I shall propose nothing to you which would offend your pride or be unworthy of the service I have received. Give him to me, and I will take charge of his education; I drew the boy out in conversation; he is eager to see and to learn. I love children, and I have none of my own; he will not be unhappy with me."

My mother received this proposition as was fitting, but she did not accept it.

"Permit me to tell you," said Mr. De Bihorel, as he gave her his hand, "why it is that you refuse my proposal. You love your boy passionately; you love him, not for his own sake alone, but for the sake of his dead father as well; he is all you have now, and you wish to keep him with you. Am I not right? Now I am going to tell you also why you ought to give him to me, notwithstanding this. He has a fund of intelligence which only requires to be cultivated; at Port Dieu this would not be possible, nor, without seeking to pry into your affairs, would it be possible for you, I believe, to send him elsewhere; add to this that the boy has an independent spirit and an adventurous disposition, and that

he needs guidance. Think over what I have said; do not give me an answer at once; reflect upon the matter quietly, when your maternal feelings shall have grown calmer. I will come back to-morrow evening."

When he had taken his departure we sat down to supper, but my mother did not eat; she looked long and thoughtfully at me, and when her glance encountered mine she turned her gaze on the fire.

When I said good-night to her before going to bed, I felt my cheeks wet with her tears. What was the source of these tears? Was it pride at what Mr. De Bihorel had told her of me? Was it grief at our approaching separation?

I thought then only of the separation, the idea of which troubled me also.

"Don't cry, mamma," I said, kissing her; "I won't leave you."

"Yes, my child; it is for your good. Mr. De Bihorel is right; we must accept his offer."

V.

The reception I met with on going to Mr. De Bihorel's justified, in my mind, his reputation for eccentricity, of which I had already heard.

When I reached the house, I found him standing before the door; he had seen me at a distance and had come out to welcome me.

"Come here," he said, without giving me time to look about; "have you ever written a letter? No.

Well, you shall write one now to your mother to tell her that you have arrived safely and that Saturday will go to-morrow for your clothes. I shall see from this letter what you know. Come in and sit down here."

He took me into a large apartment filled with books, pointed to a table on which were pen, ink, and paper, and left me to myself.

I felt more disposed to cry than to write, for this brusqueness, coming while my heart was still oppressed with grief at parting from my mother, almost suffocated me. I did my best to obey him, however. But I wet the paper with my tears more than with ink, for, although it was my first letter home, I felt that "I have arrived and Saturday will go to-morrow for my clothes" was not enough to say; but I found it impossible to think of anything else.

I had been struggling helplessly for a quarter of an hour or more to get beyond this wretched sentence when my attention was attracted by a conversation going on in the adjoining room between Mr. De Bihorel and Saturday.

"The child has come, then," said Saturday.

"Why, did you think he was not coming?"

"I thought that his coming would make a great change here."

"In what respect?"

"The master breakfasts at noon; I take my mouthful early in the morning. Will the boy wait till noon to breakfast, or will he take his mouthful with me?"

"You are a fool with your mouthful."

"Well, I never undertook to nurse children before."

"You were once a child yourself, were you not?

Well, then, recall that time, and treat him as you were treated."

"Oh, no; that sort of treatment would not do in his case. I was brought up in the midst of hardships; if you want to bring him up like that it would be better for you to send him home again. Do not forget that you owe the boy something."

"Do not forget it, you, and act accordingly."

"Then I am to give him his mouthful with sugar?"

"Give him what you liked at his age, or, rather, ask him what he likes, and give him that."

"If you put him on that footing things will go on well."

"Saturday, do you know what children serve for?"

"They serve for nothing but to destroy and ruin everything and to make the world go to perdition."

"They serve for something very different from that; they serve to help us to begin life anew when we have gone astray; they serve to carry out the purposes in which we have failed."

Almost immediately afterwards he entered the room where I was.

"You have done nothing," he said; "so much the better; it will not be necessary to pull up before planting. Now, go run about."

It was indeed a strange place of abode, this island, which was called Pierre Gante. I have never seen another place like it.

From the shore, the island presented the appearance of a triangular-shaped amphitheatre, the angle opposite the main-land, from which it was separated by an arm of the sea some four hundred yards in width, being

level and more prolonged than either of the other two. The side facing the shore was covered with vegetation —plants and shrubs, among which rose, here and there, a gray granite peak. The side facing the sea was barren, bare, and burned by the winds and the salt air.

The house was situated on the highest point of the island, whose sides sloped upward, forming a small plateau. Here, while it had the advantage, on the one hand, of enjoying a view embracing the whole horizon, landward as well as seaward, it was exposed, on the other, to all the violence of the winds, from whatever quarter they might blow. But the winds spent their fury in vain against it, for, constructed under the ministry of Choiseul to repel the invasions of the English and to serve as one of the numerous guard-houses on the coast, it had massive granite walls, several feet thick, and a bomb-proof roof. When Mr. De Bihorel bought this old shell he surrounded it on the outside with a gallery which, adding to its size, gave it a more cheerful air; and the interior he transformed into a habitable dwelling by means of partitions and doors. He had, indeed, rendered it neither comfortable nor elegant by these improvements; but neither had he taken away anything from its one indispensable quality, which was to present as firm a front against the wind as the rock of which it seemed to form a part.

These scorching winds, while they were a foe against whose attacks unceasing vigilance was necessary, were at the same time an advantage to the island. They rendered its temperature in winter milder than that of the main-land, so that in the valleys and in the shelter of the rocks and the hill-side, plants and shrubs were to be

found which in more temperate climates grow only in hot-houses—such as oleanders, fuschias, and fig-trees.

Most of the inequalities of the ground were due to nature; but some of them had been created by Mr. De Bihorel himself, who, aided by Saturday, had transformed the island into a sort of wild garden. The western side only had escaped cultivation; swept unceasingly by the winds, and watered by the salt spray, it served as pasturage for two little Breton cows and several black sheep.

What made this really considerable work of transformation and reclamation remarkable was that it had been accomplished by the unaided efforts of these two men.

I had often heard it said in the village that Mr. De Bihorel had, in this matter, been actuated by avarice; when I knew him better, however, I saw that he had acted, on the contrary, from principle. "Man ought to suffice to himself," he would often say, "and I am a living example that it is possible for him to do so."

He pushed this idea so far in its application that not even for the common and ordinary affairs of life had he recourse to outside help. They lived upon cow's milk, the fruits and vegetables of the garden, the fish caught by Saturday, the bread baked in the house, made from flour ground in a little windmill, which was undoubtedly the *chef-d'œuvre* of Mr. De Bihorel. If the island had been large enough, they would have raised sufficient grain for the entire year and apples to make cider.

To be just, it must be said that the part Saturday took in all this was not inconsiderable. He had been

in his time a cabin-boy, a sailor, body-servant to an officer, and cook on board a whaling vessel; and in this way he had served an apprenticeship to many trades.

The relationship existing between the two men was not that of master and servant; they were rather two partners. They ate at the same table, and the only distinction between them was that Mr. De Bihorel sat at the upper end. There was something simple and dignified in this mode of living, at which I ceased to wonder when I found myself sharing it, but which causes me emotion now as I remember it.

"My boy," said Mr. De Bihorel to me on the very day of my arrival, "it is not my intention to make a gentleman of you—that is to say, a notary or a doctor—but only a sailor who shall be a man. There is more than one way of learning; one may learn amusing one's self and walking about. Is this system to your taste?"

This discourse sounded strange to me, child as I was. Experience made plain to me afterwards what I at first failed to comprehend.

I was not a little surprised to learn that education could be carried on as an amusement, for it was not in this way that I had been accustomed to work at school. I was still more surprised when he gave me my first lesson—that is to say, that very afternoon.

I accompanied him in his walk on the sea-shore, and, as we walked, he made me talk. We had entered a little oak grove.

"What are those?" he said to me, pointing to some ants crossing the road.

"Ants," I answered.

"Yes, but what are they doing?"

"Carrying other ants."

"Good. Now follow them to their ant-hill; look well at them and tell me what you see; if you see nothing that surprises you, return to-morrow, the day after to-morrow, every day, until you shall have observed something."

After two days spent in watching the ant-hill, I saw that there were ants there who did absolutely nothing, while there were others who toiled ceaselessly and who even fed the lazy ones.

"Very good," he said, when I communicated to him the result of my observations; "you have seen the principal thing; that suffices. Those ants who do nothing are not sick or disabled, as you may imagine; they are the masters of those who work, who are their slaves. Without the assistance of those slaves they would be unable to go in search of food. This surprises you; the same thing, however, is often seen in our own world; there are still countries where there are men who do nothing and who are fed by others who work. If this idleness proceeded from the inability of the masters to work, nothing would be easier to understand than that some should work and others do nothing. To help one another is indeed right, but that is not what happens here. The masters among the ants are those which are most skilful in the things which require strength and courage—such as war. We will go back to observe the ants together, and we shall doubtless see them engaged in some great battle among themselves. While you are waiting for an opportunity to witness one of these combats, I will give you an account of one to read, written by a *savant* named Huber,

which took place simultaneously with another great battle, a much more terrible one, five hundred leagues away, between men. Whether the men had any better reason than the ants to massacre each other on that particular day I do not know; but I do know that the slaughter was frightful. I myself came very near being left dead on the field. We were marching along the borders of a river called the Elbe, on the opposite bank of which a Russian battery was stationed, whose guns we could hear, although we could not see the execution they did, as we were sheltered by a bend of the river and by an embankment. During the whole time we were marching I kept thinking that this day, which might be the day of my death (for we had to pass under the fire of the enemy), was my wife's fête day, and regretting that I could not wish her joy on the occasion. Suddenly I perceived at my feet, in the damp ditch in which I was walking, a cluster of *myosotis* in full bloom. It must not be supposed that battles are fought, as they are represented in pictures, with unbroken ranks. We had been detached as skirmishers; that is to say, we were independent in our movements. In spite of the seriousness of the situation, the little blue flowers caught my attention. I stooped down to gather a few of them, and at the same instant I felt a terrific wind pass close to my head; I heard a deafening detonation, and I received full on my back a heap of willow branches. We were in front of the battery, and it had mowed down my comrades all around me. If I had remained standing—that is to say, if it had not been for my bunch of flowers—I should have been killed like them. Confess that I had done well to

think of my wife. When I succeeded in freeing myself from the willow branches, Marshal Ney had silenced the Russian cannon."

With this account of the battle of Friedland still fresh in my mind, I read that evening Huber's account of the combat of the ants. Huber was blind. He saw with the eyes of the most devoted and the most intelligent of servants, to whom he dictated the most delightful book that has ever been written on bees and ants. If Mr. De Bihorel had not led me to read the account of the battle of the ants in the way he had done, if he had imposed the reading of it upon me as a task instead of giving it to me as a reward, what effect would it have produced on a child of my age, ignorant as I was? Thanks to the manner in which he presented it to me, it entered so fully into my mind, already prepared for it, that to-day, notwithstanding the years that have passed since then, the impression I retain of it is clearer and more vivid than that of many books that I have read recently.

Mr. De Bihorel was not very fond of reading. There was one book, however, which he put at once into my hands; but this book was for him what the Bible is for Protestants, the *Imitation* for a Catholic. It was on this book that he had modelled his life; it was this book which had created Pierre Gante and the marvels of industry there; it was this book which had suggested to him the idea of the large umbrella; this book which had given his name to Saturday whom, out of respect for its hero, he had not called Friday—it was *Robinson Crusoe*.

"You will learn in this book," he said, as he gave it

to me, "what force of will can accomplish; you will learn also that if a man, by the exercise of his will, can reproduce every human invention, he ought not to pride himself too much on this power, for there is still above him One greater than he. You do not understand now, perhaps, the meaning of these words, but you will do so later, and it is necessary that I should say this to you. Besides, even if you are not struck by this great truth, you will still, like all who read the book, find something in it that will please you."

I do not know if there are children who can read *Robinson Crusoe* without emotion; as for me, I was enchanted with it.

I must confess, however, that what attracted me most was not the philosophical side of the story, to which my attention had been directed, but its romantic side—the adventures at sea, the shipwreck, the desert island, with its savages, its terrors, its unknown dangers. My Indian uncle had a rival in my thoughts.

I found in it the justification of my longings, as it were. Who is there who has not put himself in the place of De Foe's hero, and said to himself:

"Why should not such adventures happen to me? Why should not I be able to do all that he did?"

It is not the child in arms only who thinks he has but to stretch out his hands to grasp the moon.

Saturday, who knew so many things, did not know how to read. Seeing my enthusiasm, he was curious to know the adventures that had aroused it, and he asked me to read them to him.

"He will tell them to you," said Mr. De Bihorel,

"and that will be better; you are primitive enough to prefer a narration to a reading."

Ten years of voyaging had given Saturday a certain amount of experience, and he did not accept all my stories without expressing an occasional doubt as to their veracity. But I always had an answer ready for him which ended the discussion—

"It is so in the book."

"Are you quite sure, my little Romain?"

I would take the book and read.

Saturday would listen, scratching his nose; then, with the submissiveness of a blind faith:

"Since it is so in the book," he would say, "of course it must be so; but all the same I have been myself on the coast of Africa, and I never saw lions swimming out from shore to attack a vessel. But go on."

He had sailed chiefly in northern waters, and he had many reminiscences of his voyages, with which he in his turn often entertained me.

On one occasion, being overtaken by the snows, they had been obliged to pass the winter in those inhospitable regions. For more than six months they had lived under the snow, and more than half the crew had remained buried there. Even the dogs had died, not from cold or from want of food, but from want of light. If there had been oil enough to keep the lamps burning they need not have died. His adventures were almost as wonderful as those of Robinson Crusoe—sometimes, indeed, almost too wonderful for my belief.

"Are those things in a book?" I would ask.

Saturday was then obliged to confess that he had not read them, although he had seen them.

"What does that matter," I would answer, "since they are not in a book?"

Conversations like these, it must be confessed, were not calculated to inspire me with a desire for a tranquil life on shore; so that my mother, distressed at seeing my natural inclinations so unfortunately encouraged, appealed to Mr. De Bihorel.

"My dear madame," he answered, "I will give you back the boy, if you think I urge him towards a calling which you would not like to see him follow. But you will never be able to change his nature; he is of the race of those who strive after the impossible. I agree with you that such a disposition rarely leads to fortune, but it sometimes leads to great things."

Such is the ingratitude of children that about this time I would have left Pierre Gante almost gladly. Mr. De Bihorel had studied the cries of birds, and in these cries he believed, whether rightly or not, that he had discovered a language, of which he compiled a dictionary. He wished to teach it to me. I could understand absolutely nothing of it. Thence arose continual occasions for anger on his part, for tears on mine.

This language was something curious, however, and I regret now that I can remember only a few words of it. All that a bird can express Mr. De Bihorel affirmed he had succeeded in translating, as he said, literally: "I am hungry;" "There is food yonder;" "Let us fly away;" "Let us make a nest;" "*Kia ouah tsioui*" (a storm is approaching). But I was then still too much of a child and too much of a peasant to admit that animals could talk. We can understand music, although it is not our native speech, and we will not admit that

birds, they who were our first masters in the art, can understand it. Our dogs, our horses, our domestic animals understand our language. Was it, then, altogether impossible that Mr. De Bihorel should understand the language of the birds?

My mother, disturbed by Mr. De Bihorel's answer, did not persist in her demand, and I was obliged to continue studying the dictionary of the guillemots and the sea-mews.

"You will see later," said Mr. De Bihorel to me, "the utility of what now seems to you ridiculous. Your mother is afraid that you will be a sailor; it is not *my* wish, either, that you should become one, for as things now are one may enter the naval service at fifteen full of enthusiasm, to leave it at forty in disgust. But you have a passion for the sea; with you it is a family calling, and we must arrange matters so as to satisfy both your own inclination and your mother's wishes. My desire is that you should become a man like André Michaux, whose life you read the other day; like Siebold, a Dutch physician, to whom we are indebted for our earliest knowledge of Japan; or like the Englishman, Robert Fortune. I should like to fit you to travel in lands which are little known, for the good of your country, which you would enrich with new plants and useful animals; for the good of science, whose soldier you would become. That would be a better occupation than following the sea and spending all your life carrying coffee from Rio Janeiro to Havre, and Parisian articles from Havre to Rio Janeiro; and if my hopes are realized, you will see that what you are now learning will be of real use to you."

It was a beautiful dream. Unfortunately, it remained a dream. Whether this clear-sighted and elevated guidance would have made of me the man Mr. De Bihorel wished I do not know, for it ceased precisely at the time when it was most necessary, and just as I had begun to profit by the lessons of this excellent man. This unlooked-for catastrophe happened in the following manner:

I usually accompanied Mr. De Bihorel in his excursions. Occasionally, however, he would go out alone in the long-boat to study at his ease the cries of the birds at the island of the Grunes, which is about three leagues distant from Port Dieu.

One day, when he had gone on one of these excursions before I was out of bed, we were greatly surprised, when the dinner-hour arrived, to find that he had not yet returned.

"He must have missed the tide," said Saturday; "he will not be home now before evening."

The weather was fine, the sea calm; there was, apparently, no danger to be feared. Yet Saturday seemed uneasy.

Evening came, but Mr. De Bihorel had not returned, and Saturday, instead of going to bed, went and kindled a large fire of logs on the highest point of the island. I wanted to accompany him, but he sent me back to bed, crossly. Towards morning I rose and joined him. He was walking up and down before the fire, which sent up great red flames, and from time to time he stopped to listen. Nothing could be heard but the murmur of the sea, and occasionally a faint sound, the rustling of wings, when some bird, which the light

had awakened in its nest, would flutter about for a moment and then fall dazed among the burning brands.

Dawn was brightening the eastern sky.

"There is no doubt that something has happened to him," said Saturday. "We must borrow Gosseaume's boat and go in search of him to the island of the Grunes."

The island of the Grunes is a group of granite rocks inhabited only by sea-birds. It did not take us long to search it through; no trace was to be found anywhere, either of Mr. De Bihorel or of the long-boat.

At Port Dieu the utmost anxiety prevailed; for, notwithstanding his eccentricity, old Mr. Sunday was greatly loved by the villagers. His disappearance was inexplicable.

"His boat may have capsized," some of the villagers said.

"In that case it would have been found," objected others.

"The currents may have carried it away."

Saturday said nothing, but he did not leave the shore the whole day; when the tide ebbed he followed the receding waters, and, one after another, examined every rock along the beach. Sometimes we would find ourselves, when night came, five or six leagues distant from Port Dieu. He did not speak; he never uttered Mr. De Bihorel's name; only when we met some fisherman he would say to him,

"No news?"

And then, when he saw my eyes fill with tears, he would say, tapping me on the head,

"You are a good boy; yes, you are a good boy."

A fortnight after this mysterious disappearance, a certain Mr. De la Berryais, who lived in Lower Normandy, arrived at Pierre Gante. He was a grand-nephew of Mr. De Bihorel, and his only remaining relation.

After making us give him a minute account of all that had passed, he engaged twelve men at Port Dieu to explore the coast. The search continued for three days; on the evening of the third day he stopped it, declaring that it was henceforth useless, and that Mr. De Bihorel had certainly perished; the tide must have carried both the body and the long-boat out to sea.

"How do you know that?" cried Saturday. "You say it because you would wish it to be so. The tide may have carried the long-boat out to sea without its having capsized; perhaps the master has landed in England. What is there to prevent his coming back to-morrow or the next day?"

The men who had carried on the search were present when he said this. No one contradicted him, through respect for his grief, but no one shared his opinion.

On the following day Mr. De la Berryais sent for Saturday and me, and said to us that no one was now needed at Pierre Gante, that the house was to be shut up, and that the notary would attend to the wants of the animals until they should be sold.

Saturday was so taken by surprise that he could only stammer a few unintelligible words in answer; then, suddenly turning towards me,

"Make up your bundle," he said; "we will go from here at once."

As we were leaving the island we met Mr. De la Berryais on the causeway; Saturday walked straight up to him.

"Sir," he said, "you may be his nephew in the eyes of the law, but in my eyes you are not; no, you are not his nephew; and it is a true sailor who tells you so."

It had been agreed upon that Saturday was to accept the hospitality of my mother until he should be able to find a lodging in the village, but he did not remain long with us.

Every morning he went to the beach, where he continued his researches. This lasted for some three weeks, when one evening he told us that he was going to leave us on the following day, to go to one of the Channel islands—perhaps to England itself.

"For the sea," he said to us, "keeps nothing; it may be that it has taken nothing."

My mother questioned him in regard to his plans, but she could draw nothing further from him.

I went with him on board the coaster on which he was to sail.

When I embraced him,

"You are a good boy," he said. "Go sometimes to Pierre Gante and take a handful of salt to the black cow; she, too, was fond of you."

VI.

I HAD an uncle in whom the blood of the Kalbris did not show itself, and who had preferred *terra firma* to to the sea. He was a bailiff at Dol, and had the reputation of being very wealthy.

My mother, not knowing what to do with me when I returned home, wrote to him, asking his advice in the matter. A month afterwards he arrived in Port Dieu.

"I did not answer your letter," he said, "because, as I intended to come, it was not worth while spending money on postage; it is hard enough to earn. I did not come sooner because I was waiting for an opportunity; I found a fishmonger who took me fifteen leagues for twelve sous; 'tis so much saved."

It may easily be guessed from these words that my uncle Simon was of a saving disposition; he soon gave us the proof that this was the case.

"I see what you mean," he said, when we had made him acquainted with the condition of our affairs; "you do not wish the boy to go to sea; you are right, sister-in-law, it is a dog's life; one makes nothing at it; and you would rather he should finish the education he began with old Sunday. But you have not counted upon me to help you, I hope?"

"I have never asked any money from you," answered my mother, with gentle dignity.

"Money! I have none. They say I am rich, but that is not the case. I am in debt to everybody. I have

been obliged to buy a piece of property which is ruining me."

"The priest has told me," continued my mother, "that the manner of his father's death and his services to the State entitle the boy to admittance to a college without payment."

"And who would take the necessary steps? Not I, you may depend upon it. I have not the time, and I do not like to bore people of influence whom I know; one might have need of them afterwards. No; you can do better than that. The Leheu Brothers have promised to take charge of the boy; it is their place to pay his college expenses."

"They have not alluded to the matter again."

"Well, then, I would speak to them about it if I were you."

As my mother was about to interrupt him,

"There should be no false delicacy," pursued my uncle; "ask what is your right. It is those who wait to be asked who ought to be ashamed; remember that."

My mother was obliged to resign herself to taking this step, against which her sense of right and her pride alike rebelled; my uncle was a man who tolerated no opposition.

"You understand," he said, in conclusion, "that I have neglected my own affairs to attend to yours; the least you can do is to follow my advice."

He was a man who was economical of his time, also.

"You," he said, turning towards me, "must go at once to the office of the Messrs. Leheu, to see if they are both there; I will wait for you in the street, and if they are together we will go in. I know their ways;

if we see them apart, the one we see first will promise to do everything we ask him, as soon as he has let his brother know, and the latter will refuse what the other has promised. I don't believe in those tricks."

As they were both in their office we went in, and I witnessed a strange scene, the minutest details of which are engraved on my memory; it must have impressed me deeply, for when we left the room my face was crimson; I felt instinctively that it was to dishonor my father's self-devotion to ask payment for it from those egotists, and my eyes filled with tears of shame.

When my uncle had put his proposition into plain words, the two brothers showed unmistakable signs of astonishment, and moved as uneasily upon their chairs as if they had been sitting on thorns.

"Send him to college!" cried the younger.

"To college!" repeated the elder.

"We, the Leheu Brothers!" cried both in chorus.

"Did you not promise to adopt him?" replied my uncle.

"Adopt him?" said the elder.

"Adopt him? You!" cried the younger.

"Adopt him? We!" vociferated both together.

Then began a confused and noisy discussion; every response of the younger of the brothers was immediately repeated by the elder, exactly in the same words, only in a ten times higher key; the one screamed, the other vociferated. Throughout all the dispute my uncle had kept his self-control, but when the two brothers repeated in chorus, "We do more than we promised; we give the mother work," he laughed a

little dry laugh, which immediately made them lower their tone.

Finally, when they had returned for the fifth or sixth time to this argument, he made an impatient gesture.

"One would think you were ruining yourselves by that," he said; "upon my word, you carry your thrift further than any one I ever met. You give, you give —to hear you one would think you gave your fortune, and you give—work. Do you not get the value of your ten sous and food in work? Do you pay more to his mother than you would have to pay to any other seamstress?"

"We pay her in cash," said the younger, with a gesture of just pride, "and we are disposed—yes, we are disposed—not to stop at that. When you come to tell us that Kalbris lost his life to save our fortune, that is not true; he lost his life trying to save men, sailors like himself, from drowning; and that, you know very well, is not our business, but the Government's; there is an appropriation made for those who amuse themselves in playing the hero. No matter for that, however; when the boy grows up and knows how to work, let him come to us and we will give him work, shall we not, Jerome?"

"Work," said the elder, "and as much of it as he wants."

This was all the satisfaction my uncle could obtain.

"These are people"—he began, when we were outside the office door.

I thought I was going to hear the explosion of his long-repressed anger.

"These are admirable people," continued my uncle, amazed at meeting any one as penurious as himself; "let them serve you as an example. They can say no. Bear that word well in mind. Only by knowing how to say that word can a man be sure of keeping what he has made."

Not being able to send me to college with the money of the Leheu Brothers, my uncle proposed to my mother to take me home with him. He was just then in need of a clerk; I was very young to fill such a position, but if I did not earn my board at first, by binding myself to remain with him for five years without payment, I should be able to indemnify him, to some extent, towards the end of that period, for what I should have cost him in the beginning; besides, I was his nephew, and he wished to do something to help his family.

This was not, alas, the education which my poor mother so ardently desired for me, but it was at least a means of preventing me from being a sailor. I went, then, with my uncle. It was a sorrowful parting. I wept bitterly, my mother wept more bitterly still, and my uncle scolded each of us in turn.

The sight of Dol, which is undoubtedly a picturesque place for one who is travelling for pleasure, produced on me the first melancholy impression ever caused by material objects. It was dark when we arrived there, and an icy rain was falling. We had set out from Port Dieu early in the morning in a fishmonger's wagon going to Cancale, which set us down at five or six leagues' distance from the city, and we had walked across broad, marshy plains, crossed at intervals by trenches filled with water, my uncle in

front; and I found it difficult to keep up with him, afflicted as I still was by the recent parting from my mother. In addition to my grief, I was so faint with hunger that my knees bent under me; but as my uncle during the whole of this long day had not once spoken of stopping to eat, I had not ventured to speak of doing so either. At last we perceived the lights of the city, and, after walking through two or three deserted streets, my uncle stopped before a tall house, with a portico in front supported by large pillars. He took a key out of his pocket and turned it in a lock; I took a step forward to enter; he stopped me; the door was not yet opened. He drew a second key from his pocket, then a third, this last key being a very large one. The bolts creaked with a metallic sound, which I recalled afterwards on hearing it in prison scenes at the theatre, and the door opened. These three locks produced in me a feeling of mingled fear and wonder. At our house there was only a latch with a string attached to it, and at Mr. De Bihorel's a simple bolt. Why, then, did my uncle take all these precautions?

He closed the door in the same manner in which he had opened it; then, taking me by the hand, he led me in the darkness across two apartments which appeared to me to be very large, and where our steps resounded on the stone pavement as if we were walking through a church. The air was permeated by a strange odor which was new to me—the odor of old parchments and musty papers, peculiar to the atmosphere of law offices and the offices of business men. When the candle was lighted, I saw that we were in a species of kitchen, but it was so encumbered with desks, presses, and old

black oaken chairs that its size and shape could only be guessed at.

Notwithstanding this not very inviting aspect, I felt a thrill of joy—at last we were going to warm ourselves and get something to eat.

"Shall I light the fire?" I asked my uncle.

"The fire?"

He made me this answer in so harsh a voice that I did not venture to say that I was wet to the skin, and that my teeth were chattering with cold.

"We are going to bed after we have had supper," he said.

And, going to a press, he took from it a loaf of bread and cut two slices, placed on each of the slices a morsel of cheese, gave me one of them, put the one which he had reserved for himself on a table and replaced the bread in the press, which he locked.

I know not what may be the sensations of the prisoner when he hears the key of his dungeon turned upon him, but they cannot be much more painful than those which I experienced when the creaking of the lock of this press fell upon my ear. It was very evident that it would be of no use to ask for a second slice of bread, and yet I could very well have eaten five or six such slices as that which my uncle had given me.

At this moment three starved-looking cats rushed into the kitchen and ran to rub themselves against my uncle's legs; this gave me a little hope; they came to ask their supper, and if the press were opened I should at least have the chance of having another slice of bread cut for me.

But my uncle did not open it.

"The jolly fellows are thirsty," he said; "we must not let them become mad."

And he set before them some water in a tin pan.

"Since you are now one of the family," he continued, "you must see that they never want for water; that will be your duty."

"And food?" I asked.

"There are plenty of rats and mice for them to eat. If they were to gorge themselves with food they would grow lazy," he answered.

Our supper was soon ended, and my uncle then said that he would show me to the chamber which I was henceforth to occupy.

The confusion of objects which I had observed in the kitchen was repeated on the staircase, on which, though it was very wide, there was scarcely room to pass. On the steps were rusty andirons, clocks, statues in wood and stone, turnspits, faience vases, odd-shaped pieces of pottery, and all sorts of articles, of whose names and uses I was ignorant. On the walls hung frames, pictures, swords, helmets, all in a confusion which seemed greater seen in the flickering light of the little candle that guided our steps. Of what use could all these things be to my uncle?

This was the perplexing question I asked myself without being able to answer it, for I did not know until later that to the profession of bailiff he joined another and a much more lucrative one.

Having left Port Dieu while quite a boy, he had obtained a situation in Paris with an auctioneer and appraiser with whom he had remained for twenty years, and whom he had left to open an office at Dol. But

the office was in reality only a secondary; the trade in old furniture and antiques of all sorts was his chief business. Intrusted, from his profession, with sales of all kinds, acquainted with everybody, having access to every house, he knew whenever there was a chance for a bargain, and was in a better situation to profit by his knowledge than any one else. Under cover of an assumed name, he bought in for himself any article which he considered valuable either as a work of art or from the caprice of fashion, and resold it at an enormous profit to the large merchants in Paris—the Vidalinqs and the Monbros—with whom he had dealings. Thus it was that his house, from the cellar to the garret, was a veritable storehouse of antiquities.

Like all the rooms of this old house, which seemed to have been built by giants, the room to which my uncle conducted me was of immense size; but it was so filled with articles of various sorts that he was obliged to point out the bed to me before I perceived it. On the walls hung tapestries with figures of life-size, from the ceiling hung stuffed animals—a cormorant, a crocodile, the red maw wide open, and in one corner of the room, behind a trunk which concealed its legs, was a suit of armor surmounted by a helmet, looking as if it covered the head of a living warrior.

"Are you afraid?" said my uncle, seeing my frightened and bewildered look.

I did not venture to confess that this was the case, and answered that I was cold.

"Hurry, then, and let me take away the candle. Here we go to bed in the dark."

I slipped into bed, but he had no sooner closed the door than I called him back. He returned.

The press had creaked.

"Uncle, there is a man in the press," I said.

He approached my bedside and looked at me fixedly.

"Never attempt to say so silly a thing as that again," he said, "or you will have to settle accounts with me."

