

ЭЖЕН СЮ

A ROMANCE
OF THE WEST
INDIES

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A Romance of the West Indies

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Eugène Sue

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PART I

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CHAPTER I

THE PASSENGER

Toward the latter part of May, 1690, the three-masted schooner the Unicorn sailed from Rochelle for the island of Martinique.

A Captain Daniel commanded this vessel, which was armed with a dozen pieces of medium-sized ordnance, a defensive precaution necessary at that period. France was at that time at war with England, and the Spanish pirates would often cross to the windward of the Antilles, in spite of the frequent pursuit of filibusters.

Among the passengers of the Unicorn, few in number, was the Reverend Father Griffen, of the Order of the Preaching Brothers. He was returning to Martinique to resume his parish duties at Macouba, where he had occupied the curacy for some years to the satisfaction of the inhabitants and the slaves of that locality.

The exceptional life of the colonies, then almost continually in a state of open hostility against the English, the Spanish, and the natives of the Antilles, placed the priests of the latter in a peculiar position. They were called upon not only to preach, to hear confessions, to administer the sacraments to their flocks, but also to aid in defending themselves during the frequent inroads of their enemies of all nations and all colors.

The priest's house was, as other habitations, alike isolated and exposed to deadly surprises. More than once had Father Griffen, assisted by his two slaves, intrenched himself securely behind a large gateway of mahogany, after having repulsed their assailants by a lively fire.

Formerly a professor of geometry and mathematics, and possessed of considerable theoretical knowledge of military architecture, Father Griffen had given most excellent advice to the successive governors of Martinique on the construction of works of defense.

This priest knew thoroughly the stonecutter's and carpenter's trades; learned in agriculture, an excellent gardener, of an inventive spirit, full of resources, of rare energy, a determined courage, he was a valuable man to the colony, and, above all, to the quarter he inhabited.

The word of the gospel had not, perhaps, in his mouth all the unction to be desired; his voice was rough, his exhortations were unpolished; but their moral quality was excellent; they abounded in charity. He said the mass as rapidly and as forcibly as if he were a buccaneer. One could pardon him when one knew that this holy office was often interrupted by a raid of the heretical English or the idolatrous Caribbeans; and that then Father Griffen, leaping from the pulpit from which he had preached "peace and concord," was always one of the first to put himself at the head of his flock in order to defend it.

As to the wounded and prisoners, once the engagement was ended, the worthy priest ameliorated their situation as far as he could, and with the greatest care dressed the wounds which he had himself made.

We will not undertake to prove that the conduct of Father Griffen was in all points canonical, nor to solve the question so often debated, "Under what circumstances may the clergy go to war?" We do not claim for this subject either the authority of Saint Gregory nor that of Leo IV. We simply say that this worthy priest did good and combated evil with all his might.

Of a loyal and generous character, frank and gay, Father Griffen was mischievously hostile and mocking where women were concerned. He was continually making jests upon the daughters of Eve; these temptresses, these diabolical allies of the Serpent. In justice to Father Griffen, we must say that he showed in his railleries, otherwise without malice, a little rancor and contempt; he jested lightly on the subject of a happiness that he regretted not being able to desire; for, in spite of the extreme license of Creole customs, the purity of Father Griffen's life was never questioned.

He might have been accused of loving the pleasures of the table; not that he abused them (he observed bounds in enjoying the good gifts which God bestowed), but he was singularly fond of indulging himself with marvelous recipes for dressing game, seasoning fish, or preserving in sugar the fragrant fruits of the tropics; at times, even the description of his epicurean tastes became contagious, when he would enlarge upon certain repasts after the manner of buccaneers, prepared in the depths of the forests or on the shore of the island. Between you and me, Father Griffen possessed, among others, the secret of cooking a turtle, buccaneer-fashion, of which the mere recital was enough to excite ravenous hunger on the part of his hearers. In spite of his usually formidable appetite, Father Griffen scrupulously observed his fasts, which an edict of the pope's decreed should be much less strict at the Antilles and in the Indies than in Europe.

It is unnecessary to say here that the worthy priest would abandon the most delicate repast in order to fulfill his duties as a priest to a poor slave; no one was more pitiful than he – a more charitable or prudent manager, regarding the little he possessed as the property of the unfortunate.

Never was his consolation or succor lacking to those who suffered; but once his Christian task fulfilled, he worked gayly and vigorously in his garden, watered his plants, hoed his paths, pruned his trees, and when night came he loved to rest after his salutary and rustic labor, and enjoy, with an intelligent keenness of palate, the gastronomic riches of the country.

His flock never allowed his cellar or his larder to become empty. The finest fruit, the best portion from the chase or the rod, was always faithfully sent to him. He was beloved – he was blessed. They came to him to settle all points of dispute, and his judgment was finally accepted on all questions.

The physique of Father Griffen accorded perfectly with the impression perhaps formed of him after what has just been said of his character.

He was a man of not more than fifty years, robust, active, though perhaps rather too stout; his long robe of white wool and his black cape set off his broad shoulders; a felt cap covered his bald crown. His red face, his triple chin, his lips thick and crimson, his nose long and flat at the end, his small and lively gray eyes, gave him a certain resemblance to Rabelais; but what specially characterized Father Griffen's physiognomy was a rare mixture of frankness, goodness, strength and innocent raillery.

At the commencement of this story, the Preaching Brother stood on the stern of the vessel, in conversation with Captain Daniel. The ease with which he maintained his equilibrium, in spite of the violent rolling of the vessel, proved that Father Griffen had long since found his sea-legs.

Captain Daniel was an old sea-dog; once at sea, he left the management of his vessel to his mates and pilot, and became intoxicated regularly every night. Frequently making the trip from Martinique to Rochelle, he had already brought Father Griffen from America. The latter, accustomed to the inebriety of the worthy captain, attentively studied the ship's management; for without possessing the nautical science of Father Fournier, and other of his religious colleagues, he had a sufficiently theoretical and practical knowledge of navigation. Often had the priest made the passage from Martinique to San Domingo and beyond, on board the privateer vessels, which always yielded a tithe of their prizes to the churches of the Antilles.

Night approached. Father Griffen inhaled with pleasure the odor of supper which was being prepared. The captain's boy came to announce to the passengers that the repast was ready; two or three among them, who had successfully resisted seasickness, entered the cabin.

Father Griffen said grace; they had hardly seated themselves when the door of the cabin opened suddenly, and the following words were pronounced with a strong Gascon accent:

"There is, I hope, noble captain, a small place for the Chevalier de Croustillac?"

All the guests made a movement of surprise, then strove to read in the features of the captain an explanation of this singular apparition. The captain remained stupefied, regarding his new guest with an air almost of affright.

"Eh, there, who are you? I do not know you. Where the devil did you come from, sir?" he finally said.

"If I came from the devil, this good priest," and he kissed the hand of Father Griffen, "this good priest would send me back there very quickly, by saying, 'Get thee behind me, Satan.'"

"But where *do* you come from, sir?" cried the captain, stupefied by the confident and smiling air of this unexpected guest.

"One does not come thus on board. You are not on my list of passengers. You have fallen from the sky, perhaps?"

"A few minutes since it was from the infernal regions; now it is from the heavens that I come. Faith! I do not lay claim to an origin so divine nor so infernal, worthy captain; I – "

"It matters not as to that," replied the captain. "Tell me, how came you here?"

The chevalier assumed a majestic air. "I should be unworthy of belonging to the noble house of de Croustillac, one of the oldest in Guienne, if I had the slightest hesitation in satisfying the legitimate curiosity of the illustrious captain."

"So – this is very lucky," cried the latter.