For more than an hour I kept my face hid under the damp bedclothes, trembling with fear, cold, and hunger; then, by dint of reasoning with myself, I plucked up heart a little, uncovered my head, and opened my eyes. Through the high windows the moonlight poured into the room, separating it into three compartments, two of them bright, one dark. The wind was blowing outside, the panes of glass shook in their leaden frames, and from time to time light white clouds passed across the face of the moon; for a long time I kept my eyes fixed upon the silvery disk, and I believe I would have gazed at it all night, for it was to me what the light-house is to the sailor, and I fancied that so long as it continued to shine I was safe; but it soon rose high above the horizon, and, while the light still entered the room, the moon itself disappeared from view above the tall windows. I closed my eyes; but in every corner of the apartment, behind every article of furniture, there was a magnet which, with irresistible power, attracted my gaze and kept my eyelids open against my will. At this instant a gust of wind shook the house, the timbers creaked, from the moving tapestry stood out a man dressed in red, waving a sword; the crocodile began to dance from the end of his cord, opening

wide his capacious jaws, and gigantic shadows chased one another across the ceiling, while the warrior, whom all this confusion had awakened from his slumbers, shook in his armor. I tried to cry out, to stretch out my arms to the warrior to entreat him to protect me from the red man, but I could neither move nor utter a sound, and I felt that my senses were leaving me.

When I returned to myself my uncle was shaking me by the arm and it was broad daylight. My first glance was in the direction of the red man; he had gone back to his place in the tapestry, which hung motionless on the wall.

"You must take care to waken of yourself, and earlier than this hereafter," said my uncle. "Now hurry, that I may set you to work before I go out."

My uncle had that bustling activity which is met with only among people of short stature, and if he had been endowed with the same amount of energy as all the other Kalbris, as the frame which this energy had to put in motion was a very diminutive one, he would have performed miracles of work. He rose every morning at four, went down into his office and worked there furiously until his clients began to arrive—that is to say, until eight or nine o'clock. It was the work done during these four or five hours that I had to copy during the day, for the documents of bailiffs are made in duplicate—the original and a copy.

No sooner had my uncle left the house than I abandoned the task he had given me, for ever since I had wakened I could think of nothing but the man in red on the tapestry; I felt that if in the coming night he were again to step out from the wall I should die in-

stantly; and when I thought of his menacing countenance and his raised sword, the perspiration broke out on my forehead.

I proceeded to look about the house for a hammer and nails. When I had found what I wanted, which was not a difficult task, for my uncle never employed any one to mend a piece of furniture which came to him in bad condition, I returned to my room. I went straight to the man in red; he had assumed the most harmless air in the world, and stood perfectly quiet in his place in the tapestry. I did not allow myself to be deceived by this hypocritical tranquillity, however, but with a few heavy blows of the hammer nailed his arm fast to the wall. The warrior essayed to move in his armor; but the sun shone brightly, the hour for phantoms had passed; I gave him a good blow of the hammer on his cuirass, and I let the crocodile understand by a sign that he must behave himself unless he wished to be treated in the same manner.

This done, and my conscience all the more tranquil because I had resisted a vengeful desire which impelled me to drive a nail into the neck of the man with the sword also, I went down again to the office and finished my work before my uncle had returned.

He was pleased to express himself as satisfied with what I had done, and to tell me that every day when I had finished my task I might, by way of recreation, amuse myself by dusting the furniture and rubbing with a brush and a woollen rag the articles which were of old oak.

What a contrast between this new life and the happy life I had led with Mr. De Bihorel!

I accustomed myself easily enough to the fourteen hours' work daily which was imposed upon me, but I could not accustom myself at all to the dietary of my uncle. The locking of the loaf of bread in the press was not an exceptional occurrence; it was the rule, and at every meal I must content myself with the slice I found upon the table.

On the fourth or fifth day, urged by hunger, I summoned courage, and as the press was about to be shut I stretched out my hand; the gesture was so eloquent that my uncle understood it at once.

"You would like to have a second piece of bread," he said, as he finished locking the press. "You have done well to speak of it. From this forth I will give you a loaf for yourself; the day on which you chance be very hungry you can cut as much of it as you wish."

I felt inclined to throw my arms about his neck. He continued:

"Only you must manage so as to eat less on the following day, so that the loaf may last you for the week. System is necessary in eating as in everything else; there is nothing so deceptive as the appetite, and at your age the eyes are bigger than the belly. Thirty-eight decagrams a day is about the quantity of food given in convents; that will be your portion; it is sufficient for a man, it should be sufficient for you, unless you are a glutton, a thing I would not endure."

As soon as I was alone I looked in the dictionary to find out how much a decagram was; it was ten grammes, or two drachms and forty-four grains. This conveyed no meaning either to my mind or to my stomach.

I wanted to have the question settled and off my mind. Before leaving home my mother had given me a two-franc piece. I went to the baker's across the street and asked him for thirty-eight decagrams of bread; after many calculations, he weighed me three-quarters of a pound of bread.

Three-quarters of a pound; this was the thirty-eight decagrams so generously allowed me by my uncle. In ten minutes, although an hour had not passed since breakfast, I had devoured the bread I had bought; consequently I was less hungry than usual at supper that evening.

"I knew very well," said my uncle, mistaking the cause of the discretion with which I had cut a slice from my loaf, "that that would restrain you. One is saving with what belongs to one's self; what belongs to others one is apt to squander. When you begin to have money, you will see that you will want to keep it."

I had thirty-five sous; I did not keep them long. In a fortnight they were spent in buying a supplementary portion of twenty-five decagrams of bread daily.

The regularity with which I went for this supplementary portion of bread as soon as my uncle left the house had brought about an acquaintance between the baker's wife and myself.

"Neither my husband nor I can write," she said to me precisely the day on which my money was at an end, "and we are obliged to give a written bill every Saturday to one of our customers. If you will write it for us, I will give you in payment for your work two stale cakes, which you can choose yourself every Monday morning."

You may judge with what eagerness I accepted this proposition. But how greatly I should have preferred a good pound of bread to the two cakes! I did not dare to say this, however, for the baker's wife, although she did not supply my uncle with the bread we used, which he ordered from the country, as he could buy it there a sou cheaper, appeared to know him very well; and I was ashamed, on his account, to confess my hunger to one who was already only too disposed to look upon him with contempt.

How was it that this portion of bread which was sufficient for a man was not sufficient for me? It was because ordinarily in convents and prisons there is added to the bread soup, meat, and vegetables, while with us it formed the principal part of every meal, the rest consisting of innutritious viands, the most substantial of which was a red herring, which invariably formed part of our breakfast. When my uncle was present we divided the herring between us, which does not mean precisely that we divided it into two equal parts; when he was making his rounds I had orders to keep the half for the following day.

One instance among many will give an idea of what I suffered from hunger at this epoch.

At the rear of our house was a small yard separated by a hedge from the yard of the adjoining house. This house was inhabited by a Mr. Bouhour who, as he had neither wife nor children, had lavished all his affection upon animals. Among these animals, the one which held the highest place in his master's affections, was a magnificent Pyrenean dog with white hair and a pink nose, called Pataud. As the confinement of a house

was prejudicial to Pataud's health, they had built for him a pretty rustic hut against the hedge which separated the two yards, and as it was equally prejudicial to his health to eat at his master's table, as this excited his appetite, and a diet of meat and dainties might give him some skin disease, they served him twice a day in his hut, in a fine china tureen, a mess of milk soup. Like all dogs that do not take exercise, Pataud had a sluggish, or, at least, a capricious appetite; and usually, if he breakfasted he did not dine, or if he dined, he did not feel disposed for breakfast, so that the soup often remained untouched. When I went out into the yard I could see through the hedge the pieces of white bread floating in the milk and Pataud asleep beside it. There was a hole in this hedge of which Pataud often availed himself to come into our yard. As he had a well-founded reputation for ferocity, my uncle bore this intrusion without complaining; his presence was a better protection than that of the strongest bolt, and it had the advantage of costing nothing. Notwithstanding his ferocity, we were soon the best friends in the world, and whenever I went out into the yard he would immediately run up to me to play with me. One day when he had carried my cap off to his hutch and refused to bring it back to me, I ventured to pass through the hole and go myself in search of it. The tureen was in its usual place and was full of rich milk. It was a Saturday evening; of my loaf, which I had not husbanded with sufficient care during the week, there remained only a crust about the size of an apple, which was to serve for my dinner. Hunger was gnawing at my vitals; I knelt down until my lips were level with the tureen,

and I drank a deep draught while Pataud looked at me, wagging his tail. Good dog! he was my only friend, my only companion, during these hard times. He would come and rub his handsome pink muzzle against my face when I slipped through the hedge of an evening to get my part of his supper. He would stretch out his paw every now and then to caress me, while he looked at me with his large liquid eyes. A singular understanding existed between us; he was undoubtedly conscious of his protection, and undoubtedly he was happy in this consciousness.

On what trifles do our destinies depend! If Pataud had not been taken away from me, very probably I should never have gone in search of the adventures which I have undertaken to relate; but the season arrived at which his master was accustomed to go to the country. He took him with him, and I was left alone with only my uncle's company to cheer my spirit, and my regular portion of food to fill my stomach.

Those were sad days. I was often for whole hours at a time without occupation, when I would sit alone in the gloomy study and let my thoughts wander homeward. At such times I would gladly have written to my poor mother, but a letter from Dol to Port Dieu cost six sous, and as I knew that all she earned was ten sous a day I did not dare to post every letter I wrote her. We limited ourselves to exchanging greetings through the medium of a fishmonger who came to Dol on market days.

The supplementary food which I had obtained from Pataud had rendered me almost indifferent of late to the smallness of my regular portion; now that I had only

this I fancied that at times it was even smaller than usual. While my uncle's loaf was under lock and key, mine was in a press which did not lock; but as no stranger ever entered the house this seemed to me to be of no consequence. After a few days' observation, however, I was obliged to acknowledge that I had deceived myself; at the very instant when my uncle was going to cut a slice from my loaf I opened the door behind which I had been concealed.

Indignation inspired me with a courage of which I had not thought myself capable.

"But, uncle, that is my loaf!" I cried.

"Do you think it is for myself that I am cutting it?" he asked, composedly; "it is for the white cat; she has had kittens, and you would not like to let her die of hunger, would you? We ought to be kind to animals; never forget that."

I had never felt any affection for my uncle; henceforward I had for him a feeling of mingled contempt and repulsion—hypocritical, dishonest, cowardly, and heartless as he was, I felt humiliated at being his nephew.

His chief trait was avarice—eagerness for gain. He was prodigal of his labor, insensible to privations, indifferent to everything but money, restless and unhappy at the thought of an expense to come, inconsolable for past expenses.

To think of his avarice makes me smile now, but at that time it aroused in me that feeling of youthful indignation which makes us take tragically many things that in later life we are disposed to turn into a jest.

He was, as you may suppose, the most negligent

man in the world in matters of the toilet; therefore I was greatly surprised one morning to see him simpering at his reflection in the large hall mirror. He put his hat on his head, looked at the effect, took it off and brushed it, put it on and looked at the effect again. What seemed strange to me was that he brushed the top of the hat the usual way and the bottom against the nap, so that one-half of the hat was smooth and the other half rough. I thought he must have lost his senses, for he had always taken the greatest possible care of his hat, even going to the extreme of never putting it on without first placing a band of old paper around his head under the brim to absorb the perspiration, if the weather were warm. This band sometimes served its purpose so well as to become wet through and adhere to the skin; on which occasions, when he took off his hat to salute any one, it encircled his head like a crown, looking so comical as to provoke an irresistible burst of laughter, even from those who knew him—that is to say, who feared him.

"Come here," he said, seeing me following his movements with my eyes, "and look at me well. What do you think of my hat?"

I thought all sorts of things of it, but this was not the occasion to give expression to them. I ventured to say:

"I think it is well preserved."

"That is not what I asked you. Does it look like a mourning hat? Is the rough part a good imitation of crape? My brother Jerome, of Cancale, has just died and I must go to the funeral. The cost of the journey is enough without the additional expense of crape, which

I could use only once, for I would never be foolish enough to go into mourning for a good-for-nothing who leaves only debts behind him."

Never was a laugh brought to so sudden a termination as mine was. I did not know my uncle who had just died; I only knew that he had always been unfortunate, that he was a year older than my uncle Simon, and that consequently they had been comrades until the time when the business of life had separated them. I returned to my work stupefied; my ideas regarding family ties had received a rude shock. What, then, did brotherly affection mean? What respect for the dead?

Nor were these the only ideas which in this daily intercourse were shaken, not by direct lessons, for my uncle troubled himself little to give me any such, either good or bad, but by example and by what I saw at every moment.

Country bailiffs are either the confidants or the witnesses of all kinds of miseries. To his profession of bailiff my uncle joined that of a banker, or, rather, to speak plainly, that of usurer; so that the collection of unfortunates and knaves who passed through his office was remarkably complete. He and I worked at the same table, sitting opposite each other. I was thus present at all his interviews with his clients, and it must be a very serious matter indeed which would cause him to send me to take a run. Never have I seen him yield to a prayer for mercy, or consent to delay, or abandon a prosecution. To tears, entreaties, arguments, he remained as insensible as if he had been deaf. Then, when he began to get bored, he would take out his watch and place it upon his desk.

"I can no more afford to lose my time than my clients can afford to lose their money," he would say; "if you have anything more to say I am at your service, only I warn you that it will cost you four francs an hour. It is now a quarter past twelve. Go on."

The poor women I have seen weeping and praying, the men I have seen dragging themselves on their knees to ask for a little more time—a month, a week, a few hours—it would take too long to tell, and I only mention them now to show with what feelings I regarded my uncle. But if I was able to feel all the pitiless hardness of his character, and to be touched by the fate of his victims, I was happily incapable, from my age, of comprehending fully the adroitness, craft, and knavery, not to use a stronger word, which he practised in the conduct of his affairs. The first occasion on which I perceived them, for the thing was plain before my eyes, cost me dearly, as you will see.

He had bought an old seigniorial property in which he was making important alterations for the purpose of rendering it saleable, and every Saturday we had workmen and builders coming to be paid.

One Saturday the master-builder came into the office where I was. He seemed surprised at finding me alone, for my uncle, he said, had made an appointment with him to settle his account.

He sat down and waited.

An hour, two hours, four hours passed, and still my uncle did not come. And the builder did not go. At last, at about eight in the evening, my uncle made his appearance.

"Ah," he said, "it is you, Master Rafarin. I am

very sorry to have kept you waiting, but—business, you know."

My uncle had a habit which I have sometimes since seen practised by business people who wish to make themselves seem important, but who really only make themselves ridiculous. Instead of replying to Rafarin, he questioned me as to what had taken place during the day, read the letters that had come, ran over some legal documents, examined the work I had done, and when he had devoted a good half-hour to all this, turning towards the builder who was still waiting, he said:

"Well, sir, what can I do for you?"

"You promised to settle my account to-day."

"True, but I am sorry to say that I have not the money."

"To-morrow is my pay-day. I have to pay, besides, a note of a thousand francs to your partner, who is dunning me. You have been promising to settle the account for the last six months. I relied upon your word to pay me to-day."

"My word! What word?" cried my uncle. "Did I say to you, I give you my word of honor to pay you on Saturday?' I did not. Is it not so? The promise you speak of, then, is no promise. Come Saturday and I will pay you. You see, Master Rafarin, there are promises and promises; you must not forget that."

"I did not know. Excuse me; I am only a poor man, but when I say I will pay Saturday, I pay."

"And if you cannot pay?"

"When I promise to pay, I can pay; and it is for that reason I trouble you now. Your partner has my word; if I fail to pay him he will prosecute me."

Rafarin then began to explain his position; he had entered into engagements, counting on my uncle's word; if he did not pay on the morrow the bailiff would levy an execution on his goods on Monday; his wife was dangerously ill; that would kill her. To all this my uncle only responded:

"I have no money, my dear sir; I have no money. You do not want me to steal money to give you. If you sue me there will be a lawsuit, and then you will not be paid for a year."

Four or five days before this I had been present at an interview between the other bailiff and my uncle, and I had heard the latter recommend his partner to push things to the last extremity. Without understanding the whole truth, which I did not know until later, and which was that my uncle was the real creditor, all this seemed to me strange, and I thought that I ought, even at the risk of rendering myself obnoxious to my uncle, to come to the assistance of the poor builder. I resolved, then, to interfere, cost what it might. When my uncle had repeated for the tenth time, "If I had the money I would give it to you," I said aloud:

"I have been paid some money."

The last word had scarcely crossed my lips when I received under the table so violent a kick that I lost my balance and fell forward, striking my face against my desk.

"What is the matter, my little Romain?" said my uncle, rising from his chair.

He approached me, and pinching my arm till the blood came, turned to Rafarin and said:

"How awkward the stupid little fellow is."

Rafarin, who had not seen the kick and who had not felt the pinch, looked at us both in surprise; but thinking that my uncle was seeking some pretext to change the conversation, he returned to the subject which troubled him.

"Since you have the money"—he began.

My exasperation was now at its height.

"Here it is," I said, taking the bank-notes from the drawer in which they had been put away.

Both men stretched out their hands at the same moment. My uncle, quicker than the other, seized the package.

"Listen, Rafarin," he said, after a moment's silence; "I am going to do what I can for you, to prove to you that an appeal to my generosity and my good faith is never made in vain, as some people would have it thought. Here are three thousand francs, which I did not expect to receive until to-morrow, and which I intended to employ in paying a sacred debt, which if I do not pay I may be dishonored, and which I shall not pay, for between now and to-morrow I would not be able to replace this money. But I am going to give them to you. Here, receipt your bill and take them."

I thought that Rafarin was going to throw his arms around the neck of my uncle, who, after all, it seemed, was not so bad as people thought. He did nothing of the kind.

"But my account," he cried, "is for more than four thousand francs!"

"Well?"

"And you reduced it to that sum yourself by beating me down in everything. Ah, Mr. Kalbris!"

"You do not want these three thousand francs then? Thanks, my dear sir; they will be of service to me. I offered them to you to oblige you."

Rafarin recommenced his explanations, his entreaties; then, seeing that my uncle remained impassive, he took the account and signed it.

"The notes," he said, in a hollow voice.

"Here they are," said my uncle.

The builder then rose, and, putting his hat on his head,

"Mr. Kalbris," he said, "I prefer poverty like mine to wealth like yours."

My uncle turned pale, and I saw his lips tremble. He recovered himself immediately, however, and answered, in a voice that was almost cheerful:

"That is a matter of taste."

Then, still smiling, he accompanied Rafarin to the door, just as he would have accompanied a visitor.

No sooner had the builder left the room than the expression of his face changed, and before I knew what he was about he dealt me a terrible blow which threw me from my chair to the ground.

"Now you and I must settle accounts," he said. "I am convinced you mentioned that money, knowing well what you were about, you young rascal."

The blow had hurt me severely, but it had not stunned me. My only thought was how I might avenge myself.

"It is true," I answered.

He was about to throw himself upon me, but I was

prepared for this new attack. I got under the table and slipped out on the other side.

When he saw that I had escaped him his anger knew no bounds. Seizing a large law book, called a *Paillet*, he threw it at me with such force as to knock me down.

As I fell my head struck against the sharp edge of a piece of furniture. A feeling of general numbness took possession of me, and for a time I was unable to rise.

I was obliged to support myself against the wall. I was bathed in blood, but my uncle looked at me without making a movement to come to my assistance.

"Go wash yourself, you ungrateful little beggar," he said, "and remember what you have gained by interfering in my affairs. If you ever do so again I will kill you."

"I want to go away," I replied.

"Where to?"

"To mamma."

"Indeed? Well, you shall not go, for you belong to me for five years to come, and I wish to keep you. 'I want to go to mamma, mamma, mamma.' You big idiot."

VII.

I HAD for a long time been tormented by an idea which recurred to my mind whenever I was hungry, or whenever my uncle treated me brutally—that is to say, every day; it was to make my escape from Dol

and go to Havre to ship as a cabin-boy. During my uncle's absences I had often amused myself by tracing my itinerary on a large map of Normandy which hung over the staircase. As I had no compass I had constructed one of wood, and I measured the distances between the various points as Mr. De Bihorel had taught me to do. From Dol, passing through Pontorson, I would go to sleep at Avranches; from Avranches I would go to Villers-Bocage, from Villers-Bocage to Caen, from Caen to Dozulé, from Dozulé to Pont-l'Evêque, and from Pont-l'Evêque to Honfleur. It was a journey of eight days. Bread cost, at that time, at the most, three sous a pound. If I could only save up eighty sous I was sure not to die of hunger on the road. But how could I get together eighty sous? The seeming impossibility of doing this had always presented an apparently insurmountable obstacle to the carrying out of my plan.

Paillet made me lose sight of this obstacle. Alone in my own room, after I had washed my head under the pump and stopped as best I could the flow of blood, I no longer saw the difficulties of my project. The mulberries were beginning to ripen along the ditches; in the woods there were eggs in the birds'-nests. Sometimes one finds a sou lying in the road; and why should I not be lucky enough to meet with some wagoner who would give me a lift—perhaps a piece of bread for driving the wagon while he slept? Such things were not impossible; they had happened before. In Havre I had no doubt but that any captain would take me on board as a cabin-boy. Once at sea, there was no more difficulty—I was a sailor. On my re-

turn I would go to Port Dieu; my mother would receive me with open arms; I would give her my pay. If I suffered shipwreck, why, all the better—a desert island, savages, a parrot, like Robinson Crusoe!

I no longer felt the pain of the wound in my head, and I forgot that I had not dined.

Every Sunday at daybreak my uncle went to his new property and did not return until late at night; so that from that day, which was Saturday, until Monday morning, I had the certainty of not seeing him, and by running away at once I had a start of thirty-six hours. Only to do this it would be necessary to go through barred and bolted doors, which was impossible. I decided, then, that I would lower myself down from the first story into the yard and creep through the hole in the hedge. Once in Mr. Bouhour's garden I could easily make my way into the fields.

It was in my bed that I thought over and decided upon this plan, waiting until my uncle should be in bed and asleep to put it into execution.

It was not long before I heard him go into his room, which he left again almost immediately, and I fancied I could hear him coming up the stairs, taking pains to make as little noise as possible. Had he suspected my plan, and did he wish to watch me? He pushed my door gently open. As my face was turned towards the wall I did not see him enter; but I saw on the wall the trembling shadow of the hand which he held before the candle to shade the light. He advanced on tiptoe towards my bed.

I pretended to be sound asleep. I felt him bend over me, hold the light close to my head, and then

separate carefully with his fingers the hair which concealed my wound.

"Pooh!" he said, under his breath, "this will be nothing."

And he left the room as softly as he had entered it.

Had he shown as much interest as this the day before it might, perhaps, have altered my plans; but it was now too late. I had inhaled, in imagination, the odor of the sea and the tar. I had pushed open the mysterious door leading to the Unknown.

An hour after my uncle's departure, when I thought he would be fast asleep, I arose and commenced my preparations—that is to say, I tied in a handkerchief two shirts and a few pairs of stockings. I thought for a moment of putting on the suit I had worn at my first communion, thinking it would give me an air of dignity. Fortunately, a gleam of common-sense made me reject this idea, and I decided upon wearing a good jacket and a pair of trousers of heavy sailor's cloth; then, taking my shoes in my hand so as to make no noise, I left the room.

No sooner had the door closed behind me than an absurd idea came into my head. I went back into my room. Although there was no moon the night was not dark, and my eyes, habituated to obscurity, could distinguish objects clearly. I placed a chair on my bed, and, climbing on it, reached up to the crocodile hanging from the ceiling, cut the cord that fastened it with my knife, and, taking it down in my arms, laid it full length in my bed and pulled the clothing over its head.

As I pictured to myself the expression of my uncle's face when he should find the crocodile in my place on

Monday morning, I burst into a violent fit of laughter; and my laughter broke forth afresh when the idea came into my mind that he might think it had eaten me up.

This practical joke was my only revenge.

It is wonderful what courage four walls and a roof above one's head can give. When I found myself in Mr. Bouhour's garden, after I had lowered myself from the window by clambering down the wall, I felt no inclination whatever to laugh. I looked anxiously around me. The bushes in the semi-obscurity of the night had strange forms. Among the shrubbery were large black spaces on which I did not like to let my gaze rest; a light breeze passed through the branches, and the rustling of the leaves sounded like moans. Hardly knowing what I was doing, I crouched down in Pataud's hutch. Poor Pataud! If he had been there perhaps I should not have gone away.

I had always thought myself brave; when I was conscious that my knees were bending under me and that my teeth were chattering, I could not help feeling ashamed. If I were already afraid I had better return to my uncle's house. I left the hutch and walked straight to a tree which, with its great arms extended, seemed to say to me, "You shall go no farther." It remained motionless, but the birds that slept among its branches flew away twittering. I inspired other creatures with fear; this gave me courage.

I threw my bundle over the wall which separated the garden from the fields, and, aiding myself by the espalier, climbed to the top. Far as my eyes could see stretched a level plain; it was deserted; not a sound

was to be heard. I slipped down gently on the other side.

I ran on for an hour without stopping, for I felt that if I gave myself time to look around me I should die of fright. At last I could run no longer, for want of breath. I was now in the midst of a meadow crossed by a dike which drained the water of the marsh into the sea. It was the haymaking season, and through the white mists I could discern the hay-ricks bordering the road. Without slackening my pace I left the highway, and, going down into the meadow, I crouched under the hay. I knew I could not be more than two leagues from the city. I felt as if I were at the end of the world; I was once more able to breathe freely.

Exhausted by so many emotions, dizzy from my wound, faint with hunger and fatigue, I lay down on the hay, which had retained the heat of the sun, and went to sleep, lulled by the croaking of innumerable frogs that were making a deafening noise in the trenches of the marsh.

I was awakened by the cold, the damp cold of early morning, which I had never before felt, and which pierces to the very marrow of the bones. The stars paled; long streaks of white light crossed the faint blue of the sky, and a vapory mist rose up in smoke-like wreaths from the meadows. My clothes were as wet as if it had been raining, and I shivered from head to foot, for if the hay kept me warm on one side, the night dews cooled me on the other.

But, what was more distressing than the cold, I experienced a vague feeling of disquietude. Night is

the time for tender melancholy, morning for anxious thoughts and the pangs of conscience which, during the sleep of the body, awakes and makes itself heard. To be shipwrecked on a desert island did not now seem so delightful as it had seemed the day before. I should never return to my native place, then; I should never see mamma again! My eyes filled with tears, and notwithstanding the cold I sat for a long time motionless on the hay, holding my head between my hands.

When I raised my head my plans were changed. I would go straight to Port Dieu to see my mother once more before setting out for Havre. By entering the village in the evening I could hide in the cabin and depart again in the morning without any one suspecting that I had been there. At least I should carry away with me this souvenir; and wrong as it might be to abandon my mother in this way, it seemed to me less so than to go away without seeing her at all.

I took up my bundle. I had at least twelve leagues before me; there was no time to be lost. Day would soon break; already I could hear the faint twitterings of the birds.

It did me good to walk; I felt less sad, less depressed than before. The rosy hue which diffused itself through the east diffused itself also through my spirit, and the light of morning dispelled the gloomy and exaggerated shadows of the night from my mind as well as from surrounding objects.

The mists floating in the atmosphere massed themselves low over the dike, submerging everything in their cottony waves, save here and there some old pollard willow whose top pierced through them. The

light that brightened the eastern sky turned yellow, then red, then diffused itself through the whole heavens, mounting up into the zenith; a light breeze passed through the branches of the trees, shaking the dew from them; the plants and flowers raised their heads; a transparent mist rose swiftly from the earth; it was day. When I was at Mr. De Bihorel's I had often seen the sun rise, but I had never taken any notice of it; now, however, as by my emancipation I had become one of the lords of creation, I deigned to take a pleasure in witnessing this spectacle.

But, lord of creation as I was, it was not long before I found that if Nature abundantly regaled my eyes, she had made very little provision for my stomach; flowers were everywhere, fruits nowhere; perhaps, after all, I had been imprudent in depending upon chance for food.

After walking for several hours, this doubt became a certainty. In the fields there was nothing, absolutely nothing, that I could eat; while in the villages through which I passed preparations were everywhere being made for Sunday; on the tables in the inns were joints of meat; in the bakers' windows were displayed large loaves of bread and lightly-browned cakes, still exhaling a pleasant odor of warm butter. When I looked at them my mouth watered and my stomach grew faint with hunger.

Whenever an unhappy creditor tried to move my uncle to pity by saying that he was starving, my uncle never failed to respond: "Tighten in your stomach." I was simple enough to try this plan of assuaging the pangs of hunger; but it is probable that those who rec-

ommend it so confidently have never tried it themselves, for when I had tightened the buckle of my belt, I found that I could scarcely breathe; I suffered more from the heat, and I was as hungry as ever.

I fancied that if I tried to divert my thoughts from the terrible hunger I felt I should suffer less from it, and I began to sing. The people who passed me on the road, dressed in their Sunday clothes, looked with astonishment at the boy walking slowly along, with his bundle in his hand, and singing with all his might.

Singing did not avail me long, however; my throat grew dry, and to the pangs of hunger were added those of thirst; this necessity was easy to satisfy, for I frequently came across little rivers running towards the sea.

I selected a very clean spot on the bank of the next one I came to, knelt down, buried my chin in the water and drank my fill, thinking, mistakenly, that provided my stomach were full it did not matter much whether the contents were liquid or solid. I remembered that, during a fever I had had, I had remained for four or five days without eating—I had taken only drink, yet I was not hungry.

A quarter of an hour later I was bathed in perspiration; this was produced by the water I had drunk, together with the excessive heat. I was seized with a great weakness, my senses began to fail me, and it was with difficulty I succeeded in reaching a tree under whose shade I could sit down. I had never felt so faint before; my ears buzzed, and I seemed to see everything through a red mist. I was near a village, indeed, for I could hear the bells calling to mass. But

what advantage was this to me? I had not a sou to buy a piece of bread with.

I must go on; already the peasants passing by on their way to mass had begun to take notice of me and make remarks about me. I would have to tell where I came from, whither I was going; they would take me back to my uncle; this thought terrified me.

When I was in some measure rested and refreshed, I resumed my way. The stones were very sharp, my legs very stiff, and the sun was burning.

I knew that if I went on walking as I had done since morning I should soon fall down from exhaustion and be unable to rise again. I resolved, then, not to walk more than half a league without sitting down to rest, and to rest, in any case, whenever I felt faint.

As I walked on, some lines which I had read while at Mr. De Bihorel's recurred to my mind with irritating and tiresome persistency:

> "Does God ever let his children want?
> The young birds he supplies with food;
> His care extends over all nature."

It seemed to me that I could not be of less value in the eyes of God than one of the little birds that were flying about from branch to branch with joyous little cries.

I had for a long time been mechanically repeating these lines, rather as a sort of music to which I kept step than a hope to be cheered by, when I approached the entrance to a wood, the first I had come to in my journey. All at once my attention was attracted to a bank crowned with yellow broom, where here and

there among the grass glowed little red dots. Strawberries?—yes, they were strawberries. I forgot my fatigue; at a bound I crossed the ditch; on the other side berries grew as thick as in a strawberry bed; under the trees and in the glades they covered the ground like a red carpet. I have eaten larger and finer strawberries since then, but never better ones. They gave me strength, courage, hope; yes, I could travel now to the end of the world.

"Does God ever let his children want?"

Wild strawberries are not quickly gathered; to pick them one has to go here and there, and to stoop down for every berry. When my hunger was somewhat appeased, if not satisfied, I set about gathering a supply for my journey. I thought that when I had eaten enough of them I might perhaps exchange those that were left for a piece of bread. A piece of bread; this was my dream. But time pressed; it was past midday. I had five or six leagues still to walk before reaching Port Dieu, and I felt by my legs that they would be longer and less quickly got over than those I had already traversed. I could not fill my oak-leaf bordered handkerchief, then, as full as I wished, and I returned to the highway more cheerful and courageous than when I had left it.

Fatigue, however, again soon overcame me, and, instead of walking half a league at a stretch, I sat down to rest by the way-side at every mile or so. The fatigue I felt must have betrayed itself in my appearance, for, as I was sitting on a bank, a fishmonger who was walking along the road leading his horses crossed

over to the road-side, and stopping in front of me, looked at me.