"Do not say it is lucky, rather say it is right. I fall upon your vessel like a bomb; you are astonished; nothing is more natural; you ask me how I came on board. This is your right. I explain it to you – that is my duty. Completely satisfied by my explanation, you extend to me your hand and say, 'This is well, chevalier, place yourself at table with us.' I respond to you, 'Captain, I cannot refuse, for I am dying for lack of sustenance. Blessed be your benevolent offer.' So saying I slip in between these two estimable gentlemen. I make myself small; very small; in order not to incommode them; on the contrary, the motion is so violent that I wedge – "

So saying, the chevalier put his words into execution; profiting by the general surprise, he insinuated himself between two guests and provided himself with the glass of one, the plate of another, and the napkin of a third. Profound amazement made his neighbors oblivious to the things of this world. All this was accomplished with so much quickness, dexterity, confidence and boldness that the guests of the illustrious captain of the Unicorn and the illustrious captain himself did not dream of more than looking with the greatest curiosity and astonishment at the Chevalier de Croustillac. The adventurer proudly wore an old waistcoat of rateen, once green, but now of a yellowish blue; his frayed breeches were of the same shade; his stockings, at one time scarlet, were now a faded pink, and seemed in places to be fairly embroidered with white thread; a badly worn gray felt hat, an old sword-belt trimmed with imitation gold lace, now tarnished, supported a long sword upon which the chevalier, on entering, leaned with the air of a grandee. Croustillac was a very tall and excessively thin man. He appeared to be from thirty-six to forty years of age. His hair, mustache, and eyebrows were jet black, his face bony, brown and tanned. He had a long nose, small hazel eyes, which were extraordinarily lively, and his mouth was very large; his physiognomy betrayed at the same time an imperturbable assurance and an excessive vanity.

Croustillac had that overweening belief in himself which one finds only among the Gascons. He so exaggerated his merits and natural graces to himself that he believed no woman was able to resist him; the list of his conquests of every kind had been interminable. In spite of the most

amazing falsehoods, which cost him little, it cannot be denied that he possessed true courage and a certain nobility of character. This natural valor, joined to his blind confidence in himself, sometimes precipitated him into almost inextricable situations, into which he threw himself headlong, and from which he never emerged without hard blows – for if he was as adventurous and boastful as a Gascon, he was as obstinate and opinionated as a Breton.

Heretofore his life had been very similar to that of his Bohemian companions. The younger son of a poor Gascon family of doubtful nobility, he had come to seek his fortune at Paris; by turns petty officer of a forlorn hope; provost of an academy, bath-keeper, horse jockey, peddler of satirical news and Holland gazettes; he had more than once pretended to be a Protestant, feigning conversion to the Catholic faith in order to secure the fifty crowns that M. Pelisson paid each neophyte as the price of conversion. This cheat discovered, the chevalier was condemned to the lash and to prison. He suffered the lash, escaped from prison, disguised himself by means of an immense shade over his eye, girded himself with a formidable sword with which he ambled about, then embraced the profession of wheedling country folk for the benefit of gambling houses, into which he led those innocent lambs, who did not come forth again until completely shorn. It must be said – to the chevalier's credit that he took no part himself in these rascalities; as he said to himself – if he did bait the hook, he at least did not eat the fish.

The laws regarding duels were at that time very severe. One day the chevalier encountered a well-known brave named Fontenay-Coup-d'Epée. The latter roughly elbowed our adventurer, saying, "Take care! I am Fontenay Sword-Thrust." "And I," said the Gascon, "Croustillac Cannon-Ball," whipping out his sword.

Fontenay was killed, and Croustillac obliged to flee in order to escape capture.

The chevalier had often heard of the wonderful fortunes to be realized in the colonies. Journeying sometimes on foot, sometimes on horse, sometimes in a wagon, he went to Rochelle hoping to embark for America. Once there, Croustillac found that he not only must pay his passage on board a vessel, but must also obtain from the intendant of marine, permission to embark for the Antilles.

These two things were equally difficult of accomplishment; the emigration of Protestants, which Louis XIV. wished to prevent, made the officers of the ports extremely severe, and the voyage to Martinique cost no less than eight or nine hundred livres. In all his life the adventurer had never been possessed of a tithe of this amount. Arriving at Rochelle with ten crowns in his pocket, dressed in a smock frock and carrying his clothing on the end of his scabbard, the chevalier went, like a journeyman, to lodge at a poor tavern, ordinarily frequented by sailors.

There he inquired as to outgoing vessels, and learned that the Unicorn would set sail in a few days. Two of the crew of this vessel frequented the tavern which the chevalier had selected for the center of his operations. It would take too long to tell by what prodigies of astuteness and address; by what impudent and fabulous lies; by what mad promises Croustillac succeeded in interesting in his behalf the master cooper charged with the stowage of the casks of fresh water in the hold; it is enough to know that this man consented to hide Croustillac in an empty cask and to carry him on board the Unicorn.

According to custom, the intendant's assistants and the admiralty clerks carefully examined the vessel at the moment of its departure, in order to see that no one had fraudulently embarked. The chevalier kept quiet at the bottom of his cask and escaped the careful search of the king's servants. His heart bounded freely when he felt the vessel under way; he waited some hours before daring to show himself, knowing well that, once on the high seas, the captain of the Unicorn would not return to port to bring back a contraband passenger.

It had been arranged between the master cooper and the chevalier that the latter should never disclose the means whereby he had been smuggled on board.

A man less impudent than our adventurer would have timidly kept his place among the sailors, waiting with uneasiness the moment when Captain Daniel should discover the stowaway. Croustillac, on the contrary, went boldly to his end; preferring the captain's table to the mess of the crew, he was not a moment in doubt that he would be seated at that table – if not rightfully, at least in fact.

We have seen how his audacity served his purpose.

Such was the unexpected visitor at whom the guests of the Unicorn looked curiously.

CHAPTER II

BLUE BEARD

"Now, sir, explain how you came here!" cried the captain of the Unicorn, too impatient to learn the Gascon's secret to send him from the table.

The Chevalier de Croustillac poured out a large glass of wine, stood up, and said in a loud tone, "I will first propose to the illustrious company to drink the health of one who is dear to us all – that of our glorious king, that of Louis the Great, the most adored of princes!"

In that troublous time, it would have been unwise and even dangerous for the captain to receive the chevalier's proposition with coolness. Captain Daniel and the passengers following his example, responding to the toast, repeated in chorus, "To the king's health! to the health of Louis the Great!" One person alone remained silent; this was the chevalier's neighbor. Croustillac looked at him frowningly.

"By the gods, sir, are you not one of us?" said he; "are you, then, an enemy of our beloved king?"

"Not at all, sir; not at all. I love and venerate this great king, but how can I drink. You have taken my glass," replied the passenger timidly.

"What! gods! Is it for such a trifle as this that you expose yourself to passing for a bad Frenchman?" exclaimed the chevalier, shrugging his shoulders. "Are there not enough glasses here? Waiter! bring this gentleman a glass. My dear friend, good luck. Now stand and let us say, 'To the king's health – our great king!'"

After this toast all reseated themselves. The chevalier profited by the confusion to give a napkin and plate to his neighbor. Then, uncovering a dish placed before him, he said boldly to Father Griffen, "Father, may I offer you some of this potted pigeon?"

"Zounds, sir," cried the captain, struck by the liberties taken by the chevalier, "you put yourself very much at your ease."

The adventurer interrupted the captain and said to him with a solemn air, "Captain, I know how to render to each what is due. The clergy is the first order of the state; I conduct myself then as a Christian in serving at once this reverend father. I shall do more – I shall seize this occasion to render homage, in his respectable and holy person, to the evangelical virtues which distinguish and always will distinguish our church."

So saying, the chevalier served Father Griffen. From this moment it became very difficult for the captain to oust the adventurer. He had not refused the chevalier's toast, nor prevented him from doing the honors of the table. Meanwhile he continued to question him. "Come, sir, you are a gentleman, so be it! you are a good Christian, you love the king as we all love him – this is very well, but tell me, how the devil came you here to eat supper with us?"

"Father," said the chevalier, "I call upon you to bear witness, in the presence of this honorable company – "

"To bear witness to what, my son?" replied the priest.

"To bear witness to what the captain has said."

"How? What have I said," exclaimed the captain.

"Captain, you have said, you will remember, in the presence of this company, that I am a gentleman."

"I have said so, no doubt, but – "

"That I am a good Christian."

"Yes, but – "

"That I love the king."

"Yes, because – "

"Very well," replied the chevalier. "I again call this illustrious company to bear witness that when one is a good Christian, when one is a gentleman, when one loves his king, what more can be asked? Father, shall I help you to some of this roast?"

"I will take some, my son, for my seasickness takes the form of a robust appetite; once on shipboard, my hunger redoubles."