"Here is a young man who is tired," he said. "Is it not so?"

"A little, sir," I answered.

"That is easy to be seen. Have you far to travel in this state?"

"Five leagues more."

"If your way lies in the direction of Port Dieu, I am going there, and I can give you a lift."

The opportunity was not to be neglected. Summoning up what little strength and courage I had left, I said,

"I have no money; but if you will take strawberries in payment, here are some that I have just gathered."

And I opened my handkerchief.

"How fragrant they are," he said. "So, my boy, you have no money," he continued, changing his tone, and ceasing to treat me like a gentleman; "well, get up, all the same; you look very tired. You can sell your strawberries at the inn of Beau Moulin, and you can treat me to a drink as the price of your ride."

My poor strawberries! They gave me six sous for them at the inn of Beau Moulin, and that only because my friend the fishmonger protested that it would be robbery to give me less.

"Now," he said, when the bargain was concluded, "a couple of drinks."

It was no time for delicacy.

"I would rather have a piece of bread," I said.

"Well, take a drink, all the same; if you are hungry you can take your part in bread when it is my turn to treat."

My part in bread! I did not wait to be asked twice, you may be sure.

Instead of arriving at Port Dieu in the evening, as I had calculated in doing, we arrived there before four o'clock—that is to say, at the hour when, my mother being at vespers, I could enter the house without being seen and take all the time I needed to settle myself in the cabin, which my mother scarcely ever entered. I found it just as I had left it, as it had remained ever since the time of my father's death—full of his nets and fishing implements. They were as dry as cobwebs, and still preserved the odor of the tar and pitch. I kissed the nets and then took an armful of them to make myself a bed for the night. This done, and having arranged the window opening into the kitchen so that I could see without being seen, I sat down to wait.

I had not remembered how fatigued I was; scarcely had I settled myself comfortably when I fell fast asleep. It must have been long afterwards, for it was quite dark when I was awakened by the sound of voices. My mother was in the kitchen. Stooping down in front of the chimney-piece, she was blowing a few sticks, laid together, into a blaze. One of my aunts was standing near her, leaning against the wall.

"Then," she was saying, "you will go on Sunday?"

"Yes, I am too lonely; and then I can see with my own eyes how he is; he makes no complaint in his letters, but I imagine he is unhappy."

"You may say what you choose, but in your place I would not have given him to brother Simon."

"I should have been obliged to let him go to sea if I had not done so."

"Well, and what then?"

"What then? What has become of your eldest son? What has become of our brothers, Fortuné and Maxime? What has become of my poor husband? What has become of the husband of Françoise? Look around you and see how many are missing. Ah, the sea!"

"I should be less afraid of it than of Simon; he is not a man, he is a heap of money."

"And that is what deprives me of sleep at night, not so much for what the poor child may be suffering now as for what he may grow up to be under the influence of such a man. The Leheu brothers were speaking of him the other day; it seems that he is worth more than three hundred thousand francs. It is not by honest means that one can make such a fortune as that in his business. Ah, if he had not taken Romain for five years!"

"But must you leave him with him whether you wish to or not?"

"If I take Romain away he will be angry; he will want to make me pay him an indemnity. Where should I get the money to do that? You don't know him. At any rate, I shall go see the boy."

"Well, on Saturday evening I will bring you a pot of butter to give to him in my name; most likely he is not any too well fed."

When my aunt went away, my mother set about preparing her supper. How the odor of the roasted potatoes recalled the old days when I used to come home ravenous from school!

She seated herself at the table in front of me, where

the light fell full upon her face. The meal did not last long, although from time to time she would sit without eating, gazing into vacancy, as if her thoughts were far away; at other times she would fix her gaze with a sigh on the place I had occupied opposite her. Poor mamma! I can see her now with her kind face, so sad, but so sweet. It was of me she was thinking, it was for me she was sighing, and I was there only a few steps away, withheld from going to her by my fatal resolution.

Always neat and orderly, she put back everything into its place, washed her plate, wiped the table, and then, kneeling down before the image of St. Romain, she began her prayer.

How often had we prayed together in that very place, at this very hour, that God would extend his protecting hand over my father.

Listening to those fervent words which we had so often repeated together, I knelt down on the nets, and softly repeated them to myself. But this time it was not my father's name that issued from my mother's trembling lips, but mine.

Ah, how was it that at this instant I did not spring to her side!

VIII.

I FELL asleep with tears in my eyes. My sleep was less tranquil under the maternal roof than it had been the preceding night in the meadows of Dol.

Before dawn, as soon as I heard the tide coming in

at the foot of the cliff, I stole cautiously out of the cabin.

When I reached Port Dieu the preceding day, at four o'clock, the tide was beginning to go out; I knew then, when I heard the tide coming in, that day would soon dawn, and I wished to avoid being seen by some early riser among the neighbors.

When I had planned to go to sea, I had not taken into account how hard it is to leave the house where one was born. When I reached the furze hedge that separated our yard from the moor, I stopped, in spite of myself, and turned round. My heart beat to suffocation. The cock was crowing in our yard, and the dogs of the neighborhood, wakened by the noise of my footsteps, were barking loudly. I could hear their chains clank at every tug they gave them in their efforts to spring after me. Day began to break, and against a narrow band of white light which shone above the cliff the house stood out darkly.

My whole childhood, from my first day of conscious existence, came back to my recollection: the nights when my father would walk up and down the room with me in his arms, trying to quiet me by singing,

"The stones lie on the ground,
Tira, lira—"

the first sea-gull I had caught alive, and which, with broken wing, came to eat out of my hand; my mother's anxious hours of wakefulness on stormy nights when my father was at sea, and my prayers, kneeling before the flickering taper. The fears and the tortures I had seen her suffer she would suffer now

again after my departure. Was it not a crime to abandon her?

The light in the light-house was extinguished, and the sea was gleaming brightly under the still dark sky; from the chimneys of the village columns of yellow smoke curled upward, and the sound of *sabots* resounding on the stones of the streets reached me where I was; the village was astir.

Yet I still remained on the summit of the bank, crouched among the furze, hesitating, impatient, unhappy, dissatisfied with myself, and altogether wretched. The spirit of adventure, the vague hope of making a fortune, of being independent, the bent of my nature, the mystery of the unknown, all drew me onward; habit, the timidity natural to my age, the trials of the preceding day, and, more than all, the thought of my mother, combined to keep me at home.

The sound of the angelus bell broke the silence. Before it had done ringing my mother pushed open the door and appeared upon the threshold ready to depart for her day's work. Was she going to the village to work or to the market-town, a place situated higher up on the plain and inhabited exclusively by farmers? If she were going to the village, she would go down and away from me; if, on the contrary, she were going to the town, she would pass close beside me, walking along the bank on whose summit I lay concealed. I had a moment of keen anxiety, for I felt my resolution beginning to give way. Chance decreed that she should on that day work in the village, and I was not called upon to combat the temptation which impelled me to go and throw myself into her arms.

When I heard the wicket fall back into its place, creaking, I rose from among the furze-bushes to follow her—at least, with my eyes. I could see nothing but the white gleam of her cap appearing and disappearing among the branches behind the hedge. The sun had risen above the cliff, lighting up the house brightly; in its rays the mosses covering the thatch of the roof had a soft, velvety richness of coloring, and among them, here and there, bloomed tufts of yellow houseleek. A sea-breeze sprang up, diffusing through the pure morning air a salty freshness, whose odor I seem to inhale, and whose pungent taste I seem now to feel upon my lips.

But I must not allow myself to be carried away by those tender recollections.

I left my mother's house as I had left Dol—that is to say, running at the top of my speed. And it was only when breath failed me that I slackened my pace.

If motion serves to distract one's thoughts, it is in repose that one can best reflect.

And I had need for reflection. I had started on my journey—so far, so good; now the question was how to reach my destination.

I sat down at the foot of a hedge. The plain was deserted; there was no danger of being surprised here; no one was to be seen but, in the distance, at the edge of the cliff, a coast-guard on duty, whose figure stood out blackly against the luminous background of the sunrise.

The result of my reflections was that, instead of following the highway, as I had at first intended, I followed the shore. My experience of the past two days

had taught me that the highways offer slight hospitality to those who have not a well-filled purse, and my greatest anxiety was as to how I should be able to procure food during my journey. A saying that I had often heard Mr. De Bihorel repeat—"The sea is more productive for man than the land"—recurred to my mind, and I relied upon the shore to furnish me with food—oysters and mussels. When I thought of the oysters I must confess that my mouth watered, for it was long since I had eaten any. What a feast I was going to enjoy!

I rose to my feet. How many leagues was it to Havre, walking by the shore? A great many, I supposed. But what did it matter? A month's march on the beach did not frighten me.

I did not venture to descend immediately, however, for fear of meeting some one from Port Dieu who might recognize me. It was not until I had walked three or four leagues along the edge of the cliff that I summoned courage to go down to the shore to seek my breakfast.

I found no oysters, and I was obliged to content myself with the mussels which covered the rocks. My hunger being to some extent appeased, I would have continued my journey; but I was so happy at seeing the sea again that I amused myself running about on the sand and looking among the hollows of the rocks. I could jump and sing. What a contrast between this freedom and my imprisonment at Dol! Decidedly it was much more amusing to travel.

A pine board which I found wedged between two granite rocks completed my happiness. I made a boat

out of it; with my knife I gave it the requisite shape; at a little distance from the middle, towards the prow, I cut a hole; in the hole I stuck a hazel rod, which I secured in an upright position with splinters of willow; crosswise on this rod I fixed another rod; on this second rod I stretched my handkerchief, and I had a splendid frigate, to which I gave my mother's name, and which, at low tide, with my trousers rolled up to my knees, I sailed in a large pool on the shore.

Night overtook me while I was engaged in this occupation; it was necessary to look for a place of shelter. I chose a little grotto which the sea, during the floods of the equinoctial storms, had hollowed out at the base of the cliff. Then I gathered a few armfuls of dry sea-weed and made myself a bed. It was not a palace, but it was better than the marsh at Dol. I was sheltered from the cold, and, better still, I was secure from discovery; I was provided with a comfortable pillow which I had made with large pebbles; the lantern of the light-house opposite served me as a night-lamp, and took away the sense of solitude. I fell asleep as peacefully as if I had been within the walls of a house, and sailed all night in my frigate in dream-land; after being shipwrecked on an island where six-pound loaves and mutton-chops hung from the trees, like apples on apple-trees, I was made king by the barbarians; mamma joined me; she was made queen, and as we drank excellent sweet cider our subjects cried, "The king drinks! the queen drinks!"

I was wakened before daybreak by hunger—hunger which gnawed at my stomach and made my heart sick. I was obliged to wait, however, until the tide

went out, to gather my supply of mussels; but the more of these I ate the hungrier I grew. My repast certainly lasted more than two hours, and when I stopped it was rather from fatigue than because my hunger was satisfied. I began to say to myself that a piece of bread with the mussels would be a very good thing. But how obtain bread?

Do not imagine, I beg of you, because I am always talking of bread, of hunger, of food, that I was a glutton; I had simply the healthy appetite usual with boys of my age, and the question of eating—which in the circumstances in which I was, was the all-important question—became for that reason a very anxious one; besides, those who think they know what hunger is by the agreeble sensations they feel when they sit down to a dinner delayed for an hour or so, know nothing of the matter; only those who, after long months of privation, have been for whole days with an empty stomach will be able to comprehend the vividness of my recollections.

If the spot in which I had passed the night had produced oysters I might have remained there for some time longer, for it pleased me greatly because of the facilities it offered for sailing my frigate. I had been disturbed there by no one, and then the grotto, the light-house—all this attracted me. But hunger decided me to continue my journey; perhaps farther on I should find something better than mussels.

I dismounted the mast of my frigate, replaced the sail in my pocket, and abandoned my lodging. As every good traveller ought to do, I gave my shelter a name before quitting it—"The King's Grotto."

As I walked along the base of the cliff the idea of the piece of bread returned to me so persistently that I found it impossible to rid myself of it. On the way I came to a river, across which I was obliged to swim —that is to say, the water came up to my shoulders, and I carried my clothes on my head. This enforced bath made my stomach feel still more empty; my knees bent under me, and my sight grew dim.

In this condition I drew near a village built in the form of an amphitheatre, on the sea-shore. I determined to pass through it, hoping that I might not meet any one there whom I knew. When I reached the square near the church I could not resist the temptation of pausing before a baker's shop. Large golden loaves of bread were displayed in the window, and from the door came a pleasant odor of flour and cakes. I was gazing at this spectacle, wondering if the attraction of my eyes would be sufficient to raise the loaves from their places and draw them to my mouth, when I heard a great noise in the square behind me, a sound of *sabots* and confused cries; it was the children coming out of school.

Was it because I was a stranger to them, or was it because there was something odd in my appearance—which is very possible, for with my frigate under my arm, my bundle in my hand, my shoes covered with dust, my hair bristling under my cap, I must have seemed a very curious little fellow—that they all gathered around me the moment they saw me? The first-comers called the others, and I was soon surrounded by a circle of children, who examined me as if I had been some strange animal.

My frigate, or rather the piece of wood which I dignified by that name, seemed to surprise them greatly. They discussed me among themselves.

"Hey, Joseph, what is that he has under his arm?"

"Don't you see it is a board?"

"No; it is a music-box."

"A music-box, stupid! he has no monkey."

No monkey! They took me, then, for a Savoyard. My pride was hurt at this.

"It is a frigate," I said, with dignity, taking a step forward with the purpose of making my escape from the circle which had drawn closer around me.

"A frigate! What a fool he is. Look at the sailor."

I was stunned by all these cries; the boys laughed and danced around me.

I was trying to break through the band when I felt behind me one of the boys, bolder than his comrades, pulling at my frigate. At the same moment my cap was lifted from my head by another boy and tossed into the air.

My cap, my beautiful dress cap! I pushed aside those nearest to me to run after it, caught it as it fell, and crushing it down on my head went back to the crowd, clinching my fists and determined to be revenged.

But at this moment a peal of bells rang forth from the belfry, and all the children rushed towards the church porch, dragging me along with them and crying,

"See the christening!"

The godfather and godmother were coming out of the church; when they had crossed the threshold the godfather, who was a handsome gentleman, put his hand into a large bag, carried by a servant who walked

behind him, and threw a handful of lozenges among us. There was a scramble among the children, and before they had risen to their feet the godfather made a second distribution. This time he threw not bonbons only; good sous rolled over the stone pavement of the square. I saw one rolling towards me; I stooped to seize it; while I was picking it up a new distribution took place, and I had the luck to catch a ten-sou piece. Although it remained on the ground only a very short time, others besides myself had seen it. Furious at losing it, they threw themselves upon me, crying,

"He does not belong to the village! It is not fair!"

They trod on my fingers to force me to let go my prize; I held it all the tighter. Fortunately, the godfather had not yet emptied his bag, and the children left me to run after fresh distributions.

I had twelve sous. I went into a baker's shop and asked for a pound of bread; never did music sound sweeter to me than that made by the crust as the knife cut through it. Ravenously devouring my bread, I hurried out of the villiage; all thought of revenge had vanished, and all I asked was to be allowed to escape from my tormentors.

After walking for about two hours, I came to a deserted guard-house, where I resolved to pass the night.

I had often heard it said that the possession of wealth is inimical to sleep; this was realized in my case. I had made an excellent bed with a few armfuls of clover, but I slept very badly in it, perplexed by the thought of what I should do with my money. The pound of bread which I had bought for my supper had cost me three sous; of my fortune, then, there

remained nine sous. Was it better to live for three days on my little treasure, or to buy with it at once some articles which might serve to procure me food during my journey? This was the question which troubled me during the whole night. If I had had a vessel on the preceding day in which to cook my fish, I should not have suffered from hunger; I would have eaten crabs and other shell-fish. If I had had a piece of twine half as long as my handkerchief, I could have caught as many shrimps as I wished in the pools.

I decided, finally, in the morning, that at the first village I came to on the way I would buy a box of matches for a sou, some twine for three sous, and with what remained a tin saucepan in which to cook my fish. I must say, however, that what decided me on this wise course was not precisely its wisdom, but rather a desire to have some twine. Willow-branches would assuredly not serve to make sails for my frigate; with three sous worth of twine I could rig it out very well, and the remainder would do to make a net.

I bought the twine first and then the matches; but with regard to the saucepan a difficulty presented itself which I had not foreseen—the cheapest to be had cost fifteen sous. Happily I discovered one in a corner, so dinted that it must have been thrown aside as not worth mending; I asked if it was for sale, and the shopkeeper, to oblige me, as she said, consented to let me have it for five sous.

On this day I made still less progress than on the preceding day, for as soon as I found a suitable place I spent my time in making a mast and a wooden net-block, and afterwards a net. Accustomed to this work

from the time when I had first learned to use my hands it was only a pastime for me. I had the pleasure of eating for my dinner shrimps caught with my net and boiled in sea-water in my saucepan, over a fire made from branches that I gathered among the bushes.

But one is never completely happy. I had established my kitchen on the beach at the foot of a cliff, and the smoke, curling upward, rose above its brow and attracted the attention of a coast-guard. I saw him lean over the edge of the cliff, looking for the origin of the smoke; he withdrew without addressing me; but in the evening, when I was looking about for a place to sleep in, I saw him again at his post of observation, and I fancied that he looked at me curiously. Decidedly I must be a real curiosity; and with my frigate on my back, my saucepan slung with my net across my shoulder, and my bundle in my hand, I was only too conscious that my appearance was not calculated to inspire confidence. Already, on several occasions, in passing through a village, or when I chanced to meet some of the country people on the road, if they had not questioned me it was because I had hurried past them. What if the coast-guard should ask me what I was doing there? What if he should arrest me? I was seized with fear at this thought, and, to avoid him, instead of following the shore I plunged into the fields by the first road I came to; his guard duty kept him on the cliff, and I knew that he could not follow me.

If I had not the coast-guards to fear in the fields, neither, on the other hand, had I their sheds to shelter

me. I was obliged to lie down under the open sky; and what was most disagreeable was that I could not see even a group of trees. In the distance some hay-stacks stood out blackly against the crimson sunset. I should have to spend this night as I had spent the night in the marsh at Dol, I supposed. But it did not prove so bad. Some hay-forks had been left in the field; I made with these a sort of roof resting against a hay-stack; above and around I heaped bundles of lucern, and in this species of perfumed nest I was well sheltered against the cold.

The fear of being surprised here by the haymakers made me resume my journey as soon as the cool air of dawn and the cries of the birds awakened me. I was still terribly sleepy, and my legs were stiff with fatigue, but the chief thing was not to allow myself to be taken. I could sleep in the daytime.

It was not my appetite, you may well imagine, but the tide that regulated the hours for my meals. I could dine or breakfast only when the tide was low and I was able to fish. As it was high tide at about eight o'clock I could not breakfast until noon, and even then I was obliged to content myself with the crabs which I caught as soon as the tide began to recede. So, in order not to be obliged to practise a similar abstinence in future, I resolved to lay in a supply of provisions beforehand, and, my repast finished, I began to fish for shrimps. I caught a large quantity of them —of the kind called in Paris "bouquet"—as well as three fine plaice and a sole.

As I was returning to the cliff in search of a place where I could cook my fish, I saw a lady accompanied

by two little girls, whom she was teaching to dig for shells in the sand with a wooden shovel.

"Well, my boy," she said, stopping me, "have you caught many fish?"

She had beautiful white hair, framing a face lighted by large mild eyes; her voice sounded almost like a caress. This was the first word indicating an interest in me which I had heard for four days. The little girls had fair hair and blue eyes, and were very pretty. I was not frightened, and I did not run away.

"Yes, madame," I answered, and I opened my net, in which the shrimps were wriggling about with a little harsh noise.

"Will you sell me your fish?" the lady then asked.

You may imagine whether or not I lent an ear to this proposition. Twelve-pound loaves danced before my eyes, and I snuffed in the odor of the well-baked crust.

"How much do you want for them?" she said.

"Ten sous," I answered, at random.

"Ten sous! The shrimps alone are worth at least forty. You do not know the value of your merchandise, my child. You do not fish as a business, then?"

"No, madame."

"Well, since you fish for pleasure, be so good as to accept in exchange for these shrimps this two-franc piece, and this other two-franc piece for your fish. Will you do so?"

As she spoke she handed me the two coins.

I was so astounded at the magnificence of this offer that I could not find a word to say in reply.

"Come, take them," she resumed, to relieve me from

my embarrassment; "you can buy something that you need with the money."

And she placed the two two-franc pieces in my hand, while one of the little girls emptied my shrimps into her basket and the other took my fish, which I had strung on a piece of twine.

Four francs! No sooner had my customers turned their backs upon me than I began to dance about for joy on the sand. Four francs!

A quarter of a league away there was a village. I bent my steps thither with the intention of buying a two-pound loaf. I was no longer afraid of soldiers, coast-guards, or rural constables. If I should chance to meet any of them I would show him my four francs.

"Let me pass," I would say; "you can see that I am rich!"

I met neither soldier nor coast-guard, but on the other hand I could not find a baker's. I walked twice through the one street of the village; in it were a café, a grocer's shop, an inn, but no bakery.

But I wanted bread, and it was not by listening to my coins jingling together in my pocket that I could console myself for not having it. I had lost my former shyness. The mistress of the inn was at her door, and I ventured to ask her where there was a bakery.

"There is none in the village," she answered.

"Then, madame," I said, "will you be so kind as to sell me a pound of bread?"

"We do not sell bread," she replied; "but I can give you a dinner if you are hungry."

Through the open door came an odor of cabbage, and I could hear the pot boiling on the fire. My hunger could not hold out against this.

"What does a dinner cost?" I asked.

"A dinner of soup, bacon and cabbage, and bread, cider included, thirty sous."

This was frightfully dear; but if she had said four francs I should have gone in all the same. She showed me to a low-ceiled apartment, and placed before me on the table a loaf of bread which weighed fully three pounds.

It was this loaf which was my ruin. The bacon was fat; instead of eating it with the knife and fork I made sandwiches with it and the bread, whose chief recommendation, in my eyes, was their thickness. I swallowed a first mouthful, then a second, then a third. How good it was! The loaf had diminished noticeably. I cut another slice, saying to myself that this would be the last. But when I had finished it there was still a little bacon left. I returned to the loaf, of which I left finally only a very thin slice. After all, it was an unique occasion, and it was necessary to profit by it.

I thought I was alone in the dining-room, but a confused noise behind me, like the sound of suppressed laughter, mingled with half-stifled exclamations, made me turn my head. Through the glass of the door, of which the curtain was raised, the landlady, her husband, and a maid-servant were watching me and laughing.

Never in my life did I feel so much ashamed.

They entered the room.

"Has the gentleman dined well?" said the landlady; and their laughter began afresh.

I was in a hurry to make my escape. I held out my two-franc piece.

"It is thirty sous for a man," said the landlady, taking the coin; "for an ogre it is forty, my boy," and she gave me no change.

I had crossed the threshold when she called me back again.

"Take care you don't burst," she said. "Don't walk too fast; it might be dangerous."

Notwithstanding this advice I took to my heels, like a thief, and it was not until I was a good distance away that I slackened my speed.

I was ashamed at having spent so much on a single meal, but physically I felt much the better for it; since I first set out on my journey I had never felt so courageous.

I had dined well; I had forty sous in my pocket; the world, in short, was once more mine to conquer.

Those forty sous, by husbanding them, would secure me bread for several days to come. I resolved, then, to abandon the shore and follow the route I had first traced out for myself across the Calvados.

One difficulty, however, stood in my way. I did not know where I was. I had passed through several villages and two cities, but I was ignorant of their names. On a public road I should have had the mile-stones to guide me, but there are no mile-stones along the cliffs, and I did not dare to inquire the names of the villages or towns through which I passed. I thought that so long as I had the air of knowing where I was going no one would interfere with me, while if I asked my way I might be arrested. I remembered

very well the configuration of the Department of La Manche, and I knew, as it projects into the sea, that since I did not wish to follow the shore I must turn towards the east. But would this road lead me to Isigny or Vire? If to Isigny, I should strike the coast again; that is to say, I would be able to procure fish; if to Vire, I should find myself in the midst of fields, without a hope of being able to replenish my stock of provisions when my forty sous should be spent.

The question was a very serious one, and I was fully conscious of it.

After hesitating for a long time, I determined to trust to chance, and I took the first road I came to, turning my back on the sea. My hope was in the milestones; it was not long before I came upon one bearing the inscription: "To Quetteville, 3 miles." I had three miles to walk. At Quetteville I should know which road to take. At the entrance to Quetteville I saw on the corner of a wall, inscribed in white letters on a blue ground, the words: "Public Road No. 9; from Quetteville to La Galianière, 5 miles." As I did not remember to have seen either of these names on the map, I stood still in the utmost perplexity. Where was I? Lost!

I crossed the village, and when I was at a sufficient distance from it to be out of reach of inquisitive eyes I sat down on the step of a handsome granite cross by the way. It stood on the summit of a mound at the intersection of four cross-roads, and commanded a view of extensive wooded plains, where here and there rose a stone belfry. Beyond this was the line where sea and sky blended. I had been walking ever since morning;

the sun was shining brightly, the heat was intense. I leaned on my elbow on one of the steps to reflect at my ease, and I fell fast asleep.

When I awoke I felt that two eyes were looking fixedly at me, and I heard a voice saying:

"Don't stir."

As was natural, I paid no heed to the command conveyed in these words, but rising to my feet looked around me to see which way I should turn to escape.

The voice, which was at first gentle, took an impatient tone.

"Don't stir, boy; you will be an improvement to the sketch. If you resume your former position and keep quite still I will give you ten sous."

I sat down again; the person who spoke thus did not look as if he had any intention of arresting me. He was a tall young man, dressed in a gray velveteen suit; on his head was a soft felt hat; he was seated on a heap of stones, and a portfolio rested on his knees. I comprehended that he was drawing my portrait, or, rather, the landscape and the cross, since he had said I would be an improvement to the sketch.

"You need not shut your eyes," he said, when I had resumed my former position, "nor your mouth. What is the name of this place?"

"I don't know," I answered.

"You do not belong to the place, then? But you are not a tinker, are you?"

I could not help laughing.

"Don't laugh, if you please. If you are not a tinker why do you carry that cooking apparatus on your back?"

The questions had begun already; but this gentleman seemed the kindest man in the world; I felt attracted to him; I was not afraid of answering him. I told him the truth: I was going to Havre; the saucepan was to cook my fish; I had been on the road for eight days; I had forty sous in my pocket.

"Are you not afraid of being murdered when you tell me you carry such a sum as that about with you? You are a brave fellow, truly. Don't you believe in brigands, then?"

I laughed again.

He continued to question me as he drew, and insensibly I came to tell him how I had been living since I had left my uncle's house.

"Well, my boy, you can pride yourself on being a curiosity; you began by committing a folly, it is true, but in the end you have got yourself well out of it; I like boys of your style. Shall we be friends? I have a proposal to make to you. I, too, am going to Havre, but I am in no hurry. I shall not arrive there before a month, perhaps; it depends upon the country through which I travel—if it pleases me I shall stop on the way to work; if it has no interest for me I shall continue my journey. Do you wish to come with me? You shall carry my bag there, and I will give you food and lodging."

Next day I had told him my whole story just as I have set it down here.

"What a curmudgeon your uncle is!" he said, when I had finished my recital. "Shall we go to Dol? You will show him to me, and I will make a caricature of him on every wall in the town. I will write

underneath: 'Simon Kalbris, the man who starved his nephew.' A fortnight afterwards he will have to leave the town. You do not want that? You prefer not to see him again. You are forgiving, and you are right. But there is one point in your history which I cannot let pass unnoticed. You wish to be a sailor; very good. That is your vocation, it seems. That is all right, and it is not my place to seek to influence you in the matter, although, in my opinion, a sailor's life is not a very enviable one—danger, toil, and little else. You are attracted by the heroic and the adventurous side of the thing; very good again, if that is your idea. You follow the bent of your nature; and although you are very young, perhaps the life you led with your uncle justifies you in doing so. But there is one thing which you have no right to do, and that is to afflict your mother. Can you imagine the grief, the anguish she has endured during the eight days that have passed since your uncle informed her of your flight? Doubtless she believes you dead. You must get writing materials, then, from my bag, and, while I make a sketch of this mill, write to your mother all that you have just told me; how and why you came to leave your uncle's house, and all you have done since your departure from it. You can say, too, that by chance—yes, you can say that by a happy chance—you met a painter called Lucien Hardel, who will take you to Havre and recommend you to a friend of his there who is a shipowner, so that you may find a place on a vessel where you will have an easy voyage. When you have finished your letter you will see that your heart will be the lighter for it."

Mr. Lucien Hardel was right. I wrote a letter to my mother which I watered with my tears, but when it was done I felt my conscience more tranquil.

Those days that I passed with Lucien Hardel were the happiest days of my travels.

We walked along without any fixed route, stopping sometimes for a whole day in the neighborhood of a tree or a scene that he wished to sketch, sometimes marching for a whole day without pausing. I carried his travelling-bag, which was not very heavy, slung over my back like a soldier's knapsack; often he took it from me on the road and carried it himself, in order to let me rest. It was my duty to buy every morning the provisions for the day—bread, hard-boiled eggs, some slices of ham, and to have a gourd which I carried refilled with brandy to mix with the water we drank. We breakfasted on the high-road seated at the foot of a tree, whenever we found one, and in the evening we supped at an inn. This meal did not now consist of shrimps or crabs, but of good hot soup; I did not now sleep on hay, but between clean white sheets, and I undressed before I went to bed.

My companion was surprised to find me not altogether a peasant; I sometimes astonished him by what I had learned at Mr. De Bihorel's. I knew more than he did about the trees, the plants—that world of infinitely little things which very few have any knowledge of. We were seldom silent; there was in him a charm of manner, a cordiality, which put one at one's ease, a gayety which was contagious.

Walking along in this way, wherever chance might lead us, we reached the suburbs of Mortain. This was

hardly on the way to Havre, but I did not trouble myself about that; certain of reaching that port in the end, and of being able to ship on one of the numerous packets which sail between it and Brazil, it mattered little to me whether I delayed on the road or not.

Mortain is assuredly, I will not say the most Norman, but the most picturesque canton of Normandy. Pine woods, gigantic rocks, precipitous cliffs, gloomy gorges, foaming torrents everywhere, rushing along among the trees or falling in cascades, and, finally, a vegetation of wonderful brilliancy and freshness make it a haunt dear to painters, who find there at every step subjects for sketches and pictures ready to transfer to canvas almost without altering a detail.

Without establishing ourselves at any one point we made Mortain the centre from which we started on our excursions, going to Domfront, Sourdeval, Saint-Hilaire-du-Harcouët, and Le Teilleul. While Lucien Hardel painted I fished for trout or caught crabs that had been stranded in the holes on the beach, for our supper.

This was too happy a time to last; otherwise what should be an expiation would have been a reward.

One morning when we were thus occupied we saw a gendarme coming towards us. At a distance his appearance was not a little grotesque; assuredly he had not been enrolled in the service on account of the dignity or the elegance of his carriage.

Quick to perceive the ridiculous in men and things, Lucien Hardel called my attention to the gendarme, of whose head he drew a rough sketch on the margin of the study he was making.

The soldier had meantime approached us, and seeing

that we were observing him, he had settled his hat on his straw-colored locks, drawn forward the belt of his sabre, and, slackening his pace, assumed a mincing gait.

The pencil had followed his movements on the paper, and the result was a caricature that made me explode with laughter.

This did not please the gendarme, who came towards us.

"Excuse me," he said, "but you have stared at me long enough, and now I should like to see what you look like."

"All right, gendarme," said Lucien Hardel, placing the sketch in his portfolio, "you need not be uneasy on that account; I have looked at you—very well; look at me in your turn, and then we shall be quits."

"I don't want any nonsense; you know very well that it is your passport I wish to see. It is my right and my duty to ask it from you, since I find you loitering on the high-road."

Without answering the gendarme, Lucien Hardel turned to me.

"Romain, take my passport out of the bag—it is there, in the compartment where the tobacco is—and hand it politely to the gentleman."

Then, turning towards the gendarme,

"I should like, out of respect for your functions," he said, "to present it to you on a silver salver; but when one is travelling, you know, one cannot have all one wants. That is the reason, too, why Romain has not put on gloves; but as you have none, either, we are once more quits."

The gendarme understood that this polite address, which at first he had listened to with a beatific air, was ironical; he reddened, bit his lips, crushed his hat over his brows, and then, to cover his embarrassment, he began to read:

"'We,' etc., 'request the civil and military authorities to allow Mr.'—hum, hum,—'Mr. Lucien Hardel, by profession a—a—'"

Here he came to a long pause; then, suddenly, as if summoning up courage, he proceeded,

"'By profession a—landscape—landscape-painter, to come and go freely and without molestation.'"

He muttered a few words, and then returned the passport to me.

"It is well," he said, majestically.

As he was about to turn his back upon us—in a hurry, no doubt, to end a conversation which he found embarrassing—Lucien Hardel, by an evil inspiration, stopped him.

"I beg your pardon, sir, but you have omitted to read the most important clause in my passport, the provision on account of which alone I paid two francs for it without a murmur."

"What is that?"

"That you should extend aid and protection to me."

"What do you mean?"

"Well, will you tell me in what capacity I am authorized to loiter on the high-road?"

"In the capacity mentioned in your passport."

"In the capacity, then, of landscape-painter?"

"Doubtless, since that is your profession."

"Now, will you tell me, if you please, what I am at

liberty to do, and what I am prohibited from doing, in the practice of my profession?"

"Why, is it my place, then, to teach you your profession?"

"My profession, no; but the profession of a landscape-painter. Come, understand me well; for the officers of the law I am a landscape-painter—I am, am I not?"

"Eh— Yes."

"Very well. A couple of leagues farther on I meet, let us say, one of your comrades; he demands my passport; I chance, perhaps, to be doing something just then which does not belong to my profession of landscape-painter, and he arrests me."

"Well?"

"I must know, therefore, what I am allowed to do and what it is unlawful for me to do."

Large drops of perspiration coursed down the red face of the poor gendarme; he saw that he was being laughed at, and he began to think that he must have given utterance to some piece of stupidity. Finally his anger got the better of his embarrassment.

"Do you think you will be allowed to go on annoying the authorities in this way, you with your long beard? Come, no more talk; since your profession is not your profession, there is something wrong, and since there is something wrong, I arrest you. Follow me to the Mayor's office and explain the matter to him. And that one"—and he pointed to me—"who is not in the passport, we shall see who he is. Come, obey orders!"

"Then it is in my capacity of landscape-painter that you arrest me?"

"I arrest you because I arrest you. Am I obliged to give you a reason for what I do? Come, obey orders, or I shall apprehend you!"

"Very well, let us go. If his Honor the Mayor at all resembles you the day will be complete. Take up the bag, Romain, and come along. Gendarme!"

"What is it you want?"

"Fasten my hands together and draw your sabre. Since I am to be arrested I want it done in good style."

I was far from sharing this merriment. I thought Lucien Hardel would have done much better to remain silent. "*And that one, we shall see who he is,*" the gendarme had said. These words rang in my ears. They were going to make inquiries, they would learn the truth, and without doubt send me back to my uncle.

Lucien Hardel walked on singing,

"The poor prisoner
They were taking to be hanged."

The gendarme followed him at a distance of a few paces, and I brought up the rear. It wanted nearly half a league to the village, and we were obliged to pass through a wood. Chance ordained that our path should lie straight before us, and that at this moment there should be no one in sight. We had scarcely advanced a hundred yards in the wood when, yielding to the impulse of my terror, I took a sudden resolution. Anything was better, I thought, than to be recognized and taken back to Dol. I had not strapped the bag to my back; I held it in my hand. I gradually slackened my pace; then, throwing the bag down on the ground, I cleared the ditch at a bound.

At the noise made by the falling of the bag the gendarme turned around. I was already in the wood.

"Stop! stop!" he cried.

"Don't be frightened," Lucien Hardel called to me. "We are going to have a good laugh."

The only answer I made was, "My uncle! Good-bye!"

And I plunged among the bushes. Was I followed? I did not know. I ran on without stopping, heedless of the branches that struck against my face, the thorns that tore my flesh. I ran so madly that I did not perceive an inequality in the ground before me. Suddenly I felt the earth give way beneath my feet, and I fell head-foremost into a deep pit. There I lay, not because I was hurt, but because I was inextricably entangled among plants and brambles which grew so thick that I could not see the sky. An instinct like that of the wild animal chased by dogs guided me. Lying flat against the earth, drawing myself into as small a compass as possible, scarcely daring to breathe, I listened. Nothing was to be heard but the twittering of the birds, flying away frightened, and the noise of the sand that, loosened by my fall, rolled down softly around me, grain by grain, as if from an immense hour-glass.

After a while, when I had the certainty that I was not pursued, I was able to reflect on my position.

This is how I reasoned: when he had left Lucien Hardel at the Mayor's office the gendarme would give the alarm to his comrades, and they would all set out in pursuit of me. If I did not wish to be captured, then, I must leave my hiding-place at once, in order to

get the start of my pursuers. The thought did not even present itself to my mind that at the Mayor's office everything would be explained, that the painter would be set at liberty, and that we could continue our journey to Havre, as we had intended. I was in that frame of mind when we can take only extreme measures, because they alone are in harmony with the excited state of our feelings. Rather than be captured by the gendarmes and carried to Dol, I believe I would have passed through fire. I begged forgiveness, indeed, in my heart from Lucien Hardel for having abandoned him, but was it not his absurd bantering that had rendered our separation necessary?

IX.

Two hours later I reached the outskirts of Sourdeval, but wishing to avoid observation, I made a detour, regaining the high-road leading to Vire at the other end of the town.

The walk had calmed my agitation, but I was by no means reassured about the difficulties of my journey to Honfleur. I had not now my saucepan; my little bundle had remained at Mortain, and in the fields I should find myself in the same position as on the first day of my flight; hunger had not yet made itself felt because I had breakfasted well, but it would not long delay.

Add to this that I saw gendarmes everywhere and you will understand that I did not walk along very

gayly. In the first place, I regretted my companion; then, every hat, even every cotton cap which I saw in the distance, was transformed into a gendarme's hat by my uneasy imagination. Before I had walked three leagues I had quitted the highway more than a dozen times to hide myself in the corn or among the brambles in the ditches. In jumping one of these ditches I fancied I heard a metallic sound in my pocket, like the jingling of sous. I searched my pocket; they were indeed sous; I counted them; there were six, and, what was better still, among them were two two-franc pieces. On the previous day I had bought some tobacco for the painter, and this was the change I had received out of the five-franc piece. Ought I to keep it? But how return it? I made a promise to myself that I would not fail to do so if it should ever be possible.

But large as my fortune was I did not allow it to turn my head; after a few moment's reflection I decided on the following course: I would continue my journey on foot, sleeping in the fields or in the woods, but I would not economize in my food. I could afford not to deny myself what was necessary.

Although it was not quite dark when I passed through Vire, I lost my way in the streets; instead of taking the road to Villers-Bocage I took that to Condé-sur-Noireau, and it was only when I reached Chenedollé that I discovered my error. I had studied the map well enough to carry it in my head, and I knew that by way of Harcourt I could reach Caen. I did not trouble myself then on account of this detour, and I slept soundly in the shelter of a colza hedge. Two or three hundred paces from my resting-place I

perceived a shepherd's hut in the middle of a sheepfold, whose peculiar warm, sweetish odor the breeze wafted towards me. This gave me the assurance that I should not be quite alone in the midst of those vast wooded plains, and that I should at least hear from time to time the barking of the dogs guarding the sheepfold.

Lucien Hardel, when I told him of my journey along the sea-shore, had said that he regarded it as little less than miraculous that I had escaped the fevers caused by the chill air of morning; so that when I wakened shivering under the shelter of the colza-branches I rose at once. It was not yet broad daylight, but dawn had already begun to whiten the tree-tops. The eastern horizon was tinged with gold; above my head the stars sparkled faintly in the pale, blue sky, and behind me stretched a vast black vault, across which wound slowly the gray mists rising up from the valleys. The dust of the road was as wet as if it had rained during the night, and among the branches of the trees the birds noisily shook the dew from their wings.

I continued my journey for two days without meeting with any incident of importance; but, as you may imagine, I did not walk all day from morning till night without stopping. At noon, and whenever I came to a suitable place, I slept for a few hours.

On the third day after I had left Harcourt I arrived at a large forest, called the Forest of Cinglais. The heat, although it was still morning, was so overpowering that I resolved not to wait till noon for my nap. I had never before felt the heat so intense; the ground scorched my feet. I plunged into the wood, hoping

to find there a little coolness, but there, as well as on the highway, the air was scorching; not the rustle of a leaf, not the twitter of a bird was to be heard; all around reigned unbroken silence; one might fancy that the fairy of the "Sleeping Beauty" had passed through the wood, touching with her wand the air, the animals, and the plants; only the insects had escaped the universal spell of silence; insects swarmed among the plants, and in the slanting sunbeams that pierced the dark foliage of the trees were to be seen swarms of buzzing insects whirling around, as if the intense heat had quickened their vitality.

I threw myself down at the foot of a beech-tree, and resting my head on my arm for a pillow, was soon fast asleep. I was awakened by a sharp pain in my neck. I put up my hand and caught in my fingers a large yellow ant; at the same time I felt another sting in my leg, then one on my breast, then a countless number of stings in every part of my body at once. I undressed myself quickly and shook out from my garments ants enough to people an ant-hill; but this did not cure me of the stings the confounded insects had inflicted upon me. No doubt, like certain species of mosquitoes, they had left poison in the wounds, for I was soon tormented by an intolerable itching. Naturally, the more I scratched the more irritated became my skin. At the end of an hour my nails were stained with blood.

If you have ever seen sheep in a meadow attacked before a storm by a swarm of flies and running hither and thither, rolling on the ground, or tearing their backs with the thorns, you can have some idea of my

sufferings. I fancied that if I could get out of the forest I should suffer less; but the road seemed to lengthen out interminably, and still trees bordered the path on either side, and still the air was like the breath of a furnace. At last I perceived a small river winding among clumps of trees at the foot of a declivity. In ten minutes I had reached its bank; in two seconds more I had undressed and plunged into the water.

It was one of those cool green spots which are to be found everywhere in Normandy. The river, detained by the sluice-gates of a mill whose tick-tack could be heard not far off, flowed tranquilly through tall grasses that bent before the force of the stream. Through the crystal depths of the water gleamed the yellow sands below, with here and there a moss-covered stone. Groups of alders and aspens dotted the banks, in whose cool shade swarms of insects buzzed. On the river long-legged spiders glided among the water-lilies and the cresses; above the blossoms of the meadow-sweet, the iris, and the wolf'sbane hovered blue-bottles and dragon-flies with gauzy wings. Wood-pigeons, startled by the noise I had made in plunging into the water, flew to the tops of the aspens and then fluttered down again, and, standing on the bank, dipped their heads into the water and shook out their ruffled plumage, cooing, while farther off the shyer kingfishers fluttered down, not venturing to approach when, swift as a cannon-ball, they passed through a sunbeam their azure plumage dazzled the sight.

I would have remained there for hours, so grateful was the coolness of the water, but that suddenly from

the spot on the river-bank where I had left my clothes I heard a voice call out to me,

"Ah, brigand, so I have caught you bathing here again. Well, this time you will have to go to the town-hall for your clothes."

My clothes! My clothes at the town-hall! That is to say, my clothes on one side of the river and I on the other. I could not believe my ears.

Stupefied, I looked to see who it was who thus addressed me. It was a short, stout man who, from the river-bank, was shaking his fist at me. On the breast of his gray woollen blouse gleamed a badge, yellow as gold.

The little man lost no time in putting his threat into execution. The word was immediately followed by the deed.

He stooped down and hastily rolled my poor garments into a bundle.

"Sir! sir!" I shouted.

"All right," he answered, "at the town-hall."

I would have left the water and run to him to implore his pity, but the fear of his yellow badge and the consciousness of my nudity held me back. A constable! A man who carried a sabre and who could take you to prison! Besides, what should I answer if he questioned me?

His bundle made, he took it under one arm, and extending the other towards me threateningly,

"You can give an account of yourself at the town-hall," he said.

And he went away.

I was so confounded that I forgot to make the nec-

essary movements to keep myself afloat, and naturally I sank.

But I soon returned to the surface, and gaining the bank, hid myself, filled with shame, among the reeds; their flexible leaves bent over and sheltered me, at least, from view and from discovery.

I did not need to reflect long to comprehend all the awkwardness of my position. How go to the town-hall in search of my garments? And, then, where was this town-hall? In the heart of the village, no doubt. How could I venture naked on the highway and in the streets?

Now was the time for me to have imitated Robinson Crusoe; but in real life one does not get out of one's difficulties so easily as in books.

Since I had left Dol, however vexatious and annoying the difficulties I had encountered, I had never before been utterly discouraged. Now, however, I gave myself up for lost. I felt completely overwhelmed, without power to will or to do, a prey to paralyzing despair.

My tears flowed for a long time, but insensibly I grew chilled and began to shiver. Two hundred paces off the sun shone full upon the opposite bank, drying the moisture on the plants. There I could assuredly warm myself on the dry sand, but so great was my terror that I did not dare to move. At last I was so thoroughly chilled that, summoning up resolution, I entered the water again and swam to the opposite bank. This bank rose at least six feet above the level of the water. It was hollowed out at its base, and from its summit trailed bind-weed and hop-vines inter-

laced. It was not without much difficulty and many scratches that I succeeded in reaching it.

The sun soon warmed me; but with warmth came back vitality, and with it a gnawing hunger. What to eat? With my garments the constable had taken away my little store of money.

Time passed, and no way presented itself to my mind of extricating myself from the position in which I was. Above me, a few steps away, I could hear at distant intervals the rolling of wheels along the road; but what help could come to me from that quarter? How could I abandon my place of concealment in the condition in which I was? I might, perhaps, have contrived some sort of a garment out of leaves, reeds, or straw, but the idea of doing so did not even occur to me.

The sun was beginning to decline in the west. I was not to spend this night in the open air under the shelter of a hay-stack, protected from the cold by my clothes. Naked, on this sandy strip of land, what was I to do? Looking at the current flowing ceaselessly past, I had become dizzy; I fancied I saw around me already the noxious animals that prowl about in the night.

It was about an hour before sunset when I heard on the road the noise of vehicles passing one after another. Suddenly the noise ceased; they had stopped just behind me. From my hiding-place I could not see the road, but by the noise of chains and other iron objects striking together I comprehended that horses were being unharnessed. A sort of roar or bellow, a cry which I had never heard before, louder than the neighing of a horse, deeper than the braying of an ass, broke on

the air, and the birds already perched among the bushes for the night flew away screaming; a large rat sprang between my legs and hid himself in his hole, the entrance to which I obstructed.

After a few minutes I fancied I could hear the sound of steps in the meadow above me; I was not mistaken.

"I have caught a hen!" said a voice.

"Where did you get it?"

"I knocked it on the head on the road with a stone fastened to the end of my whip, as if it had been a fish in the water; it was only the others that screamed out."

"We must have it cooked."

"If Cabriole should see us he will filch it from us, and we will have nothing but the bones left."

This dialogue was not very reassuring; but precisely for this reason it inspired me with a boldness that I should not have had with honester people.

I clung with both hands to the bank, and, passing my head between the stalks of the hop-vine, I raised myself up so as to be able to look into the meadow.

The two speakers, who from their hoarse, cracked voices I had taken to be men, were boys of about my own age. This gave me renewed courage. I raised myself a little more. My resolution was taken.

"If you please," I called out.

They turned around and stood for a moment apparently uncertain as to whence the voice had proceeded, for my head only emerged from the foliage, and, frightened as well as surprised, they did not know whether to advance or to run away.

"Oh, look at that head!" said one of them, perceiving me.

"A ghost!" said the other.

"Fool! didn't you hear him speak?"

At the same instant I heard a deep voice, coming from the direction of the high-road, saying,

"Come, idlers, cut some grass, I say."

I turned my head, and saw, standing in a row, three long wagons painted red and yellow. It was a travelling show.

"Cabriole! Cabriole!" cried the two boys.

"Well?"

"There's a savage here. Come and look at him! It's a fact."

Cabriole walked towards the meadow.

"Where is your savage?" he said.

"There among the leaves."

They all three approached, and, looking at me, burst out laughing.

"What language does your savage speak?" asked the man whom they called Cabriole.

"French, sir," I interposed.

And I told them of my adventure, which they evidently found more amusing than I had done. They laughed as if they would split their sides.

"La Bouillie," said Cabriole, turning to one of the boys, "go look for a pair of trousers and a blouse for him."

In less than two minutes La Bouillie had returned. I lost no time in dressing myself, and then jumped on the bank.

"Now," said Cabriole, "let us go see the master."

He led me to the foremost wagon, to which I ascended by some wooden steps. Seated in front of a stove,

on which simmered a stew, was a shrivelled-up little man and beside him a woman of proportions so enormous that I was frightened.

I had to relate my adventure again, and it was again received with shouts of laughter.

"So you are going to Havre to ship for a sailor?" said the little man.

"Yes, sir."

"And how are you going to pay me for my trousers and my blouse?"

I was silent for a moment. Then, summoning all my courage, I said,

"I will work for you if you will let me."

"What can you do? Can you make your head touch your heels?"

"No."

"Can you swallow a sword?"

"No."

"Can you play the trumpet, the trombone, the drum?"

"No."

"Then what is it you can do?" he said. "Your education has been singularly neglected, my boy."

"A poor acquisition; he is made like everybody else," said the giantess, examining me from head to foot, "and he talks about working in the ring!"

She shrugged her shoulders and turned away from me with a look of contempt. Ah, if I had only been a monster; if I had had two heads or three arms; but to be made like everybody else—how shameful!

"Can you take care of horses?" asked the little man, without heeding the woman's words.

"Yes, sir; I can try."

"Well, there is always that to do. From this day you belong to the menagerie of Count Lapolade, as celebrated for the beauty of the animals belonging to it as for the courage of the illustrious Diélette—Diélette, our daughter, who has tamed them. Follow Cabriole—he will show you what there is to do—and come back to supper in an hour."

In the situation in which I was I could not choose my occupation. I must not be too hard to please. I accepted as a favor the strange resource which was offered to me.

X.

Here I was, then, a mountebank, or, to speak with more modesty, the hostler of the menagerie of Count Lapolade.

My master was not, as one might justly think, an imaginary count. He had perfectly-authenticated documents, that he willingly exhibited on great occasions, which gave him the right to bear that title. After a life agitated by every vice and every passion he had come to this. To crown his degradation he had, at a time of supreme need, married the giantess who had accorded me so ill a reception. Celebrated at every fair in Europe under the name of the "Big Bordelaise," although she was a native of Auvergne, she had occupied in her youth the exalted position of phenomenon—that is to say, of giantess. One picture represented her in a pink gown, delicately balancing

her immense leg, covered with a white stocking, on a *tabouret;* another showed her wearing a blue velvet spencer with a foil in her hand, a brigadier of carabineers much shorter than herself before her, with the words underneath in letters of gold, "At your service, brigadier."

She had earned at this occupation a considerable sum of money, which had tempted the cupidity of Lapolade. The latter had for his sole fortune his talent as a speaker. This talent was remarkable; no one in the circus could equal him in making a speech at the door to draw a crowd. His reputation equalled that of Mangin or Turquetin. The "Big Bordelaise" and he had entered into a partnership, and this worthy couple had bought a menagerie which, in the beginning, had rivalled that of the celebrated Huguet de Massilia. But the source of Lapolade's strength was also that of his weakness; his mouth cost him dear; he was both a drunkard and a glutton.

Some of the animals, ill-cared for and worse fed, had died, and others had been sold; and at the time of my entrance in the menagerie it was composed only of an old lion, two hyenas, a snake, and a learned horse, that in the daytime drew a wagon and at night told which was the most stupid person in the company.

At supper I made the acquaintance of the human members of the show. Besides the count and Madame Lapolade, it was composed of Cabriole the clown, La Bouillie, the other boy I had seen with him, who was called Filasse, two Germans, one of whom, named Herman, played the clarionet, while the other, who was named Carolus, played the drum; and finally the illus-

trious Diélette, a little girl eleven or twelve years old, in appearance frail and nervous, with large blue eyes of the color of the periwinkle.

Although I was only a servant I was admitted to the table of these illustrious personages.

The word *table* is not perhaps the exact word by which to designate the object on which our meals were served; it was a large pine-wood chest which occupied the centre of the wagon; it served a triple purpose: its interior held the costumes; its top at meal-times supported our plates, at night a mattress, on which Diélette slept; on either side of this chest were two narrower ones; these served the members of the troupe as seats, for only the count and Madame Lapolade had chairs.

With all this this compartment of the wagon had a cheerful air, and there are many Parisian apartments that have not so large a dining-room. A glass folding-door opened on an exterior gallery, and through two little windows draped with red curtains could be seen the trees on the road.

I had to tell my whole story again, which I did without, however, mentioning the real names of either my mother, my uncle, or my native village. When I reached the episode of the gendarme Diélette declared that I was a simpleton; that in my place she would only have laughed. The two musicians approved of this boldness, not in words—they never spoke—but by three successive bursts of laughter, in chorus—that loud laughter peculiar to the Bavarians.

After supper was ended, there still remained some hours of daylight.

"Come, my children," said Lapolade, "let us profit by the daylight that remains to practise gymnastics a while; we must not let our muscles grow stiff."

And he took up his position in the exterior gallery, where Diélette brought him his pipe, which she had lighted for him, while Filasse and La Bouillie took from the wagon and placed on the grass by the way-side a small box with a cover. Filasse then unfastened his blouse, and, after stretching his arms and his legs and shaking his head as if he wished to shake it off, he removed the lid from the box, into which he slipped, disappearing completely from view. I was amazed, for the box was so small that I should not have thought it could hold a child a year old.

It was now La Bouillie's turn; notwithstanding all his efforts he could not succeed in getting into the box; from the gallery above Lapolade gave him a vigorous lash with his whip.

"You have eaten too much again," he said; "to-morrow I will put you on diet."

Then turning to me:

"Come, it is your turn," he said.

I took a few steps backward to get out of reach of the whip.

"In there?" I said.

"Not yet, my boy; first let us see what you can do by jumping across that ditch there."

The ditch was broad and deep; I jumped two feet farther than was necessary. Lapolade showed himself satisfied, and declared that I would succeed on the trapeze.

The first wagon was reserved for the exclusive use

of the proprietors; in the second the animals were confined; the third served as a dormitory for the company and a place of storage for the properties. As there was no room for a bed for me inside the wagon, they gave me a couple of bundles of straw with which I made one underneath it.

Although this bed was better than any I had enjoyed for some nights past, it was long before I slept. The lights were extinguished; the noises ceased; soon no sound was to be heard in the profound stillness of the night but the stamping of the horses harnessed to the wagons, tugging at their tether to crop the dusty grass around them on the way-side. From time to time from the menagerie came the deep breathing of the lion, sighing profoundly, as if the silence and the heat of the night recalled to him his African solitudes, and occasionally, too, I could hear him lashing his sides impatiently with his tail as if a gleam of courage, piercing through the abject subjection of his will, had suggested to him the thought of revolt and liberty.

He was in a cage securely fastened, but I was free and unfettered. For a moment I thought of profiting by this freedom to continue my journey; but I should have had to take with me the garments given me by Lapolade. This would have been to steal them. Then, in my own mind, I ratified the engagement I had entered into to serve my new master. After all, he could not be harder than my uncle, and the day on which I should have paid him by my work for what I owed him I should be free.

The caravan was on its way to Falaise, to the fair of Guibray; there it was that for the first time I saw Dié-

lette enter the lion's cage and heard Lapolade address the audience.

The costumes had been unpacked. Diélette had put on over her tights a silver robe spangled with gold; on her head was a wreath of roses; my comrades, Filasse and La Bouillie, were dressed as red devils; the two Germans, as Polish lancers, with plumes that fell down over their eyes; as for me, they had stained my arms, as far as the elbow, and my face and neck black. I played the part of a slave who had come from Africa with the lion, and I was forbidden to utter a single word in French. To every question I must content myself with answering by a smile, which would disclose my teeth. My mother herself, if she had seen me, would not have recognized me. This was what Lapolade had especially desired, not knowing but that there might be some one from my native village among the crowd.

For two hours past we had been making a din sufficient to drive a deaf man wild. Cabriole had finished his part; Diélette had danced a round with La Bouillie, and Lapolade now appeared on the platform in the costume of a general. We had attracted an immense crowd; my eyes were dazzled by the whiteness of the cotton caps that covered the Norman heads stretched towards us. The general made a sign. The music ceased.

Then, leaning towards me, and handing me the cigar which he had been going to smoke:

"Amuse yourself with this," he said, "while I go and make my speech."

I was looking at him in wonder when I received a kick from behind.

"What a fool the blackamoor is!" cried Cabriole; "the master offers him a cigar and he is too dainty to take it."

The public deigned to find this jest very witty, and laughed and applauded loudly.

I had never smoked. I did not even know whether it was necessary to draw in my breath or to puff it out, but this was not the moment to enter into explanations. With one hand Cabriole pulled down my chin; with the other he pulled up my nose, and Lapolade thrust his cigar into my open mouth. My grimaces must have been very comical, for the villagers had to hold their sides with laughter.

The general raised his plumed hat. Silence was restored.

"You see before you," he began, "the celebrated Lapolade. Who is Lapolade? That charlatan in a general's uniform? Himself. And why, you ask yourselves, does so illustrious a man dress in so ridiculous a fashion? To please you, my masters, and because if you are all in private life sensible people assembled together in public you are only fools."

There was a movement of dissatisfaction among the crowd, accompanied by some murmurs.

Lapolade, without losing his self-possession, took his cigar from me, gave a few puffs and then, to my despair and disgust, put it back between my lips.

"Hey, you below there!" he continued; "yes, the man with the cap with the tassel and the red nose, what are you muttering about? Is it because I said that at home you were a sensible man, and in the public square a fool? Well, I apologize: at home you are an impostor, and here you are a sly dog."

The crowd stamped with delight. When the excitement had calmed down a little, he resumed:

"Besides, if I were not disguised as a general, instead of staying here to look at me with gaping mouths, and eyes as round as marbles, you would all have gone on your own way.

"But I know humanity; I know how easily it is caught by clap-trap. For that reason I went to Germany for these two illustrious musicians you see here; for that reason I engaged for my company the celebrated Filasse, with whose fame you are undoubtedly acquainted, La Bouillie, whom you see, and, finally, the wonderful Cabriole, of whom I shall say nothing since you have already heard him. All this awakens your curiosity, and you say to yourselves, 'What is going on at that show?'

"Now messieurs the musicians will give us a little music."

The whole of this discourse, which he varied according to the place and the audience, I could give you word for word, for it has remained stamped upon my memory. It is strange how certain absurdities will fix themselves on the mind at the very age when it is most difficult for useful things to take root in it.

I have a distinct recollection, however, of the early part, only, of this day. The smoke of the cigar had sickened my stomach, and I was in a veritable state of hallucination and stupor when I went into the booth. In accordance with the duty which had been assigned me, I was to open the cages when the time came for Diélette to enter them.

It was through a sort of mist that I saw her come

towards me. In one hand she held a whip, with the other she was sending kisses to the audience. The hyenas were walking around in their cages with a slow and halting step. The lion, his head resting on his paws, seemed asleep in his cage.

"Open the door, slave," she said to me.

Then she entered. The lion did not stir. Taking his ears between her little hands she pulled them with all her strength, to make him raise his head. Still he did not stir. She grew impatient and struck him on the shoulder with the whip. As if he had been moved by a spring he raised himself on his two hind-legs, uttering so terrific a roar that I felt my knees tremble under me. Terror, combining with the qualms of my stomach and the giddiness produced by the cigar, which made me fancy that everything was whirling about, inside and around me, caused me to lose consciousness, and I fell senseless to the ground.

Lapolade was a shrewd man, and knew how to turn the most trifling incidents to his advantage.

"You see how great is the ferocity of this beast," he said, "when his very roar causes the children of his native land to swoon!"

My indisposition was so evident that the public, convinced that this was no prearranged scene, broke into prolonged applause, while Cabriole lifted me in his arms and threw me behind the shed as if I had been a bundle of rags.

During the entire performance I remained there, horribly ill, incapable of moving, although sensible of what was going on around me—of the roaring of the lion, the cries of the hyenas, the bravoes of the crowd.

Then I heard the stamping of the people leaving the booth, and a few minutes later I felt some one pull me by the arm. It was Diélette; she had a glass in her hand.

"Here, drink this," she said; "it is a glass of sugar and water. It was stupid of you to be frightened on my account, but all the same you are a good boy."

It was the first time she had spoken to me since my entrance in the company. This mark of sympathy did me good; I felt less lonely. Filasse and La Bouillie had joined together to play all sorts of tricks upon me, and I was glad to have an ally.

On the following day I would have thanked her, but she turned her back upon me and refused to listen; nor did she bestow upon me another word or look. I was obliged to give up my ideas of friendship. I had enough, then, of this life where kicks were showered upon me, and as I began to think that by taking care of the horses and cleaning the cages of the animals in the daytime, and playing the part of a blackamoor at night, I had well earned the poor linen trousers and the blouse which had been given me, I resolved to abandon the caravan and continue my journey to Havre. Poor mamma! Was it to join a travelling show that I had left her? Ah, if she could see me now! If she but knew the truth!

The season was advancing; the nights were growing cold; the days were often rainy; it would soon be impossible to sleep in the fields without shelter. I must make no delay in putting my plan into execution, the more especially as when we left Guibray we should

proceed in the direction of the Loire, and thus increase the distance between us and Havre.

As I did not wish to risk the journey, however, without making such preparations as were possible, I stored away all the crusts I could economize from my food, and employed my leisure time in making shoes out of old boot-legs. My plan was arranged. The first night after the caravan started I would run away.

The day before the one fixed for the departure of the caravan I was engaged in my task of making shoes when Diélette surprised me.

"You want to run away," she said, in a low voice.

I made a gesture of denial.

"For a week past I have been watching you," she said; "you have hidden some bread under the hay, and you have not done so without some object; but do not be afraid, I will not betray you, and if you like I will run away with you."

"Leave your father!" I said, in the tone of one who knows what it is to abandon one's parents.

"My father!" she repeated. "Those people are not my parents. But they may surprise us here. Go wait in the fortifications. I will try to join you there. If you are a good boy you will help me, and I will help you."

I had been walking for more than two hours among the trenches without seeing any signs of Diélette, and I was beginning to think she had been amusing herself at my expense when she made her appearance.

"Let us go yonder and hide among the hazel-bushes," she said; "we must not let them see us together or they will suspect something."

I followed her, and when we had plunged into a thick grove of hazel-bushes and alders, where we were completely hidden from view, she stopped.

"In the first place," she said, "I must tell you my history; that will make you understand why I want to run away."

Although we were about the same age, Diélette, in speaking to me, assumed the air of authority which grown people use with children, and I did not understand why, since she was so self-confident, she had need of the aid of one so helpless as I; but as I had conceived a lively sympathy for her, and as, above all, she was mistress of my secret, I made no objection and entered at once upon my rôle of confidant.