"I am delighted, Father, at this similarity in constitution. I, too, have a ravenous appetite."

"Very well, my son; as our good captain has given you the means wherewith to satisfy your appetite, I would say, to make use of your own words, that it is just because you *are* a gentleman, a good Christian, and well-disposed toward our beloved sovereign, that you ought to answer the questions of Captain Daniel as to your extraordinary appearance on board his ship."

"Unhappily, that is just what I cannot do, Father."

"How? cannot do?" cried the irritated captain.

The chevalier assumed a solemn air, and replied, as he turned toward the priest, "This reverend father can alone hear my confession and my vows; this secret is not mine alone; this secret is grave, very grave," he added, raising his eyes in contrition to heaven.

"And I – I can force you to speak," cried the captain, "when I cause a cannon ball to be tied to each of your feet and ride you on a rail until you disclose the truth."

"Captain," answered the chevalier, with imperturbable calm, "I never permit any one to threaten me. The motion of an eyelid, a sneer, a gesture, a nothing, which seems insulting – but you are king on your own ship, and therefore I am in your kingdom and recognize myself to be your subject. You have admitted me to your table – I shall continue to be worthy of this favor always – but there is no reason to arbitrarily inflict upon me such bad treatment. Nevertheless, I shall know how to resign myself to it, to support it, unless this good priest, the refuge of the feeble against the strong, deigns to intercede with you in my behalf," replied the chevalier humbly.

The captain was very much embarrassed, for Father Griffen did not hesitate to speak a few words in behalf of the adventurer who had so suddenly sought his protection, and who had promised to reveal, under the seal of the confessional, the secret of his presence on the Unicorn. The anger of the captain was somewhat appeased; the chevalier, at first flattering, insinuating, became jovial and comical; for the amusement of the passengers he performed all kinds of tricks; he balanced knives on his nose; he built up a pyramid of glasses and bottles with wonderful ingenuity; he sang new songs; he imitated the cries of various animals. In fact, Croustillac knew so well how to amuse the captain of the Unicorn, who was not very hard to please, that when supper was concluded the latter clapped the Gascon on the shoulder, saying:

"After all, chevalier, you are here on board, there is no way to undo that. You are good company, and there will always be a plate for you at my table, and we will manage to find some corner in which to swing a hammock for you."

The chevalier overwhelmed the captain with thanks and protestations of gratitude, and betook himself quickly to the place assigned to him, and soon was profoundly sleeping, perfectly satisfied as to his well-being during the voyage, although a little humiliated from having had to suffer the captain's threats, and from having had to descend to tricks to win the good will of one whom he mentally designated a brute and a seabear.

The chevalier saw in the colonies a veritable Eldorado. He had heard of the magnificent hospitality of the colonists, who were only too happy, he had been told, to keep the Europeans who came to see them as guests, for months, and he drew this very simple deduction: there are about fifty or sixty rich plantations at Martinique and Guadeloupe; their proprietors, bored to death, are delighted to keep with them men of wit; of gay humor, and of resources. I am essentially one of these; I have only, then, to appear to be petted, fêted, spoiled; admitting that I spend six months at each plantation, one after another – there are fully in the neighborhood of sixty – this will give me from twenty-five to thirty years of enjoyment and perfectly assured comfortable existence, and I count only

on the least favorable chances. I am in the full maturity of my gifts; I am amiable, witty, I have all kinds of society talents; how can one believe that the rich owners of these colonies, will be so blind, so stupid, as not to profit by the occasion and secure to themselves in this way the most charming husband that a young girl or a fascinating widow has ever pictured in sleepless nights.

Such were the hopes of the chevalier; we shall see if they were realized.

The following morning Croustillac kept his promise and made his confession to Father Griffen.

Although sincere enough, the avowal revealed nothing new as to the position of the penitent, which he had very nearly divined. This was, in effect the chevalier's confession: He had dissipated his fortune; killed a man in a duel; pursued by justice and finding himself without resources, he had adopted the dangerous part of going to the West Indies to seek his fortune; not having the means of paying for his passage, he had had recourse to the compassion of a cooper, who had carried him on board and hidden him in an empty cask.

This apparent sincerity caused Father Griffen to look upon the adventurer with leniency; but he did not hide from the Gascon that any hope of finding a fortune in the colonies was an error; he must bring quite an amount of capital with him to obtain even the smallest establishment; the climate was deadly; the inhabitants, as a general thing, were suspicious of strangers, and all the traditions of generous hospitality of the first colonists completely forgotten, as much through the egotism of the inhabitants as because of the discomforts following a war with England – which had gravely affected their interests. In a word, Father Griffen counseled the chevalier to accept the offer which the captain made, of taking him back to Rochelle after having touched at Martinique. In the priest's opinion, Croustillac could find a thousand resources in France, which he could not hope to find in a half-civilized country; the condition of the Europeans being such in the colonies that never, in consideration of their dignity as whites, could they perform menial employment. Father Griffen was ignorant of the fact that the chevalier had exhausted the resources of France, and therefore had expatriated himself. Under certain circumstances, no one was more easily hoodwinked than the good priest; his pity for the unhappy blinding his usual penetration. The past life of the chevalier did not appear to have been one of immaculate purity; but this man was so careless in his distress, so indifferent to the future which menaced him, that Father Griffen ended by taking more interest in the adventurer than he merited, and he proposed that the latter should stay in his parsonage at Macouba, while the Unicorn remained at Martinique; an invitation that Croustillac took care not to refuse.

Time went on. Captain Daniel was never tired of praising the wonderful talents of the chevalier, in whom he discovered new treasures of sleight-of-hand each day. Croustillac had finished by putting into his mouth the ends of burning candles, and by swallowing forks. This last feat had carried the captain beyond bounds of enthusiasm; he formally offered the Gascon a situation for life on board ship if the chevalier would promise to charm thus agreeably the tedium of the voyages of the Unicorn.

We would say here, in order to explain the success of Croustillac, that at sea the hours seem very long; the slightest distractions are precious, and one is very glad to have always at one's beck and call a species of buffoon endowed with imperturbable good humor. As to the chevalier, he hid under a laughing and careless mask, a sad preoccupation; the end of his journey drew near; the words of Father Griffen had been too sensible, too sincere, too just not to strongly impress our adventurer, who had counted upon passing a joyous life at the expense of the colonists. The coldness with which many of the passengers, returning to Martinique, treated him, completed the ruin of his hopes. In spite of the talents which he developed and which amused them, none of these colonists made the slightest advance to the chevalier, although he repeatedly declared he would be delighted to make a long exploration into the interior of the island.

The end of the voyage came; the last illusions of Croustillac were destroyed; he saw himself reduced to the deplorable alternative of forever traversing the ocean with Captain Daniel, or of returning to France to encounter the rigors of the law. Chance suddenly offered to the chevalier the most dazzling mirage, and awakened in him the maddest hopes.

The Unicorn was not more than two hundred leagues from Martinique when they met a French trading vessel coming from that island and sailing for France. This vessel lay to and sent a boat to the Unicorn for news from Europe. In the colonies all was well for some weeks past; not a single English man-of-war had been seen. After exchanging other news, the two vessels separated.

"For a vessel of such value (the passengers had estimated her worth at about four hundred thousand francs) she is not very well armed," said the chevalier, "and would be a good prize for the English."

"Bah!" returned a passenger with an envious air, "Blue Beard can afford to lose such a vessel as that."

"Yes, truly; there would still remain enough money to buy and arm others."

"Twenty such, if she desired," said the captain.

"Oh, twenty, that is a good many," said another.

"Faith, without counting her magnificent plantation at Anse aux Sables, and her mysterious house at Devil's Cliff," returned a third, "do they not say she has five or six millions of gold and precious stones hidden somewhere?"

"Ah, there it is! hidden no one knows where!" exclaimed Captain Daniel; "but one thing sure, she *has* them, for I have it from old father 'Wide-awake,' who had once seen Blue Beard's first husband at Devil's Cliff (which husband, they say, was young and handsome as an angel). I have it from Wide-awake that Blue Beard on this day amused herself by measuring in a bowl, diamonds, pearls and emeralds; now, all these riches are still in her possession, without counting that her third and last husband, as they say, was very rich, and that all his fortune was in gold dust."