"Lapolade is not my father," she continued; "my father I never knew; he died while I was still an infant. My mother kept a mercer's shop in Paris, near the Market. I do not remember either my mother's name or the name of the street in which we lived. All I remember is that mamma was young and beautiful, and that she had luxuriant fair hair, so long that when my brother and I played on her bed in the morning we could hide ourselves in it as we would in a bush.

"She loved us dearly; she lavished caresses upon us, and she never beat us. My brother was a year older than I; his name was Eugene. A great many wagons passed through our street. In the morning heaps of cabbages, carrots, and vegetables of all sorts lay on the sidewalks, and from the street door we could see the gilt clock of a tall church opposite. Above the church rose a slender tower, and on this tower long black arms

moved back and forth all day. When I spoke of this last year to a clown belonging to Masson's troupe, who had come from Paris, he told me that the church was the Church of St. Eustache, and that the large black arms belonged to a telegraph post.

"As mamma worked all day she hardly ever went out with us herself, but sent us out walking with an apprentice. One summer day—I know it must have been summer, for the weather was warm and there was a great deal of dust in the streets—she took me to a fair where spice-cake was sold; this is a fair which is held at the Barrier du Trône; you must have heard it spoken of since you joined the caravan. I do not remember why my brother was not with us, but at all events he had stayed at home.

"It was the first time I had seen clowns and they amused me greatly. I wanted to go into all the booths; but the apprentice had no money, and I had only four sous, which had been given me to buy cakes with; she took them from me and we went into a side-show."

"What is that?" I asked.

"How stupid you are! If you don't know what a side-show is, what do you know? Well, it is a booth where a phenomenon is on exhibition—a giantess, living seal, or the like.

"In this booth there were two seals in a tank. I don't know how it happened, but the apprentice entered into conversation with the man in the booth; he did not take his eyes off me, and he said that I was very pretty. He left the booth with us and we went to a wine-shop, where we were shown into a little dark room where there was no one but ourselves. I was tired

and warm, and while they drank sweetened wine out of a punch-bowl I fell asleep.

"When I awoke it was almost dark and the apprentice had disappeared.

"I asked the man where she was; he answered that if I wished we would go to her. I went with him. There were a great many people on the sidewalks, the booths were all brightly illuminated, and the musicians were playing everywhere. He took me by the hand and dragged me along quickly.

"Soon we got out of the crowd. We were on a broad road, bordered on either side by trees; the lights had almost all disappeared, and only now and then was a house to be seen.

"I began to be afraid. The man saw that I resisted his efforts to drag me along; he proposed to carry me, but I refused; he tried to take me in his arms, but I screamed. Some soldiers were passing along; they stopped.

"'What are you screaming for?' he said to me. 'We are going to your mamma.'

"We resumed our tramp. The road seemed much longer now than it had seemed in going to the fair, and I did not recognize it. We passed by high gloomy walls and a large gate, before which some soldiers were on guard, and entered a wood that seemed to have no end. I was now terrified and stood still.

"'Come along, you little plague,' said the man, in his deep voice, 'or I shall settle with you.'

"No one was in sight. He dragged me along by force, and I went with him. What else could I do? You know I was only five years old; I was not at all courageous, and then I thought of mamma.

"I don't know how long he made me walk in this way, only I was very tired when we came in sight of the lights of a village. In a square at the entrance were some wagons, belonging to a travelling show, drawn up against the wooden fence. We entered one of these wagons. We were received by a woman without legs, who was drinking brandy.

"He whispered something to her, and they both looked fixedly at me.

"'Don't you see,' said the woman, 'that she has a mark on her cheek?'

"This mark was a little pink strawberry, here where there is a little hollow.

"'No matter,' said the man, 'we can soon make it disappear.'

"Terror again took possession of me, and I asked where my mamma was.

"'She will come to-morrow, dear little heart,' said the woman. 'To-night you must be good and go to bed.'

"'Perhaps she is hungry,' said the man.

"'Well, we will give the little darling something to eat.'

"It was then I perceived that the woman had no legs. She moved along turning from side to side, supporting herself on her hands. This astonished me greatly, and did not tend to reassure me; but as she gave me good things to eat—green pease, just from the pot—I ate a hearty supper.

"'She is a good little thing,' said the old woman, seeing that I devoured the pease, which had neither salt nor butter, 'and not hard to please in her food.'

"She did not know that this was a luxury which was forbidden me at home, as the doctor allowed me to eat only roast meats on account of my delicate health.

"'You must go to bed now,' she said, when I had finished eating.

"And she drew aside a curtain made of ticking, which concealed the other end of the wagon; behind it were two beds.

"It was certainly very amusing to go to bed in a wagon. I slept soundly.

"When I awoke I thought I was still dreaming, for the bed seemed to be dancing. I felt myself swaying from side to side, and I heard a noise of bells and the clanking of chains. Above my bed was a little window through which the light entered. In the distance I could see a river flowing through a meadow. I comprehended that my bedroom was moving, and I then remembered where I was. I began to cry, 'Mamma! mamma!' A deep voice which I did not recognize answered,

"'We are going to her.'

"I was greatly terrified, and I screamed louder than ever.

"Then a man whom I had not seen before entered the room; he was very tall, and his head, which was covered with a policeman's cap, touched the roof of the wagon.

"'If you scream I will kill you,' he said to me.

"You may imagine how I screamed then, but he came towards me holding out his arms; I thought he was going to strangle me, and I tried to stifle my cries.

"As soon as he had left the wagon I looked around for my clothes, so that I might dress myself. I could not find them, and not daring to ask for them I remained in bed.

"The wagon rolled on for a long time, sometimes over paving stones, sometimes over sand; through the window I could see that we were passing through village streets; at last it stopped, and the woman without legs entered.

"'Mamma! Where is mamma?' I asked her.

"'Presently, little heart, presently,' she responded.

"She spoke gently. This encouraged me.

"'I want to get up,' I said.

"'That is what I was going to propose to you; here are your clothes,' she answered.

"And she showed me an old frock.

"'That is not my frock,' I said.

"'It is the one you must put on,' she returned.

"I felt like tearing the old frock to pieces instead of putting it on, but the woman without legs looked at me so meaningly that I obeyed.

"When I was dressed in this ugly garment the wagon stopped and the woman without legs told me I might get out. We were in the midst of an extensive plain, and around us, far as the eye could reach, stretched green fields. The man in a policeman's cap had lighted a fire on the high-road, over which, suspended from three sticks fastened together, hung a pot. I was very hungry, and I was glad to hear the pot simmering.

"The woman without legs had remained in the wagon; the man went over to it, lifted her up in his arms, and set her on the road.

"'The mark,' she said, looking at me.

"'Ah, you are right; I had forgotten it,' he answered.

"And the bad man took me between his knees, pressing me close against him and holding my arms so tightly that it was impossible for me to move. The woman without legs then held up my head with one hand, and with a pair of scissors, which she held in the other, cut the strawberry from my cheek.

"The blood gushed forth, filling my mouth and staining my frock. I thought she was going to kill me, and I began to utter terrified shrieks, trying at the same time to bite her. Without heeding my struggles she put something on my cheek that burned it and stopped the blood.

"'Let her go now,' she said to the man.

"She thought I was going to run away. No, indeed; I threw myself on her striking her with all my might.

"I think she would have strangled me if the man had not caught hold of me and thrown me into the wagon and shut the door upon me.

"They kept me all day without food; it was evening before they opened the door. My first word was to ask for mamma.

"'She is dead,' said the woman without legs.

"I had been thinking all the time that I was shut up alone in the wagon.

"'It is not true; mamma is not dead. You are a thief!' I cried.

"She began to laugh, which exasperated me.

"For three weeks or a month I remained with the

woman without legs and the man with the policeman's cap. They had thought to tame me, as wild animals are tamed, by hunger, but they could not succeed in doing so. When I was hungry I did all they wished, but as soon as I had satisfied my appetite I was as rebellious as before. The woman without legs knew well that I would never forgive her for the operation she had performed on my cheek, and she sometimes declared that she was afraid of me, that she thought I was capable of stabbing her.

"We had now arrived in a place the name of which I did not know, but where bread was called '*brod*,' and where there were a great many rivers; here, seeing that they could do nothing with me, they sold me to a blind man, who was no more blind than you are, but who pretended to be so for the purpose of begging. All day long I was obliged to stand on the bridge holding out my hand. Fortunately, he had a poodle dog that I played with in the evenings at home. If it had not been for this I should have died of grief.

"I had no talent whatever for begging, and as I would not annoy the people who gave me nothing by running after them, crying, I was beaten every day. Tired at last of beating me the blind man resold me to a party of travelling musicians, for whom I took up the collection while they played.

"How many countries we travelled through! I have been in England, and also in America, where it is so cold that they drive about in wagons without wheels that glide along over the snow. One must sail across the seas to get there, and the voyage lasts more than a month.

"The musicians sold me, in their turn, to Lapolade when we came back to France. He bought me to perform on the trapeze, and while I was learning I fed the animals. At this time we had three lions; one of them, that had been very vicious before, became quite gentle with me. When I carried him his dinner he would lick my hands.

"One day, vexed because I could not execute a difficult feat, Lapolade gave me a beating. I screamed as loudly as I could. This scene took place in front of the cage of my lion; angry at seeing me beaten, the friendly animal stretched his paw through the bars, and, clutching Lapolade on the shoulder, drew him towards him. Lapolade tried to get away, but the lion had dug his claws into the flesh and held him firmly. If they had not come with iron bars to his assistance Lapolade would never have got away alive.

"It was two months before he recovered from his wound, but this suggested to him the idea of making me go into the cages. 'Since the lions are friendly to you,' said Madame Lapolade, 'they will not try to hurt you; and if they do, the big lion will protect you.'

"I liked this better than performing on the trapeze, and it is since that time that 'the illustrious Diélette has tamed by her charms the ferocious children of the desert,' as Cabriole says. He is a fool with his 'ferocious children of the desert;' they are gentler than dogs. Ah, if my poor old Rougeaud were not dead you should see! I used to put the three lions into the same cage. I would strike the other two with all my might with my whip, and when they would begin to growl and grow angry I would say to Rougeaud, 'De-

fend me!' He would immediately place himself before me, roaring so terrifically that the earth shook. Then I would pretend to faint; he would lick my face; they would open the grating, and he would carry me to it in his mouth. If you could have heard the people applaud; and the bouquets and the cakes and the kisses of the beautiful ladies!

"I had so much success that Lapolade received an offer to go to Paris. Fancy if I was pleased! At Paris I was sure that I could run away and go to mamma.

"But just as we were going to start Rougeaud fell sick; it was winter, and he was constantly shivering with cold. Ah, I took good care of him; I even lay down with him under his covering. He died, though, all the same.

"I had never had so great a grief; they thought I was going to die of it. The caravan did not go to Paris, and I had to give up the hope of finding my dear mamma.

"I have often since then thought of running away, but alone I had not the courage; and I have no confidence in Filasse or La Bouillie. You are not one of these people. Will you help me to find mamma? You shall see how rejoiced she will be, and how she will embrace you."

But Paris was not Havre, and I in my turn related my history to Diélette.

"Come to Paris, all the same," she said; "mamma will pay your expenses to Havre, and we will take you there."

I tried to make her understand how difficult it would be for us to provide for our necessities on the journey

to Paris. What should we eat? Where should we sleep?

"I have seven francs and eight sous," she said; "they will buy food for us; we can sleep in the open air; if you are near me I shall not be afraid."

This mark of confidence, so flattering to my pride, decided me at once; and then Diélette was a girl whom one could not resist, and she had a way of looking at you with her large blue eyes, full of mingled timidity and boldness, innocence and experience, sweetness and severity, that admitted of no refusal.

It was agreed, then, that we should abandon the caravan as soon as it reached Orleans.

"Until we arrive there," she said, "I will not speak to you before other people; you are too innocent; you would betray yourself."

I made a grimace; she saw that I was not greatly flattered by this compliment.

"Shake hands with me," she said; "it is because you are innocent that I trust you."

XI.

It was Saturday, market-day, and the streets were full of country-people. On the great square, which I was crossing on my way to the wagons, I came across Filasse and La Bouillie standing watching Turquetin, who, to the sound of a big drum, was drawing teeth with such rapidity that they went flying through the air as if he were playing bones.

Still a young man, Turquetin had not then attained the reputation which thirty years' battling with Norman teeth, more industrious than sound, have since so deservedly earned him; but even at that time his skill, and still more his wit and good-humor, had rendered him popular throughout the western part of the country; a dense crowd had gathered around his wagon.

A poor gymnast, La Bouillie was a very skilful juggler, and he delighted to practise his art, playing jokes of a more or less serious nature upon the country-people. When I saw him among the crowd around Turquetin, I knew well he was there for some mischief, and I stayed to see what trick he was up to. Only as he had more than once reaped blows for his reward at this sport, I prudently held aloof.

It was well for me that I did so.

On this particular day the trick of my two companions consisted in abstracting their snuff-boxes from the pockets of the country-people who took snuff, and their handkerchiefs from the pockets of those who did not take snuff. Naturally, the part of La Bouillie, with his skill at sleight-of-hand, was to pick the pockets. The part of Filasse was, when La Bouillie passed him a snuff-box, to substitute coffee-grounds for the snuff it contained, and to powder with this the handkerchiefs as they were passed to him.

Their attention engaged with Turquetin's discourse, their eyes fixed on the luckless patient, who was waiting the speaker's pleasure to operate upon him, their ears filled with the noise of the big drum and the shouts of the charlatan, oblivious to all around them,

the country-people allowed their pockets to be picked as if they had been so many manikins.

Several of the crowd had already used their handkerchiefs, sneezing violently thereafter, to the great delight of the two accomplices, who were ready to split their sides with laughter; others, after taking a pinch of snuff, had looked at their snuff-boxes with so comical an air of surprise that I felt tempted to take an active part in this mystification.

But as I was going to join my comrades I saw a gendarme slip behind La Bouillie and seize him by the collar, just as he was about to introduce his hand into the pocket of an old woman. There was a commotion in the crowd, an uproar, and Filasse was also arrested.

Without waiting to see more I made my way out of the crowd, and, trembling with fear, hurried to our encampment, where I related what I had just witnessed.

An hour later the police came to search our wagons. Naturally, they found nothing, for my two companions were not thieves. They kept them in prison, however, and Lapolade's efforts to persuade the magistrates that the affair was only a practical joke of two boys were so ill-received that he desisted, fearing to be arrested himself as an accomplice, or, at least, as a receiver of stolen goods. The police show little mercy to mountebanks, and if a crime is committed in a place when they chance to be passing through it, they are the first on whom suspicion falls. When they are accused, it is not necessary to show that they are guilty; it is their place to prove that they are innocent.

Filasse and La Bouillie, arrested in the act of picking the pockets of the country-people, could not prove

that they had not intended to steal, and they were sentenced to detention in the House of Correction until they should be of age.

It was decided, in order to fill the vacancy thus left in the company, that I should take the place of both. To this arrangement of Lapolade I objected strenuously. I had no vocation for dislocating my bones and shutting myself up in boxes.

"There is no question of boxes," he said, pulling me by the hair, which was his way of showing affection and good-will; "you are supple; you will succeed very well in vaulting."

It was at the fair of Alençon that I made my début. Unfortunately, there had been very little time to prepare for this, and although the exercises I had to go through were very simple, they resulted in an accident which obliged me to put off my projected flight.

It was a Sunday; we had begun our performances at noon, and had continued them without a moment's respite till evening; the musicians, hot and thirsty, had scarcely breath enough left to blow their instruments. Lapolade uttered a few discordant words from time to time that sounded more like the barking of a dog than a speech; the lion refused to stand up, and when Diélette threatened him with her whip he fixed his languid eyes upon her without moving, as if to implore her pity. As for me, I was half-dead with fatigue; I was hungry, I was thirsty, and I could no longer stir hand or foot.

At eleven o'clock there were still people before the door of our show, and Lapolade decided that we should give one more performance.

"My only thought is the pleasure of the public," he said, in the short discourse he made; "we are worn out, it is true, but even if we were all to die of fatigue our first duty is to you. Come in! come in!"

The spectacle was to begin with my performance; this consisted in perilous leaps over the backs of four horses running abreast, and in feats of strength performed at the top of a pole held by Cabriole. I succeeded badly in my leaps, and the public showed signs of dissatisfaction. When Cabriole held the pole for me I was tempted to say that I could do no more, but the eyes of Lapolade, fixed upon me with an expression which I understood only too well, my vanity, and the excitement of the crowd communicating itself to me, decided me. I leaped on Cabriole's shoulders and climbed the pole easily enough.

Cabriole, too, was tired. At the moment when, by the force of my arm, I was placing myself horizontally on the top of the pole—forming a right angle with it—I felt it sway beneath me; my heart stood still. I let go my hold and fell, stretching my hands out before me to save myself.

The crowd uttered a cry; I reached the ground. The shock was severe, for I had fallen from a height of fifteen feet or more; and had it not been for the layer of sawdust I should undoubtedly have been dashed to pieces. I felt a sharp pain, and at the same time I heard a sound as of something snapping in my shoulder.

I rose to my feet immediately, and, as I had seen my predecessor do, would have saluted the audience who were standing up on the benches, their eyes turned

anxiously towards me, but I could not raise my right arm.

The people crowded around me, all speaking to me at once. I was in great pain, and I felt as if I were going to faint.

"It will be nothing," said Lapolade; "be so good as to resume your seats, and the performance will go on."

"He won't be able to do *so* for a while, that is all," said Cabriole, raising both his arms above his head: "the good souls may sleep in peace."

The audience laughed and applauded loudly.

And, in fact, for six weeks I could not make the movement indicated by Cabriole, for my collar-bone was broken.

In the circus the services of a physician are seldom called into requisition. Lapolade himself applied a bandage to my shoulder when the performance was over. For medicine, he made me go to bed without supper.

I slept alone in the wagon of the animals. I had been in bed for more than two hours, unable to sleep, consumed by a feverish thirst, restlessly turning from side to side, in the vain effort to find a comfortable position for my shoulder, when I fancied I heard the door of the wagon softly open.

"It is I," said Diélette, in a low voice. "Are you asleep?"

"No."

She entered quickly, and coming over to my bedside, kissed me.

"This has happened through me," she said. "Will you forgive me?"

"For what?"

"If I had let you go you would not have had this fall."

The moonlight, entering through the casement, fell full on Diélette's face; I thought I saw tears in her eyes. I wished to appear brave.

"It is nothing," I said. "Do you think I am made of down?"

I tried to stretch out my arm, but a sharp and sudden pain made me utter a little cry.

"It is through me," she said again, "through me, that this has happened."

And with an abrupt movement she turned up the sleeve of her jacket.

"Look at this!" she said.

"What?"

"Feel."

She took my hand gently and placed it on her arm. I felt something like blood.

"When I knew that your collar-bone was broken," she went on, "I bit my arm as hard as I could, so that it might pain me as much as possible, for when people are friends they should suffer together."

She uttered these words with savage energy, and her eyes flashed back the moonlight as if they had been diamonds. What she had done was absurd; but I felt touched to the heart, and I could scarcely keep from crying.

"How foolish you are," she said, divining my emotion; "you would have done as much for me. See, I have brought you some grapes that I took from the chest. Are you hungry?"

"I am thirsty; the grapes will do me good."

She went out again and came back as softly as a shadow, bringing me a cup of water.

"Now," she said, "you must go to sleep," and she settled my head on the pillow; "you must hurry and get well so that we can run away; the first day you are able to walk we will go. I don't want you to climb on the pole again; that sort of business does not suit you."

"But how if Lapolade forces me?"

"Forces you! I would make Mouton eat him up first. That would not be so difficult—a blow of the paw, a snap of the teeth—crack!"

At the threshold, before closing the door, she gave me a friendly nod, saying,

"Go to sleep now."

I fancied the pain in my shoulder was less severe. I was able to stretch myself comfortably and go to sleep thinking of my mother, my heart filled, indeed, with emotion, but not oppressed.

The worst part of my accident was that it delayed our flight, and brought us dangerously near to the inclement season. I had slept very well in the open fields during the fine summer nights, but in November, when the nights would be long and cold, with rain and snow, perhaps, it would be altogether different.

Diélette would allow me to do nothing; she herself took care of the animals. She was more impatient than I to see me well again; and when I sometimes said that it would be more prudent to wait for the spring, she grew angry.

"If you stay with them," she said, "you will not be

alive in spring. Lapolade will want to teach you some feat on the trapeze which will be your death. And, then, we are going farther and farther away from Paris. In the spring we shall, perhaps, be in the South."

This was a decisive reason.

I must make haste to get well. Every morning I passed under Diélette's inspection—that is to say, I stood with my back to the partition of the wagon and raised my arm as high as I could. With her knife she made a mark on the partition where my arm stopped, and then, by comparing the height each day with that of the previous day, we followed, step by step, the progress of the cure.

From Alençon we had proceeded to Vendôme, and from Vendôme to Blois; from Blois we were to go on to Tours, where I was to resume my performances. It was agreed upon, then, between Diélette and me, that at Blois we should leave the caravan and take the Orleans road to Paris. She had given me her money and I had bought an old map of the road at a second-hand dealer's at Vendôme; with a hair-pin I had constructed a compass, and I had calculated the distance between Blois and Paris to be forty leagues. This was a great distance to travel in the month of November, when the days are hardly ten hours long. Could Diélette, who was unaccustomed to walking, walk six leagues at a stretch? She bravely declared that she could, but I doubted it. In any case, it was a week's journey; fortunately she had added to her savings, which now amounted to ten francs; our provision of food was made, my shoes were finished, and she had picked up

by chance on the road an old horse-blanket, on which we depended chiefly to shelter us at night.

We were ready to run away, then, and only waited for the cure of my shoulder to be complete, a thing which, according to our calculations and to the progress attested by the notches on the partition, would coincide with the latter part of our sojourn at Blois; but a revolt of Mouton, generally so docile, delayed our flight a second time.

One evening two Englishmen, who had applauded Diélette loudly during the performance, came to her when the audience had retired and asked her to go over her exhibition again. Lapolade acceded to the request all the more willingly as it was made by two men whom an abundant dinner seemed to have disposed to generosity. Diélette went into the cage once more.

"She is a charming girl, that!"

"A brave girl!"

And they applauded again.

I know not what sentiment of vanity it was that roused the jealousy of Lapolade, and made him say that if she could perform those feats with the lion so fearlessly it was owing to the training which he, Lapolade, had given her.

"You!" cried the younger of the two Englishmen, a handsome young man with a fair and rosy complexion, "you are a braggart; you would be afraid to go into the cage."

"Ten louis to one that you would not go into it," said the other.

"Done!" cried Lapolade.

"But the girl must come out first and you must go in alone."

Perhaps, after all, it is only a prejudice that makes us fancy that it needs great courage to go into the cage of a wild beast.

"The whip," said Lapolade to Diélette.

"It is understood," said the young Englishman, "that the girl is to come out of the cage and not to go in again?"

"It is understood."

We were all present—Cabriole, Madame Lapolade, the musicians, and I, whose duty it was to open the door of the cage.

Lapolade took off his general's uniform.

"If the lion is intelligent," said one of the Englishmen, "he will not touch him—he would be too tough a morsel."

And they began to make jokes at the expense of our master, which made us all laugh.

Mouton was intelligent enough to have retained the recollection of the blows with the handle of the whip which Lapolade had at various times administered to him through the bars of his cage, and he began to tremble when the latter gravely entered the cage, his whip raised threateningly.

This attitude on the part of the animal encouraged Lapolade; he thought he could master the old lion, and he gave him a blow of the whip to make him rise; but a blow with a whip is not the same as a blow with a pitchfork. Mouton knew that he had his enemy in his power; a gleam of courage passed through his stupefied brain; he rose to his feet, growling, and before

Lapolade could draw back, threw himself on the unfortunate man, dragging him to the ground with his two formidable paws, whose claws we could see contract spasmodically, and rolled him under his body with a terrific roar.

"It is all over with me!" cried Lapolade.

Crouching over him, the lion looked at us through the grating; his eyes flashed fire, while he lashed his sides with his tail, making them resound like the sides of a drum.

Cabriole seized a pitchfork and showered blows upon the lion, who did not stir. Then one of the Englishmen drew a revolver from his pocket and placed it close to the side of the lion's head, which almost touched the bars.

But with a quick movement Madame Lapolade threw up his arm.

"Don't kill him!" she cried.

"Ah," said the Englishman, "she sets more store on the lion, it seems, than she does on her husband."

And he said a few words in a low voice in a foreign language.

The confusion and the cries had attracted Diélette's attention; she ran towards the cage. One of the bars was so arranged that it could be removed, leaving a space wide enough for her slender form, though not for the lion's head, to pass through. She removed the bar and entered the cage unperceived by Mouton, whose back was turned towards her.

She had no whip; she threw herself boldly upon the lion and seized him by the mane. Surprised at this attack, and not knowing whence it proceeded, he turned

around quickly, throwing her against the bars; but seeing who his assailant was, he dropped his paw, already raised to crush her, and, rising up, went and crouched in a corner of the cage.

Lapolade was not dead, but he was so bruised that it was necessary to lift him out bodily from the cage, while Diélette held the lion in check by her gaze.

She herself left the cage limping. The lion had bruised her leg, and she had received a sprain which confined her for a week to her chair, while Lapolade, mangled and spitting blood, lay between life and death.

At the end of a fortnight she declared that she could walk without pain, and that the time was now come to carry out our plan. Lapolade, obliged to keep his bed by his wounds, would be unable to pursue us.

XII.

It was the 3d of November, but the weather was fine for the season; if we made haste we might hope to reach Paris before the severe weather set in.

After long discussion the following plan was decided upon: As I was not watched I should leave the caravan first, taking all the baggage—that is to say, the store of crusts, the blanket, a bottle, my second pair of shoes, a small bundle of linen, which had been hidden in my chest by Diélette, and a tin saucepan—a complete load, in short; then when the Lapolades should be asleep, Diélette would rise, slip out of the wagon, and come

to meet me at a certain tree on the boulevard on which we had set a mark.

I arrived at the rendezvous as eleven o'clock was striking. Diélette did not join me until midnight. I was beginning to despair of her coming, fearing that she had been observed, when I heard her light step on the road. Her figure stood out against a band of light, and I recognized the red cape which she wore when, after her performance, she came to join the parade.

"I thought I should never be able to get away," she said, panting for breath. "Lapolade was sighing like a seal—he would not go to sleep—and then I went to say good-bye to Mouton. Poor Mouton! how he is going to grieve! Are you sure you have everything?"

This was no time to make an inventory. I told her that they might pursue us, and that we had better hurry and try to gain the open country.

"Very well," she said, "let us go; but first give me your hand."

"What for?"

"To take in mine, that we may both swear that this is for life or death. Will you swear that?"

"Willingly."

"Give me your hand, then, and repeat after me: We will stand by each other in life or death!"

"In life or death!"

She clasped my hand in hers, and I was deeply moved by the accent in which she pronounced this formula.

In the deserted streets of the town reigned a mysterious silence disturbed only by the gentle plashing of a fountain, and by the creaking of the lamps that swung

back and forth in the wind at the end of their iron chains, casting long wavering shadows on the ground.

"Let us go now," she said, taking a step forward.

We had not walked long before we found ourselves in the fields. While following her, I looked at her attentively. I fancied that her left arm was curved out as if she carried some object under her cloak. Since I had charge of all our baggage, what could it be? I asked her.

"It is my mignonette," she answered, raising her cloak, under which I perceived a small flower-pot covered with gold paper. She had always taken care of this plant, which had stood in one of the windows of the wagon, and for which I had more than once seen her make tyrannical exactions which exasperated Lapolade.

"And how do you think we shall be able to carry that?" I asked, not a little annoyed at this additional encumbrance.

"How could I leave it behind? It would have died. It was enough to leave Mouton! Poor Mouton! Do you know that just now I was strongly tempted to bring him with us? How he looked at me! I am certain he suspected something."

To take Mouton with us seemed to me a very droll idea. In a leash, no doubt, like a dog. I could not help laughing.

Diélette divided the baggage between us, and I had a great deal of trouble to persuade her to let me take the largest share.

The night was cool, although not cold; the sky, of a grayish-blue, was studded with stars that sparkled brightly; the plain was wrapped in silence; the trees

stood erect and motionless; not a branch stirred, not a leaf rustled, none of those noises of birds or insects were to be heard which make summer nights alive; only from time to time, as we passed some house, a dog would bark after us, rousing other dogs that would return the bark, the sounds dying away in the silence of the night like the calls of sentinels challenging and answering one another.

To put ourselves beyond reach of pursuit should Lapolade make any attempt to follow us it would be necessary to walk all night. I feared that Diélette would not be able to keep up with me, but she did not complain of being tired until near morning. We had passed through several sleeping villages during the night, and from the mile-stones on the road we learned that we were five leagues distant from Blois. Before us a yellow glow was beginning to brighten the horizon. The cocks, awakening, crowed to one another from the neighboring poultry-yards. In the houses lights began to appear through the shutters; soon horses and ploughmen, going with slow step to their work in the fields, began to pass along the road.

"Let us take a rest now," said Diélette; "I am no longer afraid."

"You were afraid, then?" I said.

"Yes, indeed, ever since we left Blois."

"Of what?"

"Of the silence. I don't like silence at night. And then the shadows, lengthening themselves out and shortening themselves by turns, make one's heart stand still and then go on at a gallop."

Morning dawned while we were breakfasting on our

crusts—a gray, misty morning. Far as the eye could reach stretched an open plain where, among scattered clumps of trees, nestled cottages from whose chimneys columns of yellow smoke rose gently. Fields recently ploughed succeeded fields covered with stubble; nowhere was to be seen vegetation. Flocks of crows slowly winged their flight through the air, and alighted, separating into little bands, around the ploughs and harrows at work in the fields.

We soon resumed our journey again, and did not stop until we had made two leagues; but our limbs were now stiff with fatigue, and Diélette was ready to drop with sleep. She was so tired that she slept for five hours without stirring.

My chief anxiety on this journey was as to how we should spend the nights. I had had some experience of sleeping in the open air, and I was not a little uneasy on account of the cold. We agreed, therefore, on resuming our march, that we would stop wherever we found a sheltered place to sleep, without regard to the distance we had walked. We found such a place at the foot of a park wall, where the wind had blown together a large heap of dry leaves. As it was hardly four o'clock when we came upon this spot, I had all the time necessary before nightfall to prepare our couch.

I gathered some armfuls of dry leaves in the wood and added them to the heap by the wall, smoothing all out evenly. Above this I placed some branches, fixing them firmly in the earth between the stones. This formed a species of frame, over which I spread the blanket; we thus had a bed and a roof.

Diélette was greatly delighted with this arrangement;

a hut in the woods was so amusing; it was like the story of little Tom Thumb. Now, if we only had some butter, she would make some soup—but we had no butter.

By the time we had finished our dinner, however—which, like our breakfast, consisted of crusts—it was beginning to grow dark. When the last red gleam of sunset had faded away in the sky, when the birds, perched among the leafy pines, no longer twittered, when shadows filled the wood, she seemed less assured.

"Are you sleepy?" she asked me.

"No," I returned.

"Well, then, will you stay awake until I fall asleep? I shall be less afraid if you do."

We were not badly sheltered under our blanket. Through the holes, however, which were numerous, we could see the stars shining in the sky, and although all nature seemed to sleep, we could hear those mysterious little noises that told us we were not within the walls of a house.

For a long time Diélette turned about uneasily. At last, however, overcome by fatigue, she fell asleep. Glad to be relieved from my watch, I soon followed her example.

I was right in fearing the cold; before morning it woke us up.

"Are you cold?" Diélette asked me when she felt me move. "I am frozen."