"People say she is so avaricious that she expends for herself and household only ten thousand francs a year," continued a passenger.

"As to that, it is not certain," said Captain Daniel; "no one knows how she lives, because she is a stranger in the colony, and not four persons have ever put their feet inside Devil's Cliff."

"Truly; and lucky it is so; I am not the one who would have the curiosity to go there," said another; "Devil's Cliff does not enjoy a very good reputation; they do say that strange things take place there."

"It is certain that it has been struck by lightning three times."

"That does not surprise me; and strange cries, they say, are heard round the house."

"It is said that it is built like a fortress, inaccessible, among the rocks of the Cabesterre."

"That is natural if Blue Beard has so great a treasure to guard."

Croustillac heard this conversation with great curiosity. These treasures, these diamonds, were pictured in his imagination.

"Of whom do you speak, gentlemen?" he said.

"We are speaking of Blue Beard."

"Who is this Blue Beard?"

"Blue Beard? Well, it is – Blue Beard."

"But is this a man or a woman?" said the chevalier.

"Blue Beard?"

"Yes, yes," said Croustillac impatiently.

"'Tis a woman."

"How, a woman? and why, then, call her Blue Beard?"

"Because she gets rid of her husbands as easily as Blue Beard of the old story got rid of his wives."

"And she is a widow? She is a widow! Oh," cried the chevalier, clapping his hands while his heart beat rapidly, "a widow! rich beyond belief; rich enough to make one dizzy only to try to estimate her wealth – a widow!"

"A widow; so much of a widow that she is such for a third time in three years," said the captain.

"And is she as rich as they say?"

"Yes, that is conceded; all the world knows it," replied the captain.

"Worth millions; rich enough to fit out vessels worth four hundred thousand livres; rich enough to have sacks of diamonds and emeralds and fine pearls!" cried the Gascon, whose eyes sparkled and nostrils dilated, while his hands clinched.

"But I tell you that she is rich enough to buy Martinique and Guadeloupe if she were so pleased," said the captain.

"And old? very old?" asked the Gascon, uneasily.

His informer looked at the other passengers with a questioning air. "What age should you say Blue Beard was?"

"Faith, I do not know," said one.

"All I know," said another, "is that when I came to the colony two years ago she had already had her second husband, and had a third in view, who only lived a year."

"As to her third husband, it is said that he is not dead, but has disappeared," said a third.

"He is certainly dead, however, because Blue Beard has been seen wearing a widow's garb," said a passenger.

"No doubt, no doubt," continued another; "the proof that he is dead is that the parish priest of Macouba was instructed, in the absence of Father Griffen, to say the mass for the dead, for him."

"And it would not be surprising if he had been assassinated," said another.

"Assassinated? by his wife, no doubt?" said still another voice with an emphasis that spoke little in favor of Blue Beard.

"Not by his wife!"

"Ah, ah, that is something new!"

"Not by his wife? and by whom, then?"

"By his enemies in the Barbadoes."

"By the English colonists?"

"Yes, by the English, because he was himself English."

"Is it so, then, sir; the third husband is dead, really dead?" asked the chevalier anxiously.

"Oh, as to being dead – he is that," exclaimed several in chorus.

Croustillac drew a long breath; a moment's thought, and his hopes resumed their audacious flight.

"But the age of Blue Beard?" he persisted.

"Her age – as to that I can satisfy you; she must be anywhere from twenty, yes, that is about it, from twenty to sixty years," said Captain Daniel.

"Then you have not seen her?" said the Gascon, impatient under this raillery.

"Seen her? I? And why the devil should you suppose I had seen Blue Beard?" asked the captain.

"Are you mad?"

"Why?"

"Listen, my friends," said the captain to his passengers; "he asks me if I have seen Blue Beard." The passengers shrugged their shoulders.

"But," continued Croustillac, "what is there astonishing in my question?"

"What is there astonishing?" said the captain.

"Yes."

"Hold; you come from Paris, do you not? and is Paris not much smaller than Martinique?"

"Without doubt."

"Very well; have you seen the executioner at Paris?"

"The executioner? No, but why such a question?"

"Very well; once for all, understand that no one is any more curious to see Blue Beard than to see the executioner, sir. Beside, the house in which she lives is situated in the midst of the wilds of

Devil's Cliff, where one does not care to venture. Then an assassin is not an agreeable companion, and Blue Beard has too bad associates."

"Bad associates?" said the chevalier.

"Yes, friends; friends of the heart; not to go into the matter any further, it is a saying that it is not well to encounter them by night on the plain; by night in the woods; or after sunset under the lee of the island," said the captain.

"'Whirlwind' – the filibuster first," said one of the passengers with an affrighted air.

"Or 'Rend the Soul' – the buccaneer of Marie-Galande," said another.

"Or 'Youmääle,' the Caribbean cannibal of the lake of the Caimans," continued a third.

"What?" cried the chevalier, "does Blue Beard coquette at the same time with a filibusterer, a buccaneer, and a cannibal? Bah! what a woman!"

"So they say, sir."

CHAPTER III

THE ARRIVAL

These singular revelations concerning the morals of Blue Beard made a great impression upon the chevalier. After some moments of silence he asked the captain, "Who is this man, this filibuster whom they term the Whirlwind?"

"A mulatto from San Domingo, they say," replied Captain Daniel, "one of the most determined filibusters of the Antilles; he has dwelt in Martinique for the past two years, in a solitary house, where he lives now like an alderman."

"And you think that this bully is favored by Blue Beard?"

"They say that all the time that he does not pass at his own house, he is at Devil's Cliff."

"This proves at least that Blue Beard has never loved sentimental swains!" said the chevalier. "Well, but the buccaneer?"

"Faith," cried one of the passengers, "I do not know if I would not rather have the Whirlwind for an enemy than the buccaneer 'Rend-your-soul!'"

"Zounds! there is at least a name which holds possibilities," said Croustillac.

"And which fulfills them," said the passenger, "for him I have seen."

"And is he so terrible?"

"He is certainly as ferocious as the wild boars or the bulls which he hunts. I will tell you about him. It is now about a year since I was going to his ranch in the Great Tari, in the northern part of Martinique, to purchase of him some skins of wild cattle. He was alone with his pack of twenty hounds who looked as wicked and savage as himself. When I arrived he was anointing his face with palm oil, for there was not a portion of it that was not blue, yellow, violet or purple."

"I have had these iridescent shades from a blow on the eye, but –"

"Exactly, sir. I asked him what had caused this, and this is what he told me: 'My hounds, led by my assistant, had flung themselves upon a two-year-old bull; he had passed me, and I had sent a ball into his shoulder; he bounded into a thicket; the dogs followed. While I was reloading, my assistant came up, fired, and missed the bull. My boy, seeing himself disarmed, sought to cut at the bull's legs, but it gored him and stamped him underfoot. Placed as I was, I could not fire at the animal for fear of finishing my man. I took my large buccaneer's knife and threw myself between them. I received a blow of its horn which ripped up my thigh, a second broke this arm (showing me his left arm, which was suspended in a sling); the bull continued to attack me; as there remained but the right hand that was of any use, I watched my opportunity, and at the instant when the animal lowered his head to rip me up, I seized him by the horns and drew him within reach, and seized his lip with my teeth, and would no more let go than an English bulldog, while my dogs worried his sides.'"

"But this man is a blockhead," said Croustillac, contemptuously. "If he has no other means of pleasing – faith, I pity his mistress."

"I have told you that he was a species of savage animal," replied the narrator, "but to continue my story. 'Once wounded on the lips,' said the buccaneer, 'a bull falls. At the end of five minutes, blinded by the loss of blood (for my bullets had done their work), the bull fell on his knees and rolled over; my dogs sprang upon him, seized him by the throat, and finished him. The struggle had weakened me; I had lost a great deal of blood; for the first time in my life I fainted just like a girl. And what do you suppose my dogs had been at during my swoon? They had amused themselves by devouring my servant! They were so sharp and well-trained.' 'How,' said I to Rend-your-soul, terrified, 'because your dogs have devoured your servant, does that prove that they are well-trained?' I declare, sir," continued the passenger who had related this story of the buccaneer to the Gascon, "I looked with considerable alarm upon these ferocious animals who walked round and round me and smelt at me in a manner far from reassuring."