There was no remedy, however; we had done all that we could. The best thing was to go asleep again and wait for morning.

But I found this impossible; I was chilled through;

and, notwithstanding all my efforts to avoid it, I shivered from head to foot. I heard, too, a noise around us which caused me some uneasiness: the leaves on the ground crackled as if thousands of insects were walking over them.

"Do you hear that?" Diélette asked me, in a low voice. Notwithstanding my desire to reassure her, I could not answer no, and, besides, I began to be a little frightened myself. I tried to be brave, because I had my companion to protect; if I had been alone I should probably have run away.

For more than half an hour we lay without daring to move. I could hear Diélette's teeth chatter; our bed of leaves was shaken by our trembling, and outside the same crackling continued.

The continuance and regularity of the sounds in the end reassured me a little. If they had been produced by a human being or by an animal they would have varied. I made up my mind to look out.

I raised a corner of the blanket. The white light of the moon, which came down from a starry sky, showed me that everything was in the same condition as before.

I rested my hand upon the leaves, in order to lean out to obtain a better view; the leaves crackled; they were stiff, and adhered to one another in a compact mass—the crackling had been caused by the frost.

This reassured us, but it did not warm us. On the contrary, to know that it was freezing made us feel colder than before.

Suddenly I heard Diélette getting up.

"What is the matter?" I asked.

"My mignonette! my mignonette!" she cried. "It will freeze and die!"

She took the plant in her arms and wrapped her cloak around it to keep it from the cold.

What was the hour? Was it morning, or was it still night? The moon had descended in the sky, but I did not know at what time it would set.

It soon became impossible to remain under our cover; although we huddled close to each other we shivered with cold so that we could scarcely speak. We resolved to resume our journey; by walking we should at least be able to get a little warmer.

We must pack up our bundles again and take them on our backs. One difficulty presented itself, however: Diélette wished to protect her mignonette from the cold, and she could think of no better means of doing so than by holding it under her cloak. As carrying the plant in so constrained a position would almost paralyze her arm, I proposed to leave it behind us; but she received this proposition indignantly, saying that I had no heart, and I did not venture to insist.

We resumed our march, then, while it was still night, on account of the cold. Our journey had begun inauspiciously. I did not dare to communicate my fears to Diélette, however; she walked along bravely, and she always had some cheerful word to say which it did me good to hear.

After walking for an hour through the fields we heard the cocks crowing, and we were rejoiced to think that it would soon be day. We were now warm, and we recounted, laughing at each other, our terrors of the night. This gave rise to an argument as to which

of us was the braver, and we finally agreed that I was braver than Diélette, but that Diélette had more common sense than I.

Dreading pursuit should we take the direct road to Paris, as Lapolade would probably take that road if he pursued us, we took the road leading from Blois to Chartres; according to the map this was but a slight detour.

That evening we passed Châteaudun. The day had been warm, but the evening was cool, and we resolved to put up for the night at an inn. This was to undergo an expense we could ill afford, but it was better than to die of cold.

"When our money is all gone," said Diélette, "I will sing in the villages and we can earn more."

She said this so courageously, with such unquestioning faith in her success, that her confidence communicated itself to me.

But it was not so easy a matter as we thought to earn money by singing; we were soon to learn this, and to learn, too, how easy it is to spend it.

Two leagues from Châteaudun we received hospitality for the night at an inn, for which we paid forty sous. In addition to this we were obliged to tell where we came from and whither we were going. Fortunately, I had my story ready: we were going to Chartres to engage a place for our show, which was a short distance behind, and which would arrive at the town on the next day or the day after.

To lie suited neither Diélette nor me; it was a hard necessity which humiliated us.

From Châteaudun to Chartres the way lay through

broad barren plains, with here and there, at rare intervals, some village surrounded by fields; on the road itself, however, scarcely a house was to be seen.

When we reached Bonneval, which is a large town, we thought we were going to make a fortune; but all they gave us there was three sous. I do not count as a gift a pitcher of water, which a gentleman who was shaving himself threw over us, nor the attentions of a dog, which a butcher set at us, and which tore Diélette's skirt. All is not gain in the profession of a singer.

"If I had a wolf," said Diélette, "and you a flute, we should be able to earn money. It is odd that they will only give to those who have something."

Diélette was endowed with an incredible amount of patience; no mishap or ill-treatment ever made her lose her temper.

Fortunately, we had not our lodging to pay for that night; they gave us shelter at a farm-house, where they put us to sleep in a sheep-fold, which was maintained comfortably warm by the sheep; this night was the pleasantest of our journey. In the morning, as we were about to start, the farmer's wife, who was getting into her wagon to go to the market of Chartres, saw us. She was touched by Diélette's air of fatigue, and offered her a place beside her; but Diélette refused, looking at me so expressively that the kind-hearted woman—comprehending that she did not want to be comfortable unless I could be so, too—took both of us in.

Sleeping in this way—sometimes in a farm-house, sometimes in a brick-yard, sometimes in an inn, and walking every day as far as our strength would per-

mit—we arrived at a little hamlet near Bièvre, three leagues distant from Paris.

It was high time; we had only eleven sous left. Diélette's shoes were in ribbons; one of her feet was blistered, and pained her excruciatingly when, after resting awhile, we resumed our march; and we were so tired that we dragged our limbs after us as if we were shod with lead.

She made no complaint, however, and she was always the first to be ready to start in the morning.

Our eleven sous did not permit us to spend that night at an inn, but at Saclay we chanced to fall in with a carrier with whom we travelled, and he gave us a shelter in his stable.

"We must start early to-morrow," said Diélette; "it is Saint Eugénie's day, and I want to arrive in time to wish mamma joy on her fête day; I will give her my mignonette."

Poor mignonette! It was leafless, ragged, withered; but, after all, it was still alive, and a few shoots, greener than the others, showed what it had once been.

We set out on our way when the carrier came to harness his horses—that is to say, before dawn.

The weather up to this had, as if by a miracle, been fine: cool at night and clear in the daytime; but on leaving the stable we fancied that the cold had grown sharper. The sky was cloudy, however; not a star was to be seen, and in the east, instead of the gorgeous red and copper-colored hues to which we had been accostumed since the beginning of our journey, hung dark-gray clouds. In addition to this a wind blew from the north, which stripped the leaves from the

boughs and whirled them about in the air. At times they rushed towards us in such clouds that it almost seemed as if they wished to bar our progress. Diélette found it very difficult to keep her cloak around the mignonette. Day was breaking, but with a gloomy and livid light.

"The sun is taking a rest; so much the better; it will not show off our dirty rags," said Diélette, who found some compensation in every trouble.

"Never fear; the skies will wash them clean before we reach Paris," I answered.

I thought it was going to rain, but it snowed instead. At first the snow came down in little flakes that were soon dissolved by the wind; then the flakes became larger, and fell in a dense and compact mass which the wind blew in our faces with such violence as almost to blind us.

We had walked scarcely a league; woods bordered the road on either side, and we resolved to look for a shelter in them. Far as the eye could reach not a house was to be seen; and nothwithstanding our anxiety to reach Paris, it was impossible to walk in this snow-storm.

The woods were crossed at intervals by ditches bordered with hedges, in which the withered leaves still clung to the branches. We took shelter at the foot of one of these hedges. It protected us for a time, but the snow, whirled along by the wind, skimmed the earth like a cloud of white dust, pausing in its course when it encountered any obstacle. It soon accumulated in this way on the other side of our hedge, until finally it rose above the top of the hedge and fell down

on the side on which we had taken shelter; it whirled above our heads and slipped down our necks, where it melted. We endeavored to shelter ourselves with the blanket, but the wind rendered this almost impossible.

Our garments were in tatters; they afforded slight protection against the cold. I saw that Diélette looked blue, and that she was shivering; she huddled up close to me, but I was too cold myself to communicate warmth to her. The snow sifted in powder down my neck and ran in water into my shoes. I was wetter than if I had dipped myself in the river.

For two hours we remained in this position. The snow did not seem to fall from the sky; it sped along horizontally, like innumerable tiny white arrows; sometimes it would whirl in eddies through the air.

Diélette had not abandoned her mignonette, however; she still held it pressed close to her, sheltered under her cloak; but the snow penetrated there as everywhere; when she saw that the earth around the plant was covered with snow which was frozen hard, she handed me the flower-pot.

"What do you wish me to do with it?" I asked.

"Try to save it for me, I implore you."

I was vexed to see her so greatly concerned about this plant. I shrugged my shoulders and pointed to her fingers, stiffened by contact with the pot.

"Ah," she said, angrily, "why did you not tell me in the beginning to throw it away?"

We were in a situation where disputes are easily kindled; we exchanged a few angry words—the first that had ever passed between us; then, relapsing into silence, we sat watching the falling snow.

But presently I felt her hand seeking mine.

"Do you want me to throw it away?" she said, sadly.

"You can see that it is dead; the leaves are black and drooping."

She did not answer, but I saw her eyes fill with tears.

"Oh, mamma!" she said. "Then I shall take her nothing!"

"Let us keep it," I said; and I took the pot from her.

The snow still fell, but the wind had diminished; it soon ceased altogether, and then the flakes came down thicker; in a few moments the earth was covered with snow, which rose up around us, as if to envelop us gradually in its icy folds.

This lasted for more than an hour. The branches of the trees bent under the weight of the snow. On our blanket, which protected us to some extent, we felt a weight of several pounds. Huddled closely together, we neither moved nor spoke; the cold had benumbed us, and I think neither of us was fully conscious of the danger of our situation.

At last the snow-flakes diminished in size, grew lighter, and finally ceased to fall. The sky was of a slaty blackness; the only light there was came from the white ground.

"Let us go on," said Diélette.

We regained the high-road; the snow was half-way up to our knees. Far as the eye could reach not a wagon was to be seen on the road, not a laborer in the fields; the only living creatures to be seen in this desert were the magpies that, perched on the branches

of the trees along the ditches, seemed to be mocking us with their cries as we went by.

After passing through a village we came to the summit of a high bank, where we could see before us a cloud of smoke resting over an immense city, irregularly laid out between two white hills; a confused hum, something like the murmur of the sea, reached us where we stood.

"It is Paris," said Diélette. We felt less cold, less exhausted, at sight of it.

On the road vehicles were driving towards the city.

But we were not yet there; and when we descended to the plain and no longer saw before us the desired goal our weariness and exhaustion returned.

We slipped at every step and made scarcely any progress; our wet garments smoked on our bodies.

The snow on the road gradually lost its whiteness, until at last it was only a blackish slush. Vehicles drove past us, going to or coming from the city, in endless procession; houses succeeded houses, and here and there in the fields were to be seen large black wheels lying among heaps of stones. Notwithstanding her spirit, Diélette was obliged to stop; the perspiration rolled down her forehead, and she limped badly. I brushed away the snow from a bench that stood before the door of a house on the road, and she sat down to rest.

"Ask if we have still far to walk," she said to me as a wagoner passed by.

"Where do you want to go?" the man said, when I asked him the question.

"To the market," I answered.

"Well, it will take you a good hour and a half to get there," he replied.

"I shall never be able to walk so far," she said, on hearing this answer.

She was livid, her eyes were dull, and she panted for breath.

I was obliged to lift her up; she wanted to remain on the bench, where already the fatal torpor produced by the cold had begun to steal over her. I reminded her of her mother, and her courage revived. We had almost reached the end of our journey, and we no longer needed the articles we had brought with us. I left them where they were on the bench, and told her to lean on me.

Once more we resumed our journey.

"You will see how mamma will embrace you," she said, "and what good soup and cakes she will give you; as for me, I will stay in bed for a week."

At the barrier I asked the way to the market. They told us to walk straight on in the direction of the river. The streets of Paris were still more dirty and slippery than the highway; the passers-by stopped to look at us as we walked along; in the midst of this crowd of people and vehicles, bewildered, wet, spattered with mud, our clothes in tatters, we must have looked like two birds strayed from their nest. Diélette with hope had recovered some of her strength, however, and we still kept up a tolerably brisk pace.

When we reached the bank of the Seine we were directed to the Pont-Neuf, and on our way there we came upon St. Eustache.

When we saw the gilded dial I felt Diélette's arm tremble.

"The clock!" she said; "that is the clock!"

It was but a momentary gleam of joy.

"It is the clock, indeed," she said; "but where are the houses?"

We walked around the church.

"We were mistaken," she said; "it is not St. Eustache."

I inquired again where we were; at St. Eustache, they told us.

Diélette's gaze wandered, her speech faltered.

"Let us look in all the streets in the neighborhood of the church," I said to her.

She allowed me to lead her, but the spirit that on arriving had helped her to throw off her fatigue had vanished.

She remembered none of the streets.

In front of the church was a large vacant space where the houses had been torn down, and men were working.

"It was there!" she said, bursting into tears; "there!"

"Let us inquire."

"How shall we inquire? I remember neither the name of the street nor mamma's name; the house, however, I should have known at once."

Stronger minds than ours would have been discouraged by this blow. So many labors, so many trials, so sure a hope to end in this! We leaned against the church, looking at each other stupefied, frightened, while the crowd, dense in this place, elbowed and jostled us about. Some of the passers-by stopped to look curiously at the two poor little bundles of rags, who presented in this spot so strange a spectacle.

Less disappointed in my hopes, and, above all, less exhausted than Diélette, I soon recovered myself, and taking her by the arm I led her to a large covered building where vegetables of all sorts were lying in heaps. In one corner were a number of empty baskets; I made her sit down on one of these; she allowed herself to be led like an imbecile. I could think of nothing to say to her; her lips were white, and she trembled from head to foot.

"You feel ill?" I said to her at last.

"Ah, mamma!" she exclaimed, and large tears rose to her eyes.

Around us the people were coming and going unceasingly, shouting, disputing, selling, buying, carrying, taking away—the hubbub, the tumult, the activity of the market.

It was not long before we were observed; the sight of two children so poorly clad, so pale, so exhausted with fatigue, one of whom cried without ceasing, was one to awaken curiosity.

"What are you doing here?" a stout woman asked me.

"Resting," I answered.

"This is no place to rest," she replied.

Without responding, I took Diélette by the hand to make her rise and go with me. Where? I did not know. But she looked at me with a glance so expressive of weariness and discouragement that the stout woman took pity on us.

"You can see she is too tired," she said to me. "Are you not ashamed to force her to walk?"

In response to her questions I told her the reason of our being here—that is to say, that we had come

from a great distance to find Diélette's mother, and that the house had been torn down.

"What a history!" she said, when I had finished my narrative; and she called to some of the other women who gathered around us.

"Then you know neither her mother's name nor the name of the street in which she lived?" one of the women said to me, after I had again gone over my story. "Does any of you know such a person?" she added, turning to the women around—"a mercer who lived in one of those streets where the houses have been torn down."

Then followed questions, answers, and discussions, but without any satisfactory result. How was it possible to identify the place after a lapse of eight years? The houses in the streets had been torn down a long time ago. Mercers there were in plenty, but which of them was Diélette's mother? Where did she live? Where look for her? All was chaos.

While all this talk was going on Diélette had grown paler than she was before; she shivered more than ever. I could hear her teeth chatter.

"It is easy to be seen that this child is frozen," said one of the women. "Come, little heart, you shall warm yourself over my warming-pan."

She made us go into her shop, into which two or three women followed us, while the others went back to their stands talking among themselves.

She did not content herself with letting us warm ourselves over her warming-pan; she had two cups of broth brought to us, and when she had warmed and refreshed us she put twenty sous into my hand.

This was a large sum for her to give, but how small a one for us in our terrible situation! Where to go, what to do now—that was the question. As for me, I might have continued my journey to Havre, but Diélette—what was to become of her? She, herself, felt the helplessness of her situation, for when we found ourselves again in the street her first words were:

"Where are we going now?"

The church was in front of us; the snow, which had begun to whirl again through the frozen air, made it impossible to remain in the street.

"There," I answered, pointing to the door of the church.

We entered; the atmosphere was warm and pleasant; silence reigned in the church; only in the chapels knelt here and there a worshipper. We took refuge in the darkest of them. "My God! my God!" murmured Diélette.

"Listen to me," I said to her in a low voice; "since you cannot find your own mamma, you must go to mine."

"To Port Dieu?"

"Yes; you don't want to go back to Lapolade, I suppose. You have had enough of the show; well, you must go to mamma. You can work with her; she will teach you her trade. When I come back from the sea I will go to join you both. You will see that mamma will love you. And then if you are with her I shall be easier in my mind; she will not be so lonely; if she should fall sick you will take care of her."

Diélette was frankness itself. She accepted my

proposition with a joy which showed, more than any words could have done, how keenly she had felt the desolateness of her position. She offered only one objection:

"Your mother will not wish to have me."

"Why not?"

"Because I have been a performer in a circus."

"Well, I have been one also."

"Ah, but in your case it is different," she answered, sorrowfully.

It was a great deal to know where we were going, but it was not enough to have a place of destination; it was necessary also to know how to reach it. The future seemed secure, but what of the present?

I had no very clear idea of how far it was from Paris to Port Dieu; I only knew that it was very far.

When I had left our bundles at Montrouge, as a vessel throws its cargo overboard to lighten its weight and save itself from sinking, I had fortunately kept my road map. I took it now from my pocket, and, unfolding it on one of the seats, I began to study it. I saw that to leave Paris we must follow the course of the Seine.

This was for the moment the essential point; later on I could study the rest of the journey.

But how make this journey without shoes on our feet or clothes on our backs, and with only twenty sous in our pockets? How undertake it, exhausted with fatigue as we were—Diélette, especially, who at every moment seemed as if she were going to faint? She flushed and paled by turns, and she shivered incessantly. How could we risk spending the night in

the open air, in the cold and snow, when only that morning, in the daylight, we had been so near dying?

"Can you walk the distance?" I asked Diélette.

"I don't know," she said; "when we were coming here I seemed to see mamma, and that gave me courage; but I cannot see your mamma."

"What are you doing here?" asked a voice behind us.

The map was spread out on one of the seats; it was very evident it was not our prayers we were reading from it.

"Come, hurry up, and get out of here."

We had to obey and walk out before the beadle, who kept muttering to himself all the way to the door.

The snow had ceased to fall, but a high wind was blowing and the cold was intense.

We retraced our steps along the street by which we had come. Diélette could scarcely drag herself along. I, however, revived by the broth I had taken, and, above all, excited by my anxious thoughts, did not feel my fatigue greatly.

We had not been walking for more than ten minutes when Diélette stopped.

"I can go no farther," she said. "See how I tremble; I feel as if I were going to faint; my chest hurts me; I really think I am going to be ill."

She sat down on a stone by the way-side, but after resting for a few minutes she got up again.

When we reached the Seine we turned to the right; the wharves stretched before us, covered with snow, and the whiteness of its banks made the water of the river seem almost black by contrast. The passers-by,

their cloaks drawn tightly around them, walked rapidly along. Some children were sliding on the sidewalks of the deserted streets.

"Is it far?" asked Diélette.

"What?"

"The place we are going to sleep at?"

"I don't know; let us go on quickly."

"But I can't walk any farther. See, Romain, leave me here; take me to some corner where I can lie down and die."

I took her arm; I wanted to get out of Paris. I fancied that if we were in the country we might find some brick-yard, some deserted house, an inn in which to take shelter; while in the streets, full of people, where every one hurried past, where there were policemen who looked at us so suspiciously, I felt myself lost.

We walked on for about a quarter of an hour longer, but without making any progress—that is to say that, although we were no longer in the midst of houses, we found ourselves closed in between a parapet on the one side and an immense wall on the other, which seemed to have no end; on the top of this wall were trees covered with snow, and soldiers on guard. Diélette, to say truth, no longer walked; I carried her. Notwithstanding the cold, the perspiration rolled down my forehead, as much from fatigue as from anxiety. I saw that she was utterly exhausted, that she was ill. What was going to become of us?

Diélette released her hold on my arm and sat down —or, rather, sank down—on the snow on the sidewalk. I tried to raise her up; her limbs refused to support her, and she sank down again.

"It is all over," she said, faintly.

I sat down beside her, and tried to make her understand that we must go on walking. She was like an inert mass; she neither heard nor answered me; her hands, only, still seemed to have any life in them; they burned like coals of fire.

After a few minutes I got frightened. No one passed by. I stood up to look around. Nothing was to be seen but the stone walls on either side, and between them the white snow. I entreated her to rise; she did not answer. I took her up in my arms; she made no resistance, but after taking a few steps I was obliged to rest; I could go no farther.

She slipped down on the ground; I sat down beside her. All was over; she must die here. Faint and exhausted as she was, she must have retained the consciousness of our situation, however, for she leaned towards me and kissed me gently with her cold and trembling lips. This brought the tears to my eyes and wrung my heart with anguish.

I hoped, notwithstanding, that she would soon revive, and that we should be able to resume our journey; but she did not move; her eyes were closed, and she leaned heavily against me. If it were not for a nervous trembling that at times shook her frame, I should have thought her dead.

Two or three passers-by, surprised at seeing us sitting in the snow in this way, stopped for a moment, looked at us inquisitively, and then went on their way.

But it was necessary to decide on some course. I resolved that I would ask help from the first person I should see. This chanced to be a policeman, who him-

self accosted me, asking what we were doing there. I told him that my little sister was ill and could walk no farther.

Then he put one question after another to me. When I had told him (it was the story I had prepared) that we were going to relations at Port Dieu, a place far away on the sea-coast, and that we had been walking for the past ten days, he looked at us in amazement.

"Come," he said, "that child will die there; we must take her to the station-house."

But Diélette, who was growing weaker and weaker, was unable to rise; she could not walk before, when I had implored her; she could not walk now, when the policeman ordered her to walk.

He then took her up in his arms and told me to go along with him. We started for the station-house. After we had walked for about five minutes we were joined by one of his comrades, to whom he repeated the story I had told him, and who carried Diélette in his turn. We soon reached a house, before the door of which hung a red lantern. Entering, we found ourselves in a large apartment, where several policemen were seated around a stove, in which there was a roaring fire.

As Diélette was unable to answer, they directed their questions to me. I went over my story again.

"I really believe she is dead," said one of the policemen.

"No; but she is not very far from it. She must be taken to the central bureau."

"And you," said the chief to me, "what are you going to do? Have you any means of support?"

I looked at him inquiringly, not knowing what he meant.

"Have you any money?" he explained.

"I have twenty sous."

"Well, try to stow yourself away somewhere for to-night; if you are found in the streets you will be arrested."

Diélette was placed in a litter, well wrapped up in blankets. The curtains were drawn, and two men carried her off.

I was overwhelmed; I could not believe that she was so ill. I must find out. But the policemen, I had been told, would arrest me if I were found in the streets. I followed the men, however; I persuaded them to let me follow them.

After a long walk, in the course of which we crossed the Seine, we stopped at a square, at the farther end of which was a large and handsome church. I was allowed to enter with them. A gentleman dressed in black drew aside the curtains of the litter. Dièlette was as red as a poppy.

He questioned her gently. I went forward and answered for her, repeating my story for the third time.

"Yes, yes," he said; "a heavy chill, excessive fatigue; it is an inflammation of the chest. To Jesus Hospital."

He wrote a few words on a paper, and we set out again. The men walked with difficulty on the slippery snow. Whenever they stopped to rest I went to the side of the litter and spoke to Diélette; sometimes she answered me in a voice expressive of suffering; at others she did not answer at all.

This second stage of our journey was longer than the first. At last the men stopped before a house with a green door, in a secluded street; here we were shown into a rather dark apartment; some men, wearing white aprons, came to meet us.

Diélette knew, no doubt, as I did, that the moment for our separation had now come; she drew aside the curtain, and, looking at me with feverishly-bright eyes,

"Are you going to leave me?" she said.

I remembered nothing but Diélette's desolate condition; I saw nothing but Diélette, lying in this miserable litter, looking at me with imploring eyes.

"No," I answered.

She had only time to thank me with a look—but what a look!—when they carried her off.

I was standing motionless, stupefied and overwhelmed with grief, when the porter told me that I must go away.

"Can't I see her?" I asked.

"Yes; on Sundays and Thursdays."

And he pushed me out of the room and closed the door behind me.

Night was approaching, and in some of the houses lights were already burning. The first question to decide was where I should sleep; as to how I was to live in Paris while waiting for Diélette to get well, I could think of that to-morrow. The time was past when I thought it necessary to have a carefully-arranged plan of action, providing against all possible contingencies. Long-continued present misery is apt to render us indifferent to the possible troubles of the future.

Although my thoughts were occupied exclusively

with this problem, I could find no solution to it; I did not know that in this great city there were thousands of miserable beings at this very hour who, like myself, did not know where they should find a place to sleep in that night, and yet who did find a place to sleep in, and, perhaps, even a dinner also. Brought up in the country, I could think of no shelter but such a one as would be likely to present itself to the mind of a peasant—a barn, a stable, a hay-rick; but in the quarter where I was I saw none of these—nothing but houses, walls, and then more houses.

On leaving the hospital I turned to the right, and found myself in a wide boulevard shaded by tall trees. On the corner of the street I read the inscription, "Rue de Sèvres." Where did the street lead to? I did not know; it mattered little to me; since I had no fixed destination, I might as well take this road as any other. I walked slowly, for I was so worn out with fatigue that I could scarcely drag myself along. My feet, badly shod, and in contact with the snow since morning, had become almost as insensible as if they were without life. On the sidewalk of the boulevard some children were sliding; I mechanically stood still to watch them.

Among those who passed in front of me what was my surprise to see a familiar face; it was that of a boy named Biboche, whom I had known at Falaise, where he had been a member of Vignali's troupe. His quarters adjoined those of Lapolade, and we had played together.

As I was the only looker-on I attracted his eye, and he at once recognized me and crossed over to me.

"What are you doing in Paris?" he said. "Is your lion here? I must go to see Diélette."

I told him that I had left Lapolade, that I had been in Paris only since morning, and that I was greatly perplexed as to where I should sleep that night. I did not mention Diélette, and ended by asking him if he thought they would employ me in his company.

"Certainly they would employ you if you are a good pal," he said. "Are you a good pal?"

I had no idea of the qualities which went to the making of a good pal, but as I was thinking of where I was to sleep that night I answered that I thought I possessed those qualities.

"Shake hands on it then," said Biboche.

"And the director?"

"How soft this kid is! I am the director; you are a member of our company now. I will teach you to swipe."

I did not understand the meaning of these words, which were new to me; no doubt they were Parisian words. I did not wish to show too plainly, either, the surprise it caused me — not slight, in truth — to see Biboche, who was only eleven years old, and who was no bigger than a ferret, at the head of a troupe.

"You are cold," said Biboche, seeing that I was shivering; "come and warm yourself."

He took me to a wine-shop, where he made me drink a glass of hot wine.

"Now that you are warmed up, let us go get our supper," he said.

Instead of walking towards the centre of the city, which was to our right, we turned to the left and walked on for a long time through streets which were

almost deserted, and where the houses had a mean and grimy look.

Biboche observed my surprise. "Did you think I had invited you to sleep at the Tuileries?" he said, laughing.

It was not, in truth, to the Tuileries that he took me, but to an open field. Night had fallen, but it was not very dark. We left the road and took a path across the fields. At the edge of a pit Biboche stopped.

"Here we are," he said; "give me your hand and take care that you don't fall."

We descended into a species of quarry; then, after winding our way among blocks of stone, we entered a subterranean gallery. Biboche drew from his pocket a small wax taper which he lighted. My astonishment increased at every moment.

"In a minute more," he said, "we shall be there."

And, indeed, as he spoke, I perceived a red glow lighting up the quarry; it proceeded from a charcoal fire, before which was stretched a boy of about the same age as Biboche.

"Any one else?" asked the latter.

"No."

"Good; here is a friend; try to find him a pair of shoes—he needs them badly."

The boy went out, and almost immediately returned with an armful of shoes of all sorts and sizes. I might have fancied myself in a shoemaker's shop.

"Choose a pair," said Biboche, "and if you are accustomed to wear socks, all right, you shall have a pair; all you have to do is to ask for them."

I cannot describe the sensation of well-being I ex-

perienced when I found my travel-sore and frozen feet covered with warm woollen socks and new shoes.

I had just finished putting them on when two other boys arrived, then a third, then a fourth, then three others, making nine in all.

Biboche presented me.

"This is a friend I knew in the ring," he said; "he is a good pal. And you, let's see what you have done."

Each of the boys then emptied out his pockets before the fire; one of them took from his pocket an infant's bottle with a silver top.

On seeing this they all gave a shout, and then followed jests and bursts of laughter.

"Good," said Biboche; "he can drink out of it himself."

They then seated themselves around the fire—not in chairs, but on the ground.

Biboche did the honors at supper, and I was served the first. It was long since I had seen such abundance, and I must say that not even at Mr. De Bihorel's had I ever sat down to a banquet like the present one; after the ham they attacked a cold turkey, and after the turkey a *pâté de foie gras*. I had so excellent an appetite that I was the admiration of the company.

"Good," said Biboche, expressing the general sentiment; "it is a pleasure to invite a friend who can move his jaws like that."

But the food, the warmth, and, above all, fatigue, soon overpowered me.

"You are sleepy," said Biboche, seeing that my eyes were closing of themselves. "All right; I am sorry I

have neither a *post* nor a *cake* to offer you, but you will sleep soundly for all that, I warrant."

How a post or a cake could help me in going to sleep I did not venture to ask; these were, no doubt, other fine words which had not yet found their way into the provinces.

"A glass of punch," said Biboche, "and good-night."

I declined the glass of punch, which seemed greatly to surprise the company, and I asked Biboche to tell me where I was to sleep.

"I will show you," he said.

And he lighted a candle at the fire, and, passing before me, led the way to a side gallery of the quarry.

There was a thick layer of straw on the ground, over which were spread two or three woollen blankets.

"Go to sleep," he said; "to-morrow we will have a talk;" and he left me, taking the candle with him.

I was not very easy in my mind in this quarry, whose shadowy depths my eyes could not pierce. I was very curious, too, to know what my new comrades were; those heavily-laden pockets, the ham, the infant's bottle—all this seemed to me to have a suspicious look. But I was so completely worn out that fatigue got the better of uneasiness, and I had scarcely wrapped my blankets around me when I fell asleep. "We will have a talk to-morrow," Biboche had said; to-morrow it would be time enough to ask for explanations. I had a shelter, I had dined well; the day had been too painful a one to desire to prolong it; I went to sleep without being disturbed by the shouts of the boys, whom I heard carousing and making merry a few steps away.

On the following morning I was awakened by Bi-

boche; if it had not been for him I should probably have slept for twenty-four hours.

"Here," he said, "take these traps and dress yourself."

I took off my rags and put on the garments he had thrown down on the straw; they were a jacket and a pair of trousers, of soft, thick, woollen cloth.

A faint white light came down from the vaulted roof; it was the daylight trying to pierce its way into those subterranean depths.

"My dear fellow," said Biboche, while I was undressing myself, "I have been thinking about you and this is the result. You are not very dexterous at the trade, are you?"

"Not very," I answered.

"I suspected as much; that is easily seen. If you were to work at our business without an apprenticeship you would soon come to grief. To prevent that I am going to put you with a good boy whom you can serve as a *rat*."

Nothwithstanding my desire not to disgrace myself by showing that I was not familiar with the Parisian speech, it was impossible for me to let this word pass without an explanation; if I was to be a *rat* I must first know what a *rat* was.

"Are you dressed?" asked Biboche, seeing me looking at him.

"Yes."

"Well, let us go to breakfast, and I will take you afterwards to my friend."

I followed him; the fire had gone out, and no trace remained of the feast of the night before. The day-

light—a little brighter here, as we were nearer to the opening—disclosed to view only two pillars that supported the roof of the quarry, and here and there some heaps of stones.

From a hollow in the wall Biboche took a bottle, some bread, and the remnants of a ham.

"Let us eat a crust," he said; "we can breakfast with your new patron."