"The fact is, such customs as these are brutal," said Croustillac, "and it would be a mistake to address such a man of the woods in the beautiful language of gallantry. But what the devil can he indulge in in the way of conversation with Blue Beard?"

"God forbid I should act as eavesdropper," exclaimed the passenger.

"When Rend-your-Soul has said to Blue Beard, 'I have seized a bull on the lips, and my dogs have devoured my servants,'" replied the Gascon, "the conversation would languish; and zounds! one cannot always be feeding a man to the dogs in order to furnish entertainment."

"In faith, one cannot tell," said a listener; "these men are capable of anything."

"But," said Croustillac, "such an animal can know nothing about small courtesies; flowery language always takes the ladies."

"No, certainly," replied the narrator, whom we suspect of a slight exaggeration of the facts, "for he swears enough to sink the island; and he has a voice like the bellowing of a bull."

"That is easily accounted for; from frequenting their society he has acquired their accent," said the chevalier; "but let us hear the end of your story, I beg."

"Here it is. I demanded then of the buccaneer how he dared assert that dogs who would devour a man were well trained. 'Doubtless,' replied he, 'my dogs are trained never to insert a tooth in a bull when he is down, for I sell the skins, and they must be intact. Once the bull is dead these poor brutes, hungry though they be, have the sense to respect it, and to await its being skinned. Now this morning their hunger was infernal; my servant was half dead and covered with blood. He was very inhuman toward them; they began, no doubt, by licking his wounds; then, as it is said the appetite increases with what it is fed on, this made the mouths of the poor brutes water. Finally, they did not leave a bone of my servant. Had it not been for the bite of a serpent which nipped sharply but which was not venomous, I might have remained in my swoon. I recovered consciousness; I wrenched the snake from my right leg, round which it had coiled itself, I took it by the tail, I whirled it like a sling and I crushed its head on the trunk of a guava tree. I examined myself; I had a thigh ripped open and an arm broken; I bound the wound in my thigh with fresh leaves and secured them by a vine. As to my left arm, it was broken between the elbow and the wrist. I cut three little sticks and a long creeper and I tied it up like a roll of tobacco. Once my wounds dressed, I sought for my servant, for I could not see him. I called him, there was no answer. My dogs were crouched at my feet; they appeared so innocent, the cunning creatures! and looked at me as they wagged their tails as if nothing was wrong. Finally I arose, and what should I see at twenty paces distance but the remains of my servant. I recognized his powder-horn and the sheath of his knife. That was all that remained of him, I tell you this to prove to you that my dogs are very snappish and well-trained; for they will not injure a hair on the bull's skin.'"

"There, there! the buccaneer exceeds the filibuster," said Croustillac. "I can only say that Blue Beard is greatly to be pitied for not having had, up to this time, but an alternative of two such brutes." And the Gascon continued compassionately, "It is very easy to understand, this poor woman has not an idea of what constitutes a gentleman; when one has all one's life fed on lard and beans, one cannot conceive of anything as fine, as delicate as a pheasant or an ortolan. Zounds! I see it has been reserved to me to enlighten Blue Beard on a variety of things, and to discover to her a new world. As to the Caribbean, is he worthy of figuring at the side of his ferocious rivals?"

"Oh, as to the Caribbean," said one of the passengers, "I can speak from knowledge. I made this winter in his canoe the journey from Anse aux Sable to Marie-Galande. I was pressed to reach this latter place. The Rivière des Saints had overflowed, and I was compelled to make a great circuit in order to find a place which could be forded. At the moment when I embarked, I saw at the prow of the boat of Youmääle a kind of brown figure. I drew near; what did I see? My God! the head and arms dried to that of a mummy, forming the figurehead as an ornament for his canoe! We started on our voyage, the Caribbean silent, like the savage that he was, paddled without uttering a word. Arriving off the Caribbean Island, where a Spanish brigantine had stranded some months previous, I asked him, 'Is it not here that the Spanish vessel was wrecked?' The Caribbean nodded an assent.

It would be as well to say here that on board this vessel was the reverend Father Simon of Foreign Missions. His reputation for sanctity was such that it had reached even the Caribbeans; the brigantine had been wrecked, passengers and cargo – at least such was believed to be the case. I said then to the Caribbean, 'Is it there that Father Simon perished – you have heard of it?' He made me another affirmative sign with his head, for these people never speak an unnecessary word. 'He was an excellent man,' I continued. 'I have eaten him,' replied this wretched idolater, with a kind of ferocious and satisfied pride.

"That was one method of enjoying a person," said Croustillac, "and of sharing his qualities."

"For a moment," replied the passenger, "I did not understand what this horrible cannibal was saying, but when I had compelled him to explain himself, I learned that in accordance with I know not what savage ceremony, the missionary and two sailors who had escaped to a desert island had been surprised by the cannibals and eaten at once! When I reproached Youmääle for this barbarous atrocity, saying that it was frightful to have sacrificed these three unhappy Frenchmen to their ferocity, he replied, sententiously, and in a tone of approbation, as if he would prove to me that he understood the force of my arguments in classing, if not to their value, at least according to the flavor of three different nationalities. 'You are right: a Spaniard never, a Frenchman often, an Englishman always!'"

"This would prove that an Englishman is incomparably more delicate than a Frenchman, and that a Spaniard is as tough as the devil," said Croustillac; "but this gourmand will finish some day by devouring Blue Beard when caressing her. If all this be true – "

"It is true, sir."

"It follows then positively that this young or old widow is not insensible to the ferocious attractions of Rend-your-soul and of the cannibal?"

"Public opinion accuses her thus."

"Are they often with her?"

"All the time Whirlwind is not engaged in privateering, that Rend-your-soul is not hunting, and Youmääle is not in the woods, they pass with Blue Beard."

"Without becoming jealous of each other?"

"It is said that Blue Beard is as despotic as the Sultan of Turkey, and she forbids their being jealous."

"Faith! what a seraglio she has! But listen, gentlemen: you know that I am a Gascon; that they accuse us of exaggerating and you would ridicule – "

But Captain Daniel interposed, with a serious air, which could not be feigned, "When we arrive at Martinique ask the first creole whom you meet as to this Blue Beard; and may St. John, my patron saint, curse me if you will not hear concerning Blue Beard and her three friends the same thing."

"And as to her immense wealth, will they also speak to me of that?" asked the chevalier.

"They will tell you that the plantation where Devil's Cliff is situated is one of the most beautiful in the island, and that Blue Beard possesses a counting house at Fort St. Pierre, and that this counting house, managed by a man in her employ, sends out each year five or six vessels like the one we have just passed."

"I see how it is, then," said the chevalier in raillery. "Blue Beard is a woman who is weary of riches and the pleasures of this world; in order to distract her thoughts, she is capable of entertaining a buccaneer, a filibuster, and even a cannibal, if her heart so dictates."

"That it pleases her is evident in that she is never bored," replied the captain.

At this moment Father Griffen mounted to the deck. Croustillac said to him, "Father, I have told these gentlemen that we are accused, we Gascons, of telling fibs, but is what they say of Blue Beard the truth?"

The face of Father Griffen, ordinarily placid and joyful, took on a darker hue at once, and he replied gravely to the adventurer, "My son, never breathe the name of this woman."

"But, Father, is it true? She replaces her deceased husbands by a filibuster, a buccaneer and a cannibal?"

"Enough, enough, my son," returned the priest, "I pray you do not speak of Devil's Cliff and what goes on there."

"But, Father, is this woman as rich as they say?" pursued the Gascon, whose eyes were snapping with covetousness; "has she such immense treasures? Is she beautiful? Is she young?"

"May heaven defend me from ascertaining!"

"Is it true that her three husbands have been murdered by her, father? If this be true, how is it that the law has not punished such crimes?"

"There are crimes that may escape the justice of men, my son, but they never escape the justice of God. I do not know, however, if this woman is as culpable as they say, but still I say, do not speak of her, my son, I implore you," said Father Griffen, whom this interview seemed to affect most painfully.

Suddenly the chevalier assumed a resolute attitude, pulled his hat down over his forehead, caressed his mustache, balanced himself on his toes like a barnyard fowl preparing for combat, and cried with an audacity of which a Gascon alone is capable, "Gentlemen, tell me the day of the month."

"The 13th of July," replied the captain.

"Well, gentlemen," continued our adventurer, "may I lose the name of De Croustillac, may my coat of arms be forever smirched with disgrace, if in one month from this very day, in spite of all the buccaneers, filibusters or cannibals in Martinique or in the world, Blue Beard is not the wife of Polyphème de Croustillac!"

That evening when they went down to the saloon the adventurer was taken aside by Father Griffen; he sought by every possible means to ascertain if the Gascon knew more than he appeared to, concerning the surroundings of Blue Beard. The extraordinary persistence with which Croustillac occupied himself with her and the men about her had aroused the suspicions of the good priest. After speaking at some length on the subject with the chevalier, the priest was almost certain that Croustillac had not spoken other than by presumption and vanity.

"It matters not," said Father Griffen, "I'll not lose sight of this adventurer; he has the appearance of an empty-headed fool, but traitors know how to assume all guises. Alas!" continued he sadly, "this last voyage imposes upon me great obligations toward those who dwell at Devil's Cliff. Meantime, their secret is, so to speak, mine, but I have done what I could; my conscience approves. May they long enjoy the happiness they deserve, of escaping from the snares set for them. Ah! what dangerous enemies kings are, and one often pays dearly for the doubtful honor of being born on the steps of a throne. Alas!" went on the priest with a profound sigh, "poor angelic woman, it rends my heart to hear her thus spoken of, but it would be impolitic to defend her. These rumors are the preservation of the noble creatures in whom I am so deeply interested."

After considering awhile Father Griffen said to himself, "I at first took this adventurer to be a secret emissary from England, but I am doubtless deceived. Nevertheless, I will watch this man. In fact, I will offer him the hospitality of my house; thus his movements will not escape me. In any case, I will warn my friends at Devil's Cliff to redouble their prudence, for, I know not why, the presence of this Gascon disturbs me."

We will here hasten to inform the reader that the suspicions of Father Griffen, so far as Croustillac was concerned, were without foundation. The chevalier was nothing more than the poor devil of an adventurer which we have shown him to be. The excellent opinion he held of himself was the sole cause of his impertinent wager of espousing Blue Beard before the end of the month.

CHAPTER IV

THE PRIEST'S HOUSE

The Unicorn had anchored at Martinique three days. Father Griffen, having some matters requiring his attention before his return to his parish of Macouba, had not as yet quitted Fort St. Pierre.

The Chevalier de Croustillac found himself landed in the colonies with but very little money in his pocket. The captain and passengers had considered the adventurer's declaration that before a month had passed he would be the husband of Blue Beard, as an idle boast. Far from having given up the idea, the chevalier persisted in it more and more since his arrival in Martinique; he had carefully informed himself as to the riches of Blue Beard, and was convinced that, if the life of this strange woman was surrounded with the profoundest mystery, and she the subject of the wildest exaggeration, it was at least true that she was enormously wealthy.

As to her face, age and origin, as no one had on this point as much knowledge as Father Griffen, nothing could be affirmed. She was a stranger in the colony. Her man of business had come in advance to the island in order to purchase a magnificent estate and to build the mansion at Devil's Cliff, situated in the northern and most inaccessible and wildest portion of Martinique. At the end of several months it became known that the new proprietor and his wife had arrived. One or two of the colonists, impelled by their curiosity, had penetrated into the solitude of Devil's Cliff; they were received with a royal hospitality, but they did not see the owners of the place. Six months after this visit, news was received of the death of the first husband, which occurred during a short visit taken by the couple to Terre-Ferme.

At the end of one year of absence and widowhood, Blue Beard returned to Martinique with a second husband. It was said that this latter was killed, accidentally, while taking a walk with his wife; his foot slipped and he fell into one of those bottomless abysses which are so common in the volcanic soil of the Antilles. Such was, at least, the explanation that his wife gave concerning his mysterious death.

No one knew anything positive concerning the third husband of Blue Beard and his death.

These three deaths, so close together, so mysterious, caused strange stories to be circulated regarding this woman, and reached the ears of the Governor of Martinique, who was then Chevalier de Crussol; he started with an escort for Devil's Cliff; arriving at the foot of the thickly-wooded ascent, on the summit of which towered the mansion, he found a mulatto who gave him a letter. After reading this letter, the governor showed great surprise, and ordering his escort to await his return, he followed the slave, alone.

At the expiration of four hours the governor returned with his guide, and immediately retraced his steps to St. Pierre. Some of those who formed his escort remarked that he was very pale and very much agitated. From that moment until the day of his death, which occurred thirteen months to the very day after his visit to Devil's Cliff, no one ever heard him pronounce the name of Blue Beard. The governor made a long confession to Father Griffen, who came to him from Macouba. It was observed that in leaving the penitent, Father Griffen appeared to have received a great shock.

From that time the kind of fatal and mysterious reputation which had attached itself to the name of Blue Beard increased day by day. Superstition mingled with the terror which she inspired, until her name was never mentioned without terror; it was firmly believed that she had assassinated her three husbands, and that she had escaped punishment by law only through the power of her wealth, thus purchasing the support of the different governors who succeeded each other in turn. No one, then, was tempted to trouble Blue Beard with visits to the wild and solitary place in which she dwelt, above all since the cannibal, the buccaneer and the privateer had come, as they said, to be companions or consolers to the widow.

Whether or not these men had ever legally rendered themselves liable for any crime, it was asserted that they pursued with an implacable hatred and vengeance all who attempted to come near Blue Beard. By reason of being repeated and exaggerated, these threats bore their fruit. The islanders care little to go, perhaps at the peril of their lives, to penetrate into the mysteries of Devil's Cliff. It required the desperate audacity of a Gascon in extremity, to attempt to surprise the secret of Blue Beard and undertake to espouse her. Such was possibly the fixed design of the Chevalier de Croustillac; he was not a man to renounce so easily the hope, insane as it was, of marrying a woman worth millions; beautiful or plain, young or old, it mattered little to him.

As a means to success, he counted upon his good carriage, his spirit, his amiability, and his manner, at the same time gallant and proud – for the chevalier had an excellent opinion of himself – but he counted still more on his wit, his cunning, and his courage. In fine, a man alert and determined, who had nothing to lose and feared nothing, who believed implicitly in himself and his star; who could say to himself as did Croustillac, "In risking death during a moment – for death can be but a moment's agony – I *may* live in luxury and opulence" – such a man can perform miracles above all when he undertakes a project with such a grand object and as stimulating as that proposed by Croustillac.

According to his resolve, Father Griffen, after he had brought to a close the affairs which detained him at St. Pierre, invited the chevalier to accompany him to Macouba, to remain there until the Unicorn should sail again for France. Macouba being distant not more than four or five leagues from Devil's Cliff, the chevalier, who had spent his three crowns and who found himself without resources, accepted the offer of the worthy priest, without further enlightening him as to his resolve concerning Blue Beard; this he would not reveal until the moment arrived to put it into execution.

After taking leave of Captain Daniel, the chevalier and the priest embarked in a small boat. Favored by a good wind from the south, they set sail for Macouba. Croustillac appeared indifferent to the magnificent and novel scenes which were afforded by the coast of Martinique, seen from the water; the tropical vegetation whose verdure, of a tone almost metallic, outlined on a glowing sky, affected him very little.

The adventurer, with his eyes fixed on the scintillating wake which the boat left behind her, seemed to see flashing the living rays of Blue Beard's diamonds; the little green herbs, standing in relief from the submerged meadows which edged the winding shores, pictured to the Gascon the emeralds of the widow; while some drops of water sparkled in the sun in the fall of the oars made him dream of the sacks of pearls which the terrible resident at Devil's Cliff possessed.

Father Griffen was also deeply absorbed; after thinking of his friends at Devil's Cliff, he turned his thoughts, with a mixture of disquietude and joy, to his little flock at home, his garden, his poor and unpretentious church, his house, his favorite horse, his dog, and his two slaves who had always given him the most devoted service. And then – shall we say it? – he thought of certain preserves which he had made some days before his departure, and as to the condition of which he was ignorant.