I summoned all my courage.

"Don't laugh at me," I said; "you know I am not a Parisian, but I want to ask you what a *rat* is."

This question threw him into such fits of laughter that I thought he was going to choke.

"How soft they are in your part of the country!" he said. "Well, my dear fellow, a *rat* is a kid—in other words, a smart, active boy like you. You don't know either, perhaps, in what way many shopkeepers secure their shops while they are in the kitchen eating their meals?"

Although I did not by any means see the relation existing between these two ideas, I answered that I did not indeed know in what way the shopkeepers he spoke of secured their shops.

"By means of a low gate," returned Biboche, handing me the wine bottle, which he had nearly emptied; "this gate is fastened by a spring which connects with a bell; any one wishing to enter the shop must push in the gate; this causes the bell to ring, and the shopkeeper, who is sitting unconcernedly in his back shop or in his kitchen, comes to see who is there. Can you guess now what the *rat* is for?"

"Not in the least; unless it be to replace the bell."

Biboche fell back in his seat in a fit of laughter, which this time threatened to choke him in earnest. When he had recovered his breath he dealt me a smart blow.

"If you are going to make any more speeches like that," he said, "give me warning beforehand, or you will be the death of me. Instead of replacing the bell, the *rat's* part is to prevent the bell from ringing; for that purpose his companion lifts him over the gate, he creeps noiselessly to the drawer, takes out the till, and gives it to his pal outside, who puts in his arms and lifts him again over the half-door, and the shopkeeper is cleaned out without knowing anything about it. Do you catch on?"

I was amazed.

"But that is stealing," I cried.

"Well, what of that?"

"But you are a thief, then?"

"And you—you are a fool."

I did not answer. I was thinking of what I had witnessed the night before, and I said to myself that Biboche had good reason to call me a fool.

It was necessary to make up my mind, however.

"See," I said; "if you are counting on me to do that you are mistaken."

This time he did not laugh; he fell into a fury. I had deceived him, he said; if he allowed me to leave the quarry I would denounce him.

"Well, you shall not denounce me," he cried; "for you shall not go away from here."

"I will go."

Before I could say another word he had sprung

upon me; but if he was the more agile and active of the two, I was the stronger; the struggle did not last long; after the first moment of surprise, in which he had thrown me down, I had the advantage, and kept him under me.

"Will you let me go?" I asked.

"Will you betray me?"

"No."

"Swear it."

"I swear it."

I rose.

"You know you are nothing but an idiot," he said, angrily, "a regular idiot; you will soon see whether you will be able to live with your honesty; if you had not met me yesterday you would not be alive to-day, and if you are alive it is because you have eaten stolen ham and drunk stolen wine; if your feet are not frost-bitten, it is because I gave you stolen shoes; if you do not freeze to death when you leave this place, it will be because you have stolen clothes upon your back."

I was so easy in those comfortable, warm garments that I had forgotten all about them.

"Will you give me the candle?" I said.

"What for?"

"To go get my old clothes."

"I am not casting them up to you; I gave them to you."

"Yes, but I don't want to keep them."

He followed me, with a shrug of the shoulders, into the gallery where I had spent the night.

I took off the clothes he had given me and put on again my damp rags; the sensation was not a very

pleasant one, as you may suppose. When I went to put on my old shoes I found that one of them was coming to pieces.

Biboche looked at me in silence. I turned aside, for I was ashamed of my wretchedness.

"As far as being a fool is concerned," he said, in a gentle voice, "you are that; but what you are doing now, do you see, gives me an odd sort of feeling here," and he struck himself on the breast. "Is it a pleasant thing, then, to feel that one is honest?"

"Why don't you try?"

"It is too late."

"If you are arrested and punished what will your mother say?"

"My mother! Ah, if I only had one! See, don't speak to me of those things."

And as I was about to interrupt him,

"Are you going to preach?" he cried. "Let me alone; only I don't want you to go away like that. Since you don't wish to keep those clothes because they were stolen, will you accept the clothes I wore when I worked at Falaise? I earned those honestly; take them, if you have any heart."

I answered that I would accept them.

"Very well," he continued, with evident satisfaction, "let us go to the city together and I will give them to you."

We returned to the city, and he took me to a furnished house situated near the barrier. He preceded me up-stairs and into a room, where he took from a press a jacket and trousers which I remembered distinctly to have seen on him at Falaise. He also gave

me a pair of shoes which, although not new, were still good.

"Now good-bye," he said, when I was dressed; "if you meet any of my comrades take care not to recognize them."

It was not yet ten o'clock. I had the whole day before me to find a place in which to sleep that night.

The weather was dry. Warmly clad, well shod, and my stomach full, I troubled myself little about the difficulty—great as it would be, no doubt—of finding a lodging in Paris.

I could not go to see Diélette.

I walked straight before me; perhaps chance would come to my aid.

After walking for two hours, however, I had still found nothing, thought of nothing, although I had tried in many different quarters. It then occurred to me that I would do better to help chance than to wait for chance to help me, and I walked towards the Seine with the intention of going to the Market. Perhaps the good woman who had given me the twenty sous would give me some work, or, if not work, at least some idea how I could find work.

At first she did not recognize me in the garments of Biboche. When I told her who I was she asked me what I had done with my sister. I told her what had taken place the day before, and I saw that she was touched; then I told her that I did not wish to leave Diélette behind me in Paris, that I wished to stay here until she should be well; but that to do this I must work; that I did not know where to look for work, and that I had thought, I had hoped—

"You thought of coming to Mother Berceau," she interrupted, "and you did right, my boy. It pleases me, do you see, that you should have known by my face that I was not the woman to leave a child to die in the street. I am not rich, but I have some feeling."

She called two or three of her neighbors, and they took council together as to what I was best fitted for in case they should be able to find me some employment—not an easy matter, as it is not the custom for children to work in the Market. At last, after much discussion, when it was ascertained that I could write well, it was unanimously decided that I would be able to do the writing at the fish-market if they could find a place for me there.

I was required to take no part in this task which, as I learned, was not accomplished without some difficulty. All that I knew was that I was installed on the following morning at five o'clock behind a desk at the fish-market, where it was my duty to copy the bulletins of the day. Nothing could be easier; I wrote rapidly and legibly. When Madame Berceau came to inquire if my work gave satisfaction, they told her that I did very well, and that I might count upon receiving thirty sous a day. This was not a fortune, but as Madame Berceau let me sleep in her shop, it more than sufficed for my maintenance.

Diélette had been admitted to the hospital on Monday. I waited for Thursday with the greatest impatience, and after I had finished my work at the market on that day I went to the Rue de Sèvres. They had given me a load of oranges at the market, and my pockets were full. Anxiety quickened my footsteps; I ar-

rived at the hospital before the doors were opened. How should I find her? Was she living or dead?

When I was directed to the St. Charles ward, I began to run, but one of the nurses stopped me, and told me that if I made a noise I should be immediately sent away; after that I walked on tiptoe.

Diélette was alive and already much better. Never shall I forget the expression in her eyes when she saw me.

"I knew that you would come," she said, "unless you had died of cold."

She made me give her an account of all that I had done since our separation. When I related to her the episode of the quarry,

"That was right," she said; "that was right, my brother."

She had never before called me her brother.

"Kiss me," she added, turning her cheek to me.

When she learned what Mother Berceau had done for me,

"Ah, the good woman!" she said, and her eyes filled with tears. Then it was her turn to answer my questions.

She had been very ill; unconscious for a time, delirious and feverish, but she had been well cared for; one of the Sisters had been very good to her.

"But for all that," she said to me, in a low voice, "I should like to leave this; I feel afraid to be here. Last night a little girl died in that bed there, and when they put her in the brown box I fainted."

Diélette was disappointed in her expectation of soon leaving the hospital; the malady had taken so firm a

hold upon her that the convalescence was very slow; she remained at the hospital for more than two months.

But this was fortunate for us; during that time she gained the love of those who had charge of her—of the Sister, the doctor, and the house-surgeons, all of whom she won by her pretty ways. They had heard our story—that is to say, as much of it as we had thought advisable to tell; and the interest she inspired was reflected on me. When I went to the hospital on Sundays and Thursdays I was received by every one as if I were a friend.

At last her certificate of discharge was signed, and on giving it to her the doctor and the Sister told her that they had arranged so that we should not be obliged to go on foot to Port Dieu. They had found the driver of a wagon for conveying nurses to and from their homes, who agreed to take us in his vehicle as far as Vire. At Vire this man would engage places for us in the public conveyance as far as Port Dieu. A collection had been taken up in the St. Charles ward amounting to twenty-five francs; this was more than sufficient to cover our expenses. I, on my side, having in mind our journey, which I did not know was to be made so easy for us, had saved during these two months six or eight sous a day, which made a sum total of twenty-two francs.

What a contrast between our arrival in Paris two months before and our departure from it now! The good Madame Berceau took us herself to the wagon, and loaded us down with provisions of all sorts.

A nurses' wagon, with a wooden bench on each side

and a heap of straw on the floor, is not a very luxurious conveyance, but we found it delightful.

It was now the end of January; the weather was mild, and our journey was a pleasant one. We were not very hard to please, and we got on very well with the nurses, who were returning to their homes with their charges. When the little ones cried too much, or when they were being dressed, we got out and walked for a while.

At Vire the driver put us in the diligence, which set us down within a league of Port Dieu. It was a Sunday; it was just seven months since I had left the village.

We walked a few hundred paces without exchanging a word, for we were both preoccupied. Diélette was the first to break this embarrassing silence.

"Don't walk so fast," she said; "I want to speak to you."

The ice was broken.

"I, too, wish to speak to you," I said, in my turn. "See, here is a letter that you are to give to mamma when you arrive at the house."

"Why a letter?" she said, gently. "Why do you not come with me? Why do you not take me yourself to your mother? How do you know that she will want to have me? If she sends me away what is to become of me?"

"Don't say that; you don't know mamma."

"Yes, I know her very well; but how do you know that she will pardon me for not having brought you with me? Will she believe that if I had tried hard enough to keep you, you would have gone away?

What! You are here, and you won't go to see her? That is not natural."

"That is precisely what I have explained to her in my letter. I have told her that if I go away without seeing her it is because I know very well that if I were to see her I should not go away at all, and if I did not go away I should have to return to my uncle. I am bound to him, and my uncle is not the man to give up his rights."

"Perhaps your mamma would be able to find some means of keeping you with her."

"If mamma resisted my uncle, she would have to suffer for me; while if I am once on board he can do nothing against me, as an enrolled seaman belongs to the Government, and the Government is more powerful than my uncle. I have considered the whole matter well, you may be certain."

"I don't know how that may be; I know nothing about all those things you speak of, but I am convinced that what you are doing is wrong."

I was not sufficiently easy in my conscience to be able to hear, without getting angry, this word which had so often come into my thoughts.

"Wrong?" I repeated.

"Yes, it is wrong; and if your mamma blames you, if she says that you do not love her, I shall not be able to take your part, for I shall think as she does."

I walked along beside Diélette for a few moments in silence; I was moved by her words; my resolution was shaken; a little more and I should have yielded, but I hardened myself.

"Have I ever been unkind to you?" I asked.

"No, never."

"Do you think I could treat any one badly?"

She looked at me in silence.

"Answer me."

"No."

"Do you think I do not love mamma? Do you think I wish to make her suffer?"

She thought she had vanquished me, but she saw that I was defending myself; she did not answer. I continued:

"Well, then, if you have the slightest feeling of gratitude towards me, and if you think I am not cruel, do not speak in that way again; you might succeed, perhaps, in persuading me to remain, and that would be a misfortune for us all."

She did not utter a single word more, and we walked on together, both sorrowful, both troubled.

I had taken the path across the moor, where I was almost certain we should meet no one; in this way we reached the ditch which separated our yard from the moor. I had heard the ringing of the bells proclaiming that mass was over; my mother must be already at home.

"That is the house," I said to Diélette, pointing over the reeds to the house where I had been the object of so much love.

She was aware of my emotion from the trembling of my voice.

"Romain!" she cried.

But I pretended not to comprehend all the supplication expressed by this single word.

"Go down there," I said, hastily, "and give the letter to mamma when she opens the door, and say to

her, 'Here is a letter from your son.' You will see when she reads it that she will not send you away. In six months I will return. I will write to you from Havre. Good-bye."

I was running away, but she clung to me.

"Don't keep me," I said, "let me go; you see that you are making me cry."

She loosened her clasp.

"Don't you want me to kiss her for you?" she said.

I had already turned to retrace my steps. I came back and, putting my arm around her neck, kissed her. I felt her tears wet upon my cheek.

If I did not run away at once I should certainly not go at all. I released myself, and, without looking at her, began to run.

At the end of the road I paused, however, and crept back to hide among the reeds. Diélette had crossed the yard and entered the house.

She remained there for a long time. I could see nothing, I could hear nothing; I could scarcely breathe for anxiety. What if mamma were no longer there? What if, like Diélette's mother, she were—

Just as this sinister thought presented itself to my mind, Diélette appeared on the threshold, and, just behind her, my mother.

She was alive; Diélette was at her side, her hand in hers; the eyes of both were red, as if they had been weeping. I jumped down from the ditch. Three hours later I was sitting under the awning of the diligence, and two days afterwards I had reached Havre, passing through Caen and Honfleur. I had six francs left in my purse.

XIII.

I HAD imagined I had only to present myself on board a ship in order to be at once engaged.

No sooner was I set down in the outer port than I began my promenade on the wharves to make my choice among the vessels there. In the King's dock there were only four or five steamers; these were not what I was in search of. In the La Barre dock were some large American ships unloading bales of cotton, which lay in mountains on the wharf; these were not what I was looking for, either. What I wanted was a French sailing vessel.

In making the tour of Commerce dock I was filled with amazement; there were vessels there from all parts of the world—large vessels and small vessels, a forest of masts garlanded with pennants, streamers, and flags. I thought it finer than Paris.

There were ships which exhaled an odor of brown sugar that made my mouth water; there were others smelling of pepper and cinnamon. Everywhere men were loading and unloading vessels. Custom-house officers watched the bags of coffee as they were rolled along the wharf, and listened to the singing of the sailors with a melancholy air.

Among these ships was one which at once caught my fancy. It was painted white with a blue stripe; it was a small three-master. On a board fastened to the shrouds were the words: "The *Morning Star*,

Captain Frigard, in lading for Pernambuco and Bahia; to sail immediately." How could a voyage in a white and blue ship be other than delightful? Are there to be found in all the geography two more enchanting words than Pernambuco and Bahia?

I climbed on deck. The crew and several stevedores were busily engaged in loading the vessel; lowering large chests suspended from chains into the hold. At first no one paid any attention to me, but as I stood there for a long time without moving, not daring to interrupt a gentleman who was marking these chests one by one as they were carried past him, and who seemed to be the captain, I at last attracted notice.

"Get away with you!" this gentleman said to me.

"I would like to speak to you, sir," I answered.

And I told him what I wanted—that is to say, that I desired to ship as a cabin-boy on board the *Morning Star*.

He did not even answer me, but pointed to the plank by which I had come aboard.

"But, sir—" I began.

He raised his hand threateningly; I said no more, and left the vessel deeply humiliated.

Would no one want me, then?

I was not in a situation to allow myself to be easily rebuffed, however. I walked a little farther; doubtless the *Morning Star* was too fine a vessel for me. This time I chose a black and grimy-looking brig lading for Tampico, which was called the *Conger*. They simply told me they needed no one. In my third attempt, instead of addressing the captain, I spoke to one of the sailors; when I told him what I wanted, he

shrugged his shoulders, and all I could get from him was that I was a droll little fellow. Finally the captain of a schooner sailing for the coast of Africa, whose countenance was by no means calculated to inspire confidence, agreed to take me; but when he learned that I had no father to sign my contract, that I was not enrolled in the navy, that I had no bag for my outfit, and, above all, that I had no outfit, he told me to leave the vessel more quickly than I had come aboard unless I wished to make the acquaintance of his boots.

Matters were now assuming a serious aspect, and I was beginning to be uneasy. Should I find myself obliged to return to Port Dieu? If I had had only my mother and Diélette to consider, this necessity would have been unmixed joy; but my uncle and the contract which bound me to him — could I forget them? I continued my search, then.

In making the tour of the dock I found myself again in the outer port; the tide was beginning to rise, and several little fishing-boats were already putting out to sea. I went to the pier to see the vessels entering and leaving the harbor. It was long since I had witnessed this spectacle, and the flowing tide, the wide horizon, the boats from Caen, Rouen, and Honfleur, coming and going, the larger vessels getting under weigh for long voyages, with the adieux, the waving of handkerchiefs of the passengers, the cries of the sailors, the creaking of the pulleys and the rigging, the confusion of white sails in the roadstead, from the coast-line to the extreme verge of the horizon, all combined to make me forget my anxieties.

I had been leaning on my elbows on the parapet for

more than two hours when suddenly I felt myself pulled by the hair. I turned around in surprise, and found myself face to face with one of the musicians of Lapolade's troupe—Hermann.

"Is Lapolade in Havre?"

I asked this question with so terrified an air that Hermann delayed answering me for a minute or more, unable to control his laughter. At last he recovered himself sufficiently to tell me that he, too, had left Lapolade to go to one of his brothers who lived in the Republic of Ecuador. As for Lapolade, I need have no further fear on his account; he had inherited a considerable sum of money and had sold his menagerie, or, rather, the remains of the menagerie, for a fortnight after our flight Mouton—poor Mouton—had died of starvation and grief. After Diélette's departure he became at once gloomy and ferocious. He obstinately refused all food. It seemed as if he had an appetite only for Lapolade, whom he attacked furiously the moment he saw him. But as Lapolade could not make up his mind to save his lion's life at the expense of his own, the unfortunate Mouton had finally died, a victim to his attachment and his fidelity to Diélette.

Hermann asked me if I was at last a sailor. I told him of the difficulties I had encountered in my efforts to find a ship.

He had been long enough in the circus to have a mind fertile in expedients.

"If you wish," he said, "I will look for a place for you, as if you were my brother."

"And the outfit?" I asked.

This was an insurmountable difficulty. Hermann

was not much richer than I. His passage had been paid by his brother, in advance, as far as Guayaquil. Even if we should both put our resources together they would not be enough to cover so great an expense.

We were obliged to give up this idea. To console me he took me to dine with him, and after dinner he took me to the theatre, where one of his comrades, a musician in the orchestra, gave us two seats. The first piece was a comedy, called "Open War," in which one of the characters is brought on the stage in a box.

"There is your plan," he said to me; "between the acts I will explain my idea to you."

His idea was to buy a large chest in which I should conceal myself. An hour before the sailing of the vessel he would carry the chest, locked and corded, on board. When we should be out of sight of land he would open it, and the captain, in view of the impossibility of putting me off the ship, unless he threw me overboard, would be obliged to let me remain on the vessel; once out at sea it would be my part to find employment.

It was a wild idea, but there was an air of adventure about it which captivated me.

On the following day we visited every second-hand shop in the city, and finally bought for ten francs a large chest encircled with iron bands, which suited me as exactly as if it had been made to order. Hermann took it to his lodgings—the house where I had dined with him—and pierced it with several holes, so that I might have air to breathe. I entered the chest; he closed the lid, and I remained in it for two hours with-

out experiencing the slightest inconvenience. I could move my limbs freely, and turn over on my side or on my back whenever I wished to change my position.

The vessel in which Hermann had taken passage was to sail on the following day at high-tide at two o'clock. I passed my time until then in looking at the vessel, which was called the *Orinoco*, and in writing a long letter to my mother to tell her that I was at last a sailor, and that I asked her pardon for acting against her will, but that I hoped it would be for the happiness of all of us. In this letter I enclosed one for Diélette. I had to tell her all the news I had learned from Hermann. I had to beg her also to be very good to mamma.

Two hours before high-tide—that is to say, at noon—Hermann put me into the chest and, giving me a piece of bread, "Till to-morrow," he said, laughing; "if you grow very hungry you will have something to eat."

I was to remain in this chest for twenty-four hours; for we considered that if I were to be seen while we were near Havre I risked being put by the captain on board some fishing or pilot boat; while once out at sea the danger of falling in with such a vessel was much less to be feared. For some days past a strong south wind had been blowing; in twenty hours we should be beyond Cherbourg, in the open channel.

We had fastened two leather straps on the inner side of the chest, through which I passed my arms, to avoid being tossed about with the movement of the vessel. Hermann secured both locks, and passed the cord several times around the chest, which he then

lifted on his shoulder. He laughed so violently that I was shaken as if I had been on horseback.

When he arrived on board the *Orinoco* this gayety was suddenly cut short.

"What have you there?" asked the captain.

"My trunk," he answered.

"It is too late; the hatches are closed."

It was precisely on the closing of the hatches that we had counted; for if they had been open, the chest in which I was would have been lowered into the hold where other boxes would have been piled on top of it, and I must have remained in my imprisonment until we reached Guayaquil; while, if the hatches were closed, the chest would be deposited on the deck, or in Hermann's cabin.

But things did not settle themselves so easily; for a long time the captain refused to receive the chest on board, and I thought I was going to be put ashore again. Finally, however, the chest was put down between decks with other boxes that had come on board at the last moment.

"It can be stowed away later on," said one of the sailors.

Later on it mattered little. I hoped to be only a short time in the chest.

I soon heard the hawsers dropping into the water; at the same instant the capstan was turned around, and above my head resounded the measured tread of the sailors hauling the vessel out of the dock.

I was able to follow the working of the ship by the various sounds I heard inside my box as well as if I had witnessed it from the deck.

From the rolling of vehicles and the confused sounds of voices I knew that we were in the basin. The vessel remained motionless for some minutes; then I felt it drawn gently forward—the tug-boat was taking it in tow; a slight swaying of the vessel threw me backwards—we were in the outer port; the swaying became more perceptible—we were between the piers; the pulleys creaked, the sails were hoisted, the vessel leaned to one side, the tow-line dropped into the water, the helm groaned—we were standing out to sea.

It was decided, then; my life as a sailor had begun. The moment so ardently desired, which I had bought at the price of so many trials, and which I had thought was to be so full of joy, found me sad and anxious. It is true that the situation in which I was placed was little calculated to inspire gayety.

Perhaps if I had been on deck taking part in the working of the vessel, seeing before me the open sea, behind me the land and the harbor, I might have thrown myself joyfully into the unknown. Imprisoned, as I was, within the four sides of a chest, I could not prevent myself from feeling something like terror.

I was roused from my gloomy reflections by three or four taps on the lid of the box; but as they were not accompanied by any words I did not venture to respond, fearing that they might have been given by one of the sailors. The taps being repeated in such a manner as to convince me that they were made by Hermann, I knocked in my turn with my knife on the inside of the lid.

This signal relieved my anxiety; I had not been forgotten, then. I should have to remain in this box only

for a few hours more; when I emerged from it I should find myself in the open sea with the world before me.

A fresh breeze was blowing; the ship, which presented her side to the waves, rolled greatly. Accustomed from a child to accompany the fishermen on their expeditions, and to the motion of the boats lying at anchor, I had never been sea-sick. I had thought myself entirely exempt from this malady. I was disagreeably surprised, then, to feel an uneasy sensation in my stomach.

I thought at first that this sensation was caused by the lack of air, for, notwithstanding the holes which we had taken the precaution to pierce in the boards, the air made its way into the box with difficulty, and out of it with still greater difficulty, and the heat was oppressive. But my uneasiness increased; the dizziness, the undefinable sensation of giddiness which I experienced when the vessel pitched suddenly, left no room for doubt. This made me very uneasy, for I had known persons attacked by this stupid malady actually to bellow. What if I should do the same thing, and some sailor passing by during one of these attacks should hear me?

I had often heard it said that the best remedy for sea-sickness was sleep; as it was the only one at my disposal, I buried my head in my hands and tried with all my might to sleep; for a long time my efforts were in vain. My bed was not a soft one; if I had only had the forethought to furnish my prison with a few armfuls of straw. My stomach followed every movement of the vessel, rising and falling with it. At last, however, slumber stole over me.

How long I slept I know not, for in my chest, which the light could not enter, I was in utter darkness, and unable to distinguish between day and night. From the silence that reigned on the vessel, however, I knew that it must be night. I could hear the regular tread of the sailors of the watch on deck, and at intervals the creaking of the helm. The rolling had increased; the masts creaked, the wind whistled through the rigging, the sea dashed heavily against the sides of the vessel—all showing that a storm was rising.

Whether it was that the night air had freshened the atmosphere in the box, or that I was now accustomed to the rolling, I no longer felt sea-sick, and I soon fell asleep again, lulled by the solemn music of the winds and waves, which took me back in thought to stormy nights passed in my little room at home.

I was awakened by a terrific uproar, a creaking and straining of the vessel from stem to stern, followed immediately by a crash on deck, as if the masts and rigging had fallen together on the deck, and I could hear the cordage snap with a noise like the detonation of a gun, and the masts split asunder.

"Stop!" cried a voice in English.

"All hands on deck!" cried a voice in French.

Above all the other sounds rose one—a loud hissing sound which I at once recognized; it was the steam which was escaping. We must have collided with an English steamer, which had run into us and thrown our ship on her side, for I had been thrown violently against the side of the box.

Before I had recovered from my terror the hissing of the steam ceased, and I could hear the timbers creak

anew, and a loud commotion on deck; almost at the same instant our vessel righted herself. Had the English steamer sunk, or had she moved away?

I shouted with all the force of my lungs to attract the attention of some sailor, in the hope that he might came to release me; and then I listened. I heard a confused murmur of voices and hurried footsteps running hither and thither on the deck, the waves dashing against the sides of the vessel, and, rising above all this, the roaring of the wind, which was now blowing a hurricane.

Were we sinking? Had Hermann abandoned me to my fate, shut up in this box? I cannot describe the horrible feeling of anguish that took possession of me at this thought. My heart seemed to stand still; my hands were wet with perspiration, as if I had dipped them in water. Instinctively I tried to rise to my feet; my head struck against the lid of the box. I knelt down and pushed upward with all my force; the two locks were strong; the lid was jointed, and crossed with bands of oak; it remained immovable. I sank down paralyzed with terror and anguish.

After a few moments I began to shout again and to call to Hermann, but a loud noise arose on deck which prevented me from hearing my own voice; they were cutting away the masts with hatchets.

And still Hermann did not come to release me from my prison. What could have become of him?

While some of the sailors were cutting away the masts others worked at the pumps, and I could hear the regular tick-tack of the working-beam.

We were sinking, then. I hurled myself desperately

against the lid; it did not move, and I sank down crushed by the sense of my powerlessness, mad with rage and terror.

"Hermann! Hermann!" I shouted.

The same noises still sounded above my head—that is to say, on deck; but all was silent in the quarter where I was imprisoned. My voice died away in the chest, or, if by chance a few sounds escaped, they mingled with the wind and were carried away by it.

Had Hermann, then, fallen overboard? Had he been washed away by a wave? or, engrossed by thoughts of his own safety, had he forgotten me? Was I then doomed to be drowned shut up in this box?

Would no one come to my help?

To face death, to meet it courageously, is possible even for a child. When one is free at least one can defend one's self, and the struggle stimulates one's courage; but shut within the four sides of a box, hardly able to move or to breathe, this fate seemed to me at once miserable and monstrous.

I dashed myself with fury against the walls of my prison—they remained firm, they did not even bend. I tried to cry out again, but my parched throat refused to form a sound. I know not how a man would have borne himself in a situation like mine; I was only a child, and I fainted.

When I came to myself, after how long a time I know not, I had a strange sensation; it seemed to me that I was dead, and at the bottom of the sea, tossed about by the currents; but the noises on deck recalled me to reality. They were still at the pumps, and I

could hear the ominous gurgle of the water in the valves. The wind howled through the vessel, and the waves dashed heavily against her sides, making her quiver from stem to stern. She rolled so frightfully that I was dashed, now against the right, now against the left side of my box. I shouted again, stopping from time to time to listen; I could hear nothing but the deafening din of the tempest.

I was stifling, and I loosened my clothing to breathe more freely. When I was taking off my waistcoat my hand came in contact with my knife, which I had forgotten; it was a solid knife, such as is used by the peasantry, with a horn handle and a strong, sharp blade.

Since no one came to help me, I must help myself.

I opened my knife and proceeded to attack one of the locks of the box; not to take it off—I should only have broken my knife in the attempt—but to cut the wood around it. This wood was beech-wood, twenty or thirty years old, and was as hard as iron, and my knife cut into it with difficulty.

I worked with such ardor that in a short time I was bathed in perspiration. The knife slipped in my grasp, and at every moment I was obliged to dry my hands.

I made but little progress, for the rolling and pitching of the vessel caused me to lose my hold continually; just as I was leaning, perhaps, with all my strength on my knife, I would be thrown against the opposite side of the chest.

At last the lock began to move, and I counted upon a shock of the vessel to detach it completely. I attacked the second lock; my knife was so hot that in wetting the point in my mouth I burned my tongue.

The pumps had stopped working, but the commotion on deck had not ceased; the footsteps were more hurried; the crew were evidently working energetically. At what? I could not guess. Then came a hollow rolling, as if some heavy object, such as a large chest or a boat were being dragged along the deck. With what purpose? What was the meaning of all this?

But I had no time either for considering this question or for listening. I resumed my labor.

My knife had lost its edge, and I found much greater difficulty in cutting the wood around the second lock than I had found in cutting around the first. I put all my strength, all my energy into the work, but my arm had become numbed, my sides were sore from the constrained position which I had been obliged to maintain, and I was forced to rest for a while.

Then I heard the whistling of the wind, the shock of the waves, the groaning of the timbers of the vessel.

My labor had lasted certainly for more than half an hour. How much longer it seemed to me I cannot express. At last the second lock, too, was loosened.

I knelt down, and, supporting myself on my hands, I pushed with all my might with my back against the lid of the box, in order to force it open. Both locks were forced off, but the lid remained closed.

It was firmly secured at either end by a cord; I had forgotten this.

The next thing to be done was to cut this cord. At first I supposed that this would be an easy matter. I was mistaken, however, for the lid, although it opened slightly, remained within the rabbet, and I must re-

move this rabbet before I should be able to reach the cord. This was an additional labor to be undertaken.

I was not discouraged, however, and I set about my task at once. Fortunately, I was cutting now with the grain of the wood. At last I reached the cords; I cut them. I was free!

I pushed the lid with force; it opened slightly and then fell down again. I pushed it with greater force, but it opened no farther than before. What was the obstacle that prevented it from opening?

The anguish I felt was so intense that I sank down utterly prostrate on the bottom of the chest.

But I had accomplished too much to be willing to give up now. The lid opened sufficiently to allow me to pass my hand through the opening. I passed my hand through the opening and felt carefully all around as far as I could reach, for it was now night, and I could see only a faint glimmer of light.

In this way I at last discovered what the obstacle was with which I had to deal. It was an immense chest. Resting partly on another chest, partly on the one in which I was, it prevented the lid of the latter from working. I tried to push it off, but it was too heavy and did not move; besides, in the position in which I was, I could neither put forth all my strength nor stretch out my arm to its full extent. To undertake to raise the lid, or even to move it was folly.

All my labor, then, had ended in this. What was to be done now? I trembled with impatience and with anguish; I felt the blood boil in my head as in a caldron.

Perhaps it was the chest that had stifled my voice;

now that it was partly open, I might be able to make myself heard.

I shouted desperately; then I listened for an answer. There was a great commotion on deck, and I thought I heard something drop into the water. Since I could hear those on deck they must be able to hear me, too. I shouted again. When I listened now I no longer heard on deck the sound of rolling or the noise of footsteps—nothing but the roaring of the wind—but, a thing which surprised me greatly, I fancied that shouts coming from the water reverberated against that side of the vessel against which my prison rested.

They had not heard me evidently. I determined to take off the hinges of the lid. If I succeeded in doing this I need not raise it; I need only push it aside in order to be free.