In three hours our travelers arrived at Macouba. Father Griffen had not long to wait; the canoe was moored in a little bay, not far from the river which watered this section, one of the most fertile of Martinique.

Father Griffen leaned upon the chevalier's arm. After having for a time followed the shore where the high and powerful waves of the Caribbean Sea rolled on, they reached the village of Macouba, composed of some hundred houses built of wood and covered with roses and palms.

The village was built on a semicircular plan which followed the outline of the Bay of Macouba, a little port where many canoes and fishing boats were built. The church was a long wooden edifice from the center of which four beams arose, surmounted by a little belfry in which was hung a bell; the church overlooked the village, and was in turn overshadowed by immense cliffs, covered by rich vegetation, which made an amphitheatre of living green.

The sun was rapidly setting. The priest trod the only street that crossed Macouba, and which led to the church. Some small negroes, absolutely nude, were rolling in the dust; uttering loud cries; they

fled at the approach of the priest. A number of creole women, white or of mixed blood, dressed in long robes of Indian and madras cloth, in striking colors, ran to the doors; recognizing Father Griffen, they testified to their surprise and joy; young and old hastened to respectfully kiss his hand, and to say in creole, "Blessed is your return, good Father; you have been missed in Macouba." Numbers of men came out at once and surrounded Father Griffen, with the same tokens of attachment and respect.

While the priest talked with the villagers of the events which had taken place at Macouba during his absence, and in turn gave them news of France, the housewives, fearing that the good father would not find sufficient provision at the parsonage, had retired to select, one a fine fish, another a beautiful pullet; this one the quarter of a fine fat buck, that one some fruits or vegetables, and a number of little negroes were ordered to carry to the parsonage these voluntary tithes.

The priest reached his house, situated on one side, at some distance from the village, overlooking the sea. Nothing could be more simple than this modest wooden house, covered with roses, and of one story. Curtains of clear linen dressed the windows and took the place of blinds, which were a great luxury in the colonies.

A large room, comprising at the same time parlor and dining room, communicated with the kitchen built at the rear; at the left of this principal room were the bedroom of Father Griffen, and two other small rooms opening into the garden and set apart for strangers or the other priests of Martinique who might, at times, ask the hospitality of their brother priest.

A henhouse, a stable for the horse, lodgings for two negroes, and several sheds, completed this establishment, furnished with a rustic simplicity. The garden had been carefully laid out. Four broad paths were divided by many beds bordered by thyme, lavender, wild thyme, hyssop and other fragrant plants. The four principal beds were subdivided into numerous little ones set apart for vegetables or fruits, but surrounded by wide borders of fragrant flowers. Between two little walls of verdure, covered with Arabian jasmine and odorous creepers, could be seen, in the horizon, the sea and the hills of the other islands.

No fresher or more charming spot than this garden, in which the most beautiful flowers mingled with fruits and magnificent vegetables, could be found. Here a bed of melons, of an amber color, was bordered by dwarf pomegranates, shaped like a small box and covered at the same time with purple blossoms and fruit so heavy and so abundant that it touched the earth. A little further on, a branch of Angola wood with its long, green husks, and its blue flowers, was surrounded by a line of white and pink almonds, sweet with perfume; the carrot plant, sorrel, gimgambo and leek, were hidden in a fourfold rank of tuberose of the richest tints; finally, came a square of pineapples which perfumed the air, having a row of magnificent cacti for a border, with yellow calix and long silver pistils. Behind the house extended an orchard composed of cocoanuts, bananas, guava, tamarind, and orange trees, whose branches were weighted down to the earth with flowers and fruit.

Father Griffen followed the paths of his garden with unspeakable happiness, observing each flower, plant and tree. His two slaves attended him; one was called Monsieur, the other Jean. These two good creatures, weeping with joy at the sight of their master, could not reply to his questions, so much affected were they, and could only say one to the other, with hands raised to heaven, "God be praised – he is here! he is here!"

The chevalier, indifferent to the joy of the natives, followed the priest mechanically; he was consumed with the desire to inquire of his host if, through the woods which rose in an amphitheatre, one could see the road to Devil's Cliff.

After examining his garden, the good priest went out to inspect his horse which he had named Grenadille, and his large English mastiff called Snog; as soon as he opened the stable door Snog threw himself upon his master and bounded around him. He not only jumped upon him but barked with joy, with such evidence of affection that the negro, Monsieur, was obliged to take the dog by his collar and could with difficulty restrain him, while the priest caressed Grenadille, whose glossy coat and well-covered ribs bore testimony to the good care of Monsieur, who had charge of the stable.

After this thorough visit through his little domain, Father Griffen conducted the chevalier into the bedroom which he had intended for him. A bed draped with a mosquito-netting under a linen canopy, a large bureau of mahogany wood, and a table, was the furnishing of this room, which opened upon the garden. Its only ornament was a crucifix suspended from the center of the slightly roughened wainscot.

"You will find here a poor and modest hospitality," said Father Griffen to the chevalier, "but it is offered you with a good heart."

"And I accept it with gratitude, Father," said Croustillac.

At this moment Monsieur came to announce that supper was ready, and Father Griffen led the way to the dining room.

CHAPTER V

THE SURPRISE

A large glass wherein burned a candle of yellow wax, lighted the table; the dishes were placed on a table cloth of coarse but very white linen. There was no silver; the steel knives, and spoons of maple wood, were of great neatness. A bottle of blue glass contained about a pint of canary; in a large pewter pot bubbled the *oagou*, a fermented beverage made from the grain of sugar cane; a sealed earthen vessel held water, as fresh as if it were iced.

A fine dorado grilled in its scales (a Caribbean dish), a roasted paroquet of the size of a pheasant, two dishes of sea crabs cooked in the shell and served with sauce of the citron juice, and a salad of green peas, had been symmetrically placed on the table by the negro Jean, around a centerpiece composed of a large basket containing a pyramid of fruit, which had at its base a European melon, a watermelon, and at its summit a pineapple; there was a side dish of sliced palm-cabbage dressed with vinegar, and little whitefish preserved in spiced pickle, which would tempt the appetite of the guests or excite their thirst.

"You are treating me with royal magnificence, Father," said the chevalier to the priest. "This island is the 'promised land,' surely."

"With the exception of the canary wine, which was a gift, my son, all this is the product of the garden which I cultivate, or the fishing and hunting of my two slaves, for the offerings of my parish are superfluous, thanks to the foresight of Monsieur and Jean, who were advised of my arrival by a sailor at Fort St. Pierre. Help yourself to this paroquet, my son," said the priest to the chevalier, who appeared to find the fish very much to his taste.

Croustillac hesitated a moment and looked at the priest in an uncertain manner. "I do not know why, but it seems strange to eat a paroquet," said the chevalier.

"Try it, try it," responded the priest, and he placed a wing on his plate. "Is a pheasant's flesh more plump or more golden? It is cooked to a marvel; and then, did you ever smell anything more appetizing?"

"I should say four spices are employed," said the chevalier, inhaling the odor.

"It is claimed that these birds are very fond of the berry of the Indian trees which they find in the forest; these trees have at once the taste of cinnamon, clove and pepper, and the flesh of the game partakes of the scent of this aromatic tree. How this juice is flavored. Add a little of the orange sugar, and then tell me if the Lord has not blessed his creatures in bestowing such gifts upon them?"

"In all my life I have never eaten anything more tender, more delicate or more savory than this," replied the chevalier, with full mouth, and half shutting his eyes in sensual enjoyment.

"Is it not good?" said the good priest, who, knife and fork in hand, looked at his guest with satisfied pride.

The repast ended, Monsieur placed a pot of tobacco and pipes at the side of the bottle of canary, and Father Griffen and Croustillac were then left alone.

After filling a glass of wine and passing it to the chevalier, the priest said to him, "Your health, my son."

"Thanks, father," said the chevalier, lifting his glass. "Drink also to the health of my future bride; it will be a good omen for me."

"How? your future bride?" replied the priest; "what do you mean?"

"I allude to Blue Beard, father."

"Ah – always jesting! Frankly, I believe the men of your province are most inventive, my son," said Father Griffen, smiling mischievously, and emptying his glass in small doses.