I set myself to the work with more ardor than ever. This silence terrified me. Had the crew been swept away by the sea? It was not unlikely, for the violence with which the vessel rolled and pitched, and the roaring of the wind told me that we were in the midst of a storm.

The hinges were less firmly attached to the chest than the locks had been. I had no need to cut the wood; I should have begun with them instead of with the locks, as they were only nailed. With the point of my knife I succeeded in loosening one of them, and then, by shaking the lid violently, I caused the nails which fastened the other to drop out.

I pushed the lid aside; it moved freely. I sprang out of my horrible prison. With what joy I found myself at last free to move my limbs! To die in this chest would have been to die a dozen deaths!

This comparative success almost revived my hopes. I was not at the end of my difficulties yet, however. Guided by a streak of light, I made my way on tiptoe to the stairs. The hatch was closed; fortunately it was not fastened; I pushed it aside, and found myself on deck.

It was scarcely daylight yet, but my eyes had grown accustomed to the darkness in my prison. I looked around the deck; not a soul was to be seen. I looked towards the helm; no one was there. The ship had been deserted by the crew.

I jumped on the poop and looked out to sea. By the pale light of dawn I could perceive a black point on the water; it was the long-boat.

I shouted with all my might; but the boat was at too great a distance, and the tempest too fierce, for my feeble voice to make itself heard.

I was alone in this ship, abandoned in mid-ocean, disabled and sinking, and yet such had been my anguish while shut up in my horrible prison that I now felt less terrified than before.

On looking around me I saw that the *Orinoco* had been run into about mid-way between stem and stern. It was by a miracle that she had not been cut in two, but the English vessel had struck her obliquely. In the shock the main shrouds and the mizzen-top shrouds had been carried away, and the main-mast and the mizzen-mast, being left without support on that side precisely where her sails caught the wind, had snapped like matches. Of the masts there remained only the half of the foremast and the bowsprit; of the sails only the jib and the foretop sail, which was torn in ribbons.

Day was breaking; in the east tawny gleams flashed, swift and transitory as the lightning, along the edges of the clouds, and then vanished again into the surrounding darkness. The sea, far as the eye could reach, was a sheet of white foam, and under this livid light had a sinister aspect. The wind blew a hurricane, flattening down the waves.

If the crew had abandoned the vessel it was because she was in danger; it did not need much reflection to understand that.

At the mercy of the winds and waves, without helm or sails, the vessel rolled frightfully, and the sea dashed over her hull so that it seemed as if it must swamp her. To keep my footing I was obliged to cling to the rigging, and I was already as wet as if I had fallen into the water. I examined the vessel to see what damage she had sustained, and I found that one of her sides had been stove in. Did this injury extend below the water-line? It was impossible for me to ascertain. How much water was in the hold? I could not learn this, either, for I could not make the pumps work, as they were too heavy for me.

How long would the *Orinoco*, in this condition, be able to resist the violence of the winds and waves? This was the whole question.

That the vessel must sink eventually I had not the slightest doubt; but it was possible that before it sank some passing vessel might see her and rescue me. I did not lose all hope, then, and remembering that it was by making a desperate struggle that I had succeeded in escaping from my horrible prison, I resolved to continue the struggle and not to abandon myself to my fate.

I had sufficient knowledge of nautical affairs to be aware that if the vessel remained as she was now, without guidance, she would soon either go to pieces or founder in some heavy sea. What I must do, then, was to take the helm, and without steering towards any particular point, try to use the jib to hold the vessel agianst the force of the waves.

But I had never steered any vessel larger than a boat, and I had scarcely taken hold of the wheel of this great ship when a violent blow of the waves against her side dashed it out of my grasp and sent it whirling around, throwing me to a distance of several feet.

Fortunately, everything had been made ready on board to meet the storm. The tiller had been provided with its tackling, which enabled me to steer without danger. As I had no direction in which to steer, since I did not know where I was, I simply set the tiller so as to keep the vessel before the wind.

My chief hope was that I might fall in with some vessel. I stationed myself on the poop, therefore, where I could command a view of the whole horizon.

I fancied that the violence of the wind was now beginning to abate. Day had dawned and the sky was less overcast. Through occasional breaks in the clouds could be caught glimpses of a pale blue; and although the sea was still high, my hopes began to revive. So near land it was impossible but that some vessel should before long appear in sight.

For fully three hours I kept my eyes fixed on the horizon, but without seeing any vessel. The wind abated perceptibly, the sea grew calmer—that is to say,

the waves, instead of dashing confusedly against one another, rose and sank with a regular motion, which, allowing the vessel to rise and sink with them, greatly diminished the strain upon her.

All at once I fancied I could perceive a white speck standing out against a large black cloud that hung low on the horizon. The speck grew larger—it was a ship! It grew larger still; she was sailing before the wind—that is to say, in the same direction as the *Orinoco*.

I rushed to the tiller to steer in her direction; but while she had all her principal sails set, the *Orinoco* had only one small sail, which caught hardly any wind.

For half an hour she continued to grow larger, until at last I could count her sails. Then I fancied that she began to diminish in size. I ran to the bell and rang it violently; then, jumping on the netting, I watched for the result. She looked still smaller than before, and she was continuing on her course. She had neither seen nor heard me.

This was a cruel disappointment. For an hour I continued to follow the receding vessel with my gaze; she grew smaller and smaller; then she was only a speck, then she disappeared altogether, and I was once more alone, surrounded by immensity.

It was not enough that vessels should appear in sight; they must also perceive the *Orinoco*. It would not do to wait passively for them to come to my assistance; I must try to attract their attention towards me, so that they should know that I stood in need of it and render it to me.

I took from the signal-chest the largest flag I could find, and, as the halliards were broken, I climbed up

and fastened it to the top-mast. It was a difficult task, on account of the rolling of the vessel; but, fortunately, I was accustomed to the sea and I descended safely, full of hope in the large flag floating on the breeze; it would tell those who saw it that a ship was in distress.

My chief fear, now that the sea was calm, was the leak; but there was nothing to indicate that it had increased. The vessel did not seem to have sunk lower in the water. In order to be prepared for the occurrence, however, should the *Orinoco* sink, I collected all the planks and boxes I could find and fastened them firmly together, so as to form a sort of raft.

It was now drawing towards noon, and since the previous day I had eaten nothing. Hunger began to make itself felt. The cook's store-room had been washed away when the vessel had lost her masts. I determined to go below and look for something to eat.

But it was not without much hesitation that I took this resolution. What if the vessel should founder while I was between decks? Hunger, however, proved stronger than fear.

I went below. I had scarcely taken two steps when I heard a growling, and I drew back terrified as a dog dashed past me. It was the captain's dog, which had been forgotten on the vessel. He reached the bridge before me. Arrived there, he turned around and gave me a long and suspicious look. Doubtless his examination satisfied him, for he soon approached me and rubbed his nose against my out-stretched hand. We at once became friends. He kept beside me; like me he was hungry.

I found everything I could desire—bread, cold meat,

and wine. I seized what was nearest at hand and hurried on deck again.

I was within a few steps of death, yet I ate with a good appetite. The dog, seated before me, snatched the scraps as I threw them to him. We already had a bond between us. I no longer felt myself alone. The repast finished he seated himself at my feet, watching me with so friendly a look that I could not help embracing him.

In passing through the captain's cabin I had seen a pair of pistols lying on the table; I went below again for them; if I caught sight of a vessel they might serve, perhaps, to attract its attention.

The day passed in this way without a single sail coming in sight. The sea was comparatively smooth, and the wind was scarcely perceptible. The *Orinoco* still behaved well; the leak must have stopped. It was without any excessive terror that I saw night approach. I thought that we could not be very far from shore; perhaps in the darkness I might see the lantern of some light-house; if so, I had only to steer for it and I was saved.

It grew completely dark, but my hope was not realized. One by one the stars appeared in the sky, but no light-house was to be seen.

At the same time that I had taken the pistols I took, also, from the cabin, a bundle of clothes. I made a comfortable bed with these, on which I stretched myself, resolving, however, to keep awake all night, and not to take my eyes from the horizon.

For a long time I remained thus, my eyes searching into the darkness, which they tried in vain to pierce.

Turk, as I called the dog, had stretched himself beside me and fallen asleep. The wind ceased, and the vessel rose and fell with the waves with a regular motion in which there was nothing disquieting. At about ten or eleven o'clock the moon rose, illumining a calm, gentle-swelling sea that reflected back her light. Gradually the calm around communicated itself to me; the snoring of the dog made me grow drowsy, and, notwithstanding all my efforts to the contrary, I fell asleep.

But, notwithstanding the calmness of the sea, the storm was not yet past; towards morning I was awakened by a cold wind blowing over me. Clouds were scudding along the horizon, and the sea was growing rough.

The wind rose rapidly. I went to consult the compass; it pointed to the north-west. I put the ship before the wind, for as I did not know where I was I thought this the best course to take to reach the Norman or Breton coast.

In less than an hour the sea was as rough as it had been on the previous day, and once more began to wash over the deck of the *Orinoco*, so that the vessel, no longer rising and falling with the waves, was swept by them, at times, from stem to stern.

Swaying with the force of the wind the fore-mast, already shaken, now began to crack with an ominous sound; the shrouds and the cordage had begun to give way, and I feared at every new gust to see them fall. If that should happen, all was over; the *Orinoco* would founder.

While I was anxiously watching the mast I thought I perceived ahead a dark line receding into the distance.

Notwithstanding the danger, I rushed to the shrouds. It was land!

I ran to the helm and steered straight for this line; my limbs trembled, and—curious effect of joy—my eyes filled with tears. Saved! Was I indeed saved?

The line soon became clearly visible. Would the *Orinoco* be able to reach it? Would the mast stand?

I spent an hour of anguish at the helm, for the violence of the wind increased continually, and the mast shook and creaked in a way that made my heart sink. Turk, seated before me, did not remove his eyes from me. It seemed as if he wished to read my thoughts in my face.

The coast towards which the ship was running was low; at a short distance from the shore the ground became undulating. Neither village nor harbor was to be seen.

My hope, as you may imagine, was not to bring the ship into harbor, even had a harbor been in sight; that would be a task beyond my strength, and even, I believe, beyond the strength of an experienced seaman, with a vessel in the condition of the *Orinoco*. All I wanted was to run her aground and swim to shore.

But would it be possible to reach the coast? Might there not be submarine rocks in the way which would prevent the vessel's approach?

In this terrible uncertainty I took the raft I had made on the previous day to pieces, and placed at hand the boxes and planks which had composed it, so as to have some one of them within reach in case the vessel should founder. I divested myself of all my clothing, with the exception of my trousers, and waited.

The coast was now distinctly visible, and I could see the waves break in a long line of foam against the shore. It was low tide.

In a quarter of an hour more, in ten minutes, in five, perhaps, my fate would be decided. Oh, mamma! oh, Diélette!

I was beginning to give way to the emotion caused by this thought when the ship rose with a breaker. I heard a creaking sound, the tiller was torn from the helm, the bell rang, the mast trembled and fell forward, and I was thrown, face downward, on the deck. The *Orinoco* had grounded.

I rose to my feet; a second shock threw me down again. The vessel creaked in all her timbers, with a terrific strain came to a sudden stand-still, and then leaned over on her side.

I tried to rise to my feet, to grasp some support, but I had not the time; an oncoming wave swept over the vessel, and I felt myself dragged into the seething waters.

When I rose to the surface I was fifteen or twenty yards away from the vessel. A few feet from me swam the dog, his eyes fixed on me with a despairing look; I tried to encourage him with my voice.

We were only about two hundred yards from the shore. In ordinary weather it would have been nothing for me to swim that distance, but with the waves rolling mountain high it was an appalling undertaking.

Without losing heart, I swam slowly towards the shore, trying, above all, to rise with the waves; but in the foaming surf this was almost impossible, one wave

succeeding another with such rapidity as scarcely to leave me time to draw a breath.

There was no one to be seen on the beach, and it was evident I had no help to expect. Fortunately, both the wind and the waves impelled me towards the shore. As I sank with a wave I felt my foot touch ground; this was the decisive moment. The next wave threw me against the beach as if I had been a bundle of sea-weed. I tried to dig my fingers into the sand, but the surf snatched me away again before I could succeed in my attempt.

I saw that if I continued this struggle I should soon be drowned. I regained the open sea. I remembered a device which I had heard my father speak of: in a moment's respite, between two waves, I grasped my knife and opened it; I then swam towards the shore, and when the wave threw me on the beach I plunged my knife into the sand; the surf drew me back, but I had now a point of support, and I could resist its force; the wave receded, and I rose to my feet and ran forward; the next wave covered me only to the knees; I went a few steps farther and fell upon the sand.

I was saved, but so utterly exhausted that I fainted.

My friend Turk it was that restored me to consciousness, licking my face. His eyes were shining, and he looked at me with a glance that seemed to say, "Be satisfied; we are safely out of our peril." I sat upright, and the next moment I saw a coast-guard and some peasants running towards me along the sandy beach.

XIV.

It was to the east of Cape Levi, at a point some four or five leagues distant from Cherbourg, that the *Orinoco* had stranded.

The peasants who had come to my assistance took me to Fermanville, the nearest village, and put me to bed in the house of the curé.

I had been so shaken by my emotions and by fatigue that I slept for more than twenty hours without wakening. I believe that Turk and I could have slept for a hundred years, like the Sleeping Beauty in the wood, if the commissary of marine and the insurance agents had not come to disturb us.

I was obliged to appear before them, and give an account of all that had taken place from the time of the sailing of the *Orinoco* from Havre up to the moment when she had stranded; I was obliged, too, to explain how I had come to be shut up in the chest; it was not without some hesitation that I resolved to do this. But it was necessary to avow the truth, however improbable it might seem, or whatever might be the result of my doing so.

The result was that I was sent to Havre to the owner of the *Orinoco*. Three days after my examination I was put on board the *Humming Bird* at Cherbourg, and reached Havre the same evening.

My history was already known; the newspapers had published it, and I was almost a hero, or, at least, an

object of curiosity. A crowd had gathered on the wharf, and when I appeared with Turk at the head of the ladder of the *Humming Bird* they pointed to us, exclaiming:

"There they are! There they are!"

I learned at Havre that the crew of the *Orinoco* had not perished; they had been picked up at sea by an English vessel, and the Southampton boat had brought them back to France. As for poor Hermann, he had been precipitated into the sea at the time of the collision, and, whether it was that he did not know how to swim, or that he had been wounded or killed by that part of the mast which had carried him overboard, he had never reappeared. This explained why he had not come to release me from the chest.

My statement, it seems, was a damaging testimony against the captain. The insurers affirmed that if he had not abandoned his vessel he could have saved her. Since a child had been able to bring her to the shore the crew could assuredly have brought her into port. This point became the subject of much discussion, and there was nothing else talked of in Havre; they plied me with questions on all sides.

They were playing just then at the theatre "The Shipwreck of the *Medusa*," and it occurred to the manager to have me appear in the piece, giving the first representation for my benefit. They were obliged to turn people away from the doors. I had been given the rôle—a silent one, be it understood—of a cabin-boy. When I came on the stage with Turk beside me, the actors were obliged to stop, so vociferous was the applause. Every opera-glass was directed towards me.

I foolishly began to fancy myself really a person of importance. Turk might with as much reason have thought himself one.

The manager's expenses being deducted — and he must have allowed liberally for them—this representation brought me two hundred francs; the piece was played eight times more, and for each representation he gave me five francs; this amounted in all to two hundred and forty francs—for me a fortune.

I resolved to spend the greater part of the money in buying an outfit, for my passion for the sea and my terror of my uncle had survived everything. When I had found myself alone on the *Orinoco*, tossed about by the winds and waves, when I had been thrown on the beach —that is to say, almost on certain death—I had, I confess, made some serious reflections, and the lot of those who spend their lives quietly under the shelter of a roof seemed to me preferable to a sailor's lot. But once set upon my feet, these reflections had been like the water that had drenched my garments; they had vanished before the first rays of the sun, and when I reached Havre my only thought was to find a ship where I should be taken as a cabin-boy. The owner of the *Orinoco* had given me a place on another of his vessels called the *Amazon*, and this money came just in time to buy the necessary articles for my outfit.

When I met poor Hermann he had taken me, as may be remembered, to his lodging. This lodging was a small dark room at the end of a yard on the Quai des Casernes. I went there now. The landlady was willing to rent this room to me, but she told me that she could not board me, as she was ill. This did not

matter, however, as the question of food was with me one of secondary importance—of no importance at all, in fact, provided I could be sure of a piece of bread.

This landlady was an excellent woman; although she was scarcely able to drag herself about, she lavished attentions and kindnesses upon me which reminded me of home.

She was a widow, and was still young, although she had a son two years older than I, who was then at sea. He had sailed, eight months before, on a voyage to the Indies, and the arrival of his ship, the *Neustria*, was expected from one moment to another.

Between her and my mother there were other resemblances than these accidential ones in their circumstances. Like my mother, she, too, detested the sea. Her husband had died away from her, in Saint Domingo, of yellow fever, and it was a constant source of anguish to her that her son had gone to sea. Her only consolation lay in the hope that his first voyage, which had been attended with many hardships, might disgust him with the profession, and that he would come back disposed to remain on land.

With what impatience she awaited him! Every time I returned from the pier, where I spent the greater part of every day, she would ask me what was the state of the weather, what quarter the wind blew from, and if there were many vessels in the harbor. The voyage from the Indies is very long, hazardous, and uncertain, and the *Neustria* might arrive to-day, to-morrow, in a fortnight, or a month with equal probability.

I had been with her a little more than a week when her disease assumed an alarming character. I heard

the neighbors, who came to inquire for her health or to look after her, say that she was dangerously ill, and that the doctor entertained no hope of her recovery. And, indeed, she was growing weaker every day; she was very pale, she had almost lost her voice, and whenever I went into her room to tell her what kind of weather there was at sea I felt, when I looked at her as she lay in bed, something resembling fear.

To the storms which had caused the wreck of the *Orinoco* had succeeded a period of fine weather. The sea was now as smooth as in the mildest days of summer, and there even brooded over it a dead calm, which is not usual at this season of the year.

This calm was her despair, and every time I entered her room to repeat what I had told her the day before, "There is no wind, only a little breeze from the east," she would shake her head gently, saying:

"God is hard upon me; I shall die without embracing him."

Then the neighbors or friends who were in her room would scold her for talking in this way about dying, and try to cheer her, telling her all those falsehoods with which people try to cheer the very sick. But they did not succeed in deceiving her, and she always answered, "I know well that I shall never see him again."

And her eyes would fill with tears, making me feel like crying with her. I was not aware of the precise nature of her malady, but from what I heard I knew it to be incurable, and I never ventured to enter her room without first asking how she was.

One morning—it was a Tuesday—I had been to see

the vessels coming into port, and I was on my way back to breakfast. As I passed the house of the neighbor I was in the habit of interrogating about the health of my landlady, she made a sign to me to enter.

"The doctor has come," she said.

"Well?" I asked.

"He says she will not live through the day."

I did not dare to go up-stairs; at last I summoned courage and went, taking off my shoes to avoid making a noise. But when I reached her door she recognized my step.

"Romain!" she said, in a faint voice.

I went in. One of her sisters, who now never left her, was with her; she made a sign to me to sit down, but the sick woman called me to her bedside. She looked at me without speaking, but I knew what she meant.

"The weather is still the same," I said.

"No wind?"

"No."

"What vessels?"

"Fishing-smacks, the ships from the Seine, and the steamer from Lisbon."

I had scarcely ended when the door was pushed quickly open, and her sister's husband, who was a laborer on the dock, entered. He seemed agitated.

"The Lisbon steamer has arrived," he said.

"Yes; Romain has just told us so."

She said this apathetically, but at the same moment her eyes encountered those of her brother-in-law; she saw that he had something of importance to tell.

"My God!" she cried.

"Well, yes," he said, "there is something new; the

Neustria has been spoken off the island of Sein; all on board were well."

She was lying in bed, so pale and weak that one might almost have thought her dead; she raised herself on her arm.

"My God! my God!" she said, and her dull eyes brightened and her checks flushed.

She asked him how long it would take the *Neustria* to come from the island of Sein to Havre. This was a difficult question to answer — a couple of days, if the wind were favorable; six or eight days, if it were contrary. The Lisbon steamer had taken thirty hours, the *Neustria* might arrive on the following day.

She sent for the doctor.

"I must live until then," she said. "God will not let me die before embracing him."

Her strength, her mental activity, her energy returned to her. When the physician saw her the change that had taken place appeared to him almost miraculous.

The house was a poor one; the room in which the sick woman lay served at once as kitchen and bedroom; after being used for a fortnight as a sick-room, it was not strange that it should be in disorder, littered with a hundred articles — glasses, cups, phials, all covered with dust. The sick woman, up to this time, had had no regular nurse to take care of her; she had had to depend upon her friends, the neighbors, and her sister, who, after a short stay, were obliged to return home to attend to their houses or their children.

She begged us to clean the room a little, and put it in order, and also to open the window; and as her sis-

ter refused to do this, fearing the air might hurt her, she insisted, saying:

"It is not for myself; but I don't want it to smell of sickness when he comes."

When would he come? The weather remained unchanged; there was still the same dead calm, not the faintest breeze to fill the sails of the *Neustria*.

In commercial ports it is customary to signal the approach of vessels as soon as they are in sight; vessels coming to Havre are thus signalled from Pointe de la Hève, and the announcement, when it is received, is at once posted up. She asked me if I would do her the favor to go read the list of these notices. As may be imagined, I willingly complied with her request, and I went every hour from the Quai des Casernes to the Rue d'Orleans, where the office of the Board of Underwriters, who received these signals, was then situated.

But owing to the calm that prevailed no vessels had been sighted; they were all detained at the entrance to the Channel.

She did not lose heart, however, and when night came she caused her bed to be rolled over to the window, so that she might have constantly in view a large weathercock which was on the roof of the opposite house, for she felt sure, she said, that the wind was going to change soon. In other circumstances this would have made us laugh, for, against the background of the blue sky lighted by the full moon, we saw the weathercock stand out blackly, motionless, as if it had been soldered to its pivot.

Her sister, who had stayed to sit up with her, sent me to bed. During the night I was awakened by a noise

which I had never heard before since I had occupied my room—a sort of creaking. I rose to see what it was; it was the weathercock turning on its iron rod; the wind had changed; I left the house and went to the pier. The sea was beginning to grow rough, the wind blew fresh from the north; a coast-guard, to whom I spoke, told me that it would increase and would probably change to a west wind.

I returned to the house to take back this good news, for a west wind meant the arrival of the *Neustria* in Havre during the day, or, at the latest, at the turn of of the tide.

"You see," she said, "that I was right; I knew well that the wind would change. Ah, God is good!"

Her sister told me that she had not slept all night; that she had remained motionless, her eyes fixed on the weathercock, repeating continually the same question,

"At what o'clock does the tide come in?"

She asked for some wine; the physician had said that they might give her whatever she wanted; she took only a mouthful of it, for she was very weak, and her breathing was loud and hard.

"That will keep me up until then," she said.

Then her eyes turned towards the weathercock, and for the moment she said no more. But from time to time she murmured:

"Poor Jean! poor Jean!"

Jean was the name of her son.

At daybreak she called me to her bedside.

"Go to the butcher's," she said, "and buy three pounds of meat for the soup—get the best; then buy a head of cabbage."

"Cabbage would hurt you," said her sister.

"It is for Jean; he is fond of cabbage, and it is a long time since he has eaten any; here is the money."

And she drew with difficulty from under her pillow a five-franc piece.

The doctor came in the morning; he said that he had never seen such a fight against death; that it was only hope and the force of her will that kept her alive; but now that she had lived so long, it was probable that she would hold out till evening—till the ebbing of the tide.

When the hour came for opening the office I ran to the Rue d'Orleans. Vessels were beginning to come in sight, but the *Neustria* was not among those announced. From eight in the morning until three in the afternoon I made twenty journeys to the Rue d'Orleans. At last, at three o'clock, I read the notice: "The *Neustria*, from Calcutta."

It was high time to take back this good news, for the sick woman was gradually sinking; the disappointment of not seeing her son arrive with the morning tide had given her a fatal blow. On hearing that the *Neustria* had been signalled she revived.

"At what o'clock does the tide come in?" she asked.

"At six."

"I know I shall live until then; give me a little wine."

I went to the pier. In the roadstead more than twenty large vessels were tacking about, waiting for the tide to turn. At four o'clock those which did not draw much water began to enter, but the *Neustria* was of heavy tonnage; she did not enter the channel until nearly five o'clock.

I ran to the house. I had no need to speak.

"She is in the harbor?" she said.

"She is coming in," I answered.

A quarter of an hour later the bannister shook as if it were being torn away; it was her son. She had strength left to raise herself and clasp him in her arms.

She died at eleven o'clock that evening, at the going out of the tide, as the doctor had predicted.

This death, this love of a mother for her son, this struggle against dissolution, this despair, produced in my mind and in my heart an effect which neither Diélette's entreaties nor the shipwreck of the *Orinoco* had been able to accomplish.

My mother, too, might die while I was far away from her; for the first time I saw—I felt—this.

I did not sleep all night—this thought crushed me. The *Amazon* was to sail in a fortnight, the boat for Honfleur was to sail at five in the morning. The love of adventure and the fear of my uncle impelled me to go to sea; the thought of my mother drew me back to Port Dieu. After all, my uncle would not eat me. I had been able to defend myself successfully against hunger, against cold, against the tempest; with courage I might be able to defend myself, too, against my uncle. If my mother objected to my being a sailor it was her right to do so. Had I the right, on the other hand, to run away without her consent? Would she not receive me badly if I returned? And if I did not return, who would take care of her when she could no longer work?

At four o'clock I rose and made up my bundle; at half-past four I was on board the Honfleur boat; at

five I left Havre, and thirty-six hours later, at six o'clock in the evening, as the sun was setting, I saw the first houses of Port Dieu.

I had taken the path across the moor—that is to say, the same road which I had taken with Diélette; but the season had advanced since then; it was no longer the same road. The grass was green, the reeds were in flower, and in the moss of the ditches violets were beginning to bloom. From the earth and from the plants arose, after the heat of the day, a fragrance that expanded the lungs and rejoiced the heart.

Never had I felt so happy, so joyous! How my mother would embrace me!

Our hedge was before me; I jumped across the ditch which separated it from the moor. Twenty paces off was Diélette, taking down some handkerchiefs from a line.

"Diélette!" I cried.

She turned towards the side from which the sound proceeded, but she did not see me, for I was hidden behind the hedge.

I then saw, for the first time, that her dress was black; she was in deep mourning.

In mourning for whom?

A single word escaped me: "Mamma!"

But before Diélette could answer me my mother appeared at the threshold of the house, and my agonized fear was dispelled.

Behind her appeared at the same instant a tall old man with a white beard. It was Mr. De Bihorel. Mr. De Bihorel at my mother's side! I cannot describe my sensations. I felt as if I were looking at two ghosts.

Fortunately this lasted only for a moment.

"Well, Diélette, what is the matter?" asked Mr. De Bihorel.

He spoke! He was alive! I was not mistaken! I broke through the hedge and rushed through the reeds. What happiness!

When the first transports had calmed down a little I had to relate my adventures from the moment when I separated from Diélette. But I was in such haste to learn by what miracle it was that Mr. De Bihorel, whom I had thought dead, could be there before me alive and well, that I related my story in as few words as possible.

Mr. De Bihorel's story was very simple. While returning from the island of the Grunes, his boat had capsized in a squall; he had mounted on the keel, and he had been picked up, in this position, by a three-master sailing from Havre to San Francisco. The captain of this ship, though he had the humanity to send a boat to his rescue, refused to put in at any port to set him on shore, and Mr. De Bihorel found himself, willing or unwilling, bound for California, a five or six months' voyage, unless they should chance to fall in with some vessel that would take him back to France. This fortunate chance did not present itself. When they were off Cape Horn he put a letter for us in the box which navigators have established at the island of Terra del Fuego, but this letter never reached France. He arrived safely at San Francisco, crossed the continent, traversing the prairies, and reached France only two months before.

I did not become a sailor.

My uncle, the East Indian, was dead; it was for him Diélette and my mother were in mourning. He had left a large fortune which made each of his heirs rich.

Mr. De Bihorel took me home with him to complete my education, while Diélette was sent to a boarding-school. Whether she profited by the instruction she there received, whether she has become a good wife and mother you shall judge when she comes in by-and-by with our two little ones, a boy and a girl, who love Mr. De Bihorel as if he were their grandfather. Every day they go to Pierre Gante to visit him.

I did not become a sailor, but none the less have I retained my love for everything pertaining to the sea. Of the thirty vessels fitted out every year at Port Dieu for the Newfoundland fisheries six belong to me.

My mother is still in Port Dieu and still lives in our house. I have had the cabin twice rebuilt already in order that nothing might be changed. The picture you see there represents our house; it is by Lucien Hardel, who has become our friend. Every year he comes to spend a couple of months with us, and in spite of all his efforts he cannot find a gendarme in the country to arrest him.

Mr. De Bihorel is still living, and is now ninety-two years old. Age has not impaired either his health or his intelligence; his tall form is bent, but his heart is still youthful, still kind. The trees he planted have grown, and the island, on the side which is sheltered from the wind, is like a grove. On the western side there are still black sheep, still cows and rabbits, descendants of the cows and rabbits that were there when I was a boy.

The sea-gulls still circle around the rocks, and when he hears their shrill cries Saturday, still as healthy and vigorous as in the days when he used to give me my mouthful, never fails to say to me:

"Romain, *tscoui*, *couac*, *couac*. What does that mean?"

And he laughs to split his sides; then, if Mr. De Bihorel, who, for the last two months has been a little hard of hearing, looks at us inquiringly, he takes off his woollen cap and, assuming a serious air, says:

"We must not laugh at the poor master; if you are a man, do not forget that it is to him you owe it."

And this is the truth.

Without doubt the fortune of my uncle, the East Indian, came very opportunely to me; but it is none the less certain that if it had not been for Mr. De Bihorel, for his lessons, his example, for the care he bestowed upon my education, for his guidance, I should be little better to-day than a rich peasant, for it is not money that makes a man.

If this truth has need of confirmation, my uncle Simon would be a living proof of it.

The money left him by his brother, added to the fortune he already possessed, had given him a fever for gold. Being now too rich to trade upon the necessities of the poor peasants, who no longer yielded sufficient profit to satisfy his cupidity, he launched into extensive speculations. But in this field he met men who were shrewder and more cunning than himself, and in a few years his partners had ruined him so utterly that, after all he possessed was sold to pay his creditors—his office, his house at Dol, his estate, which

had cost him so much toil and anxiety—he still remained ten thousand francs in debt.

Just at that time I completed my eighteenth year and was declared of age, which gave me the free disposal of the fortune I had inherited from my uncle. In accordance with the advice of my mother and of Mr. De Bihorel, I offered to go to my uncle Simon's assistance. But he took my proposal very ill, and I was obliged, in satisfying the claims of his creditors, to act without his knowledge or consent. When he found that I had done so he came to us in a rage and made a terrible scene. We were fools and spend-thrifts, he said.

He lives now on a pension which we allow him. Even to do this we are obliged to take a roundabout method.

At first he agreed that he would accept a certain sum yearly. But we soon learned that instead of employing this sum in supplying his wants he made use of the greater part of it to lend out at usury and to carry on his trade in bric-à-brac. We now pay this sum to some worthy people who give him board and lodging. But, notwithstanding this precaution, he still finds the means of depriving himself of the necessaries of life in order to have the pleasure of saving a few sous.

When we reproach him for this he answers that our extravagance will one day ruin us, and that we will then be glad to have the money that his wise forethought has caused him to lay aside.

THE END.


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