"I never spoke more seriously, father. You heard the vow which I made on board the Unicorn?"

"Impossibility nullifies a vow, my son; because you should swear to measure the ocean, would you engage to fulfill this oath?"

"How, Father – is the heart of Blue Beard as bottomless as the ocean?" gayly exclaimed the chevalier.

"An English poet has said of woman, 'Perfidious as the waves,' my son."

"However perfidious women may be, my worthy host," said the chevalier with a self-sufficient air, "we men know how to disarm them, and I shall exercise afresh that power in dealing with Blue Beard."

"You will not attempt anything of the kind, my son; I am easy on that point."

"Allow me to say, father, that you deceive yourself. To-morrow, at daybreak, I shall ask of you a guide to conduct me to Devil's Cliff, and I shall confide the course of this adventure to my Star."

The chevalier spoke with so serious an air that Father Griffen hastily placed upon the table the glass which he was raising to his lips, and regarded the chevalier with as much astonishment as distrust. Until then he had really believed the matter to be only a pleasantry or idle boast. "Are you sincere in this resolve? This is absolute madness, but – "

"Excuse me, Father, for interrupting you," said the chevalier, "but you see before you the younger son of my family, who has tempted every fortune, wasted all his resources, and with whom nothing has succeeded. Blue Beard is rich, very rich. I have everything to gain, nothing to lose."

"Nothing to lose?"

"Life, perhaps, you will say. I make a good bargain; and then, barbarous though this country may be, helpless as justice may prove, I do not think that Blue Beard will dare treat me, on my arrival, as she treated her three husbands; if so, you will know that I have fallen a victim; you will demand an account of my death. I risk nothing more than seeing my homage rejected. Ah! well, if such be the case, if she repulses me, I shall continue to delight Captain Daniel during his trips by swallowing lighted candles and balancing bottles on the end of my nose. Certainly such an occupation is honorable and amusing, but I prefer another life. So, then, no matter what you say, Father, I am resolved to attempt the adventure and to go to Devil's Cliff. I cannot tell you what secret presentiment tells me I shall succeed, that I am upon the eve of seeing my destiny fulfill itself in a most wonderful manner. The future seems tinted with rose and gold; I dream only of magnificent palaces, wealth, and beauty; it seems to me (excuse the pagan comparison) that Love and Fortune have come and taken me by the hands and are saying to me, 'Polyphème de Croustillac, happiness awaits thee.' You will say, perhaps, Father," continued the chevalier, throwing a mocking glance at his faded coat, "that I am poorly dressed to present myself in this beautiful and brave company of fortune and happiness; but Blue Beard, who must be intelligent, will comprehend at once that under this outside, the heart of an Amadis, the spirit of a Gascon, and the courage of a Cæsar dwells."

After a moment's silence the priest, instead of smiling at the pleasantries of the chevalier, said to him in a tone that was most solemn, "Is your resolve finally taken?"

"Unwaveringly and absolutely taken, Father."

"Hear me then; I heard the confessions of the Chevalier de Crussol, the former governor of this island; he who, when the third husband of this woman disappeared, went to Devil's Cliff."

"Well, father?"

"While I must respect the secrets of the confessional, I can, I must, tell you that if you persist in your insane project, you expose yourself to great and unavoidable peril. Without doubt, if you lose your life, your death will not remain unpunished; but there will be no means of preventing the fatal end upon which you would rush. Who obliges you to go to Devil's Cliff? The resident of that place wishes to live in solitude; the barriers of that abode are such that you cannot break them down without violence; for in every country, and above all in this one, he who trespasses upon the property of another exposes himself to grave danger – danger the greater that all idea of a union with this widow is impossible, even if you were of a princely house."

These words hurt immeasurably the self-esteem of the Gascon, who exclaimed, "Father, this woman is but a woman, and *I* am Croustillac."

"What do you say, my son?"

"That this woman is free; that she has not seen me; that but one look, one only, will change entirely her resolve."

"I do not think it."

"Reverend Father, I have the greatest, the blindest confidence in your word; I know all its authority; but this concerns the fair sex, and you cannot understand the heart of woman as *I* understand it, you do not know what inexplicable caprices they are capable of; you do not know that what pleases them to-day displeases them to-morrow; and that they wish for to-day, that which they disdained yesterday. With women, my reverend sir, one must dare in order to succeed. If it were not for your cloth, I would tell you some curious adventures and audacious undertakings by which I have been recompensed amorously!"

"My son!"

"I understand your sensitiveness, Father, and to return to Blue Beard: once in her presence, I shall treat her not only with effrontery, with haughtiness, but as a victor – I dare say it, as a lion who comes proudly to carry off his prey."

These remarks of the chevalier were interrupted by an unforeseen accident. It was very warm; the door of the dining room which looked on the garden was half open. The chevalier, with back turned to this door, was seated in an arm chair with a wooden back which was not very high. A sharp hissing sound was heard and a quick blow vibrated in the middle of the chevalier's chair.

At this sound Father Griffen bounded from his chair, rushed and took his gun down from a rack placed in his bedroom, and precipitated himself out of doors, crying, "Jean! Monsieur! Take your guns! Follow me, my children! follow me! The Caribbeans are upon us!"

CHAPTER VI THE WARNING

All this took place so rapidly that the chevalier was dumfounded. "Get up! get up!" cried the priest. "The Caribbeans! Look at the back of your chair – get out of the light!"

The chevalier rose quickly, and saw an arrow three feet in length fixed in the back of his chair. Two inches higher and the chevalier would have been pierced through the shoulders. Croustillac seized his sword, which he had left on a chair, and hurried after the priest.

Father Griffen, at the head of his two negroes, armed with their guns, and preceded by his mastiff, sought for the enemy; unfortunately, the door of the dining room opened upon a trellised orchard; the night was dark; doubtless the person who had sped the arrow was already far away, or well hidden in the top of some thick tree.

Snog bounded hither and thither in the eagerness of his search. Father Griffen recalled his two slaves who were too venturesome and would have penetrated into the orchard.

"Well, father, where are they?" said the chevalier, brandishing his sword: "shall we charge upon them? A lantern – give me a lantern; we will visit the orchard and the neighborhood of the house."

"No, no, not a lantern, my son, it would serve to point us out to the assailants if there are a number, and you would be too much exposed; you would receive an arrow in you. Come, come," said the priest, lowering his gun after some moments of attentive scrutiny; "it is but an alarm; let us return and thank the Lord for the clumsiness of this cannibal, for if he had not blundered, you would not be here, my son. What astonishes me, and for which I thank God, is that you have escaped; a native so bold as to make such an attempt should have a true eye and a sure hand."

"But what harm have you ever done these savages, Father?"

"None! I have often been in their settlement at the Isle des Saintes, and have always been properly received; thus I cannot understand the object of this attack. But let us look at this arrow – I shall know from the feather if it is a native arrow."

"We must keep a good watch, to-night, Father, and to this end confide in me," said the Gascon. "You see that it is not only in a love affair that I have firmness."

"I do not doubt you, my son, and I accept your offer. I will fasten the windows securely against the assassins, and bar the door strongly. Snog will act as picket. It will not be the first time this house has stood a siege; a dozen English pirates attacked it two years ago, but with my slaves and the aid of an official from Cabesterre, who was accidentally at my house, we punished the heretics severely."

So saying, Father Griffen entered the dining room, withdrawing with some effort the iron-barbed arrow which stuck in the back of the chair, he exclaimed with surprise, "There is a paper attached to the feather of this arrow!" Then, unfolding it, he read these words, written in a large and bold hand: "Warning number one, to the Chevalier de Croustillac."

"To the Rev. Father Griffen, respect and affection."

The priest looked at the chevalier without saying a word. He, in turn, took the bit of paper and read it.

"What does this mean?" he exclaimed.

"It means that I have not been deceived in speaking of the sure aim of the Caribbeans. The person who shot the arrow could have killed you had he so willed. See! this arrow tip is poisoned, doubtless; it entered an inch into the back of this chair of hard wood; if it had struck you, you would be dead. What skill was displayed in thus guiding this arrow!"

"Zounds, Father! I find it rather more marvelous that I am not touched," said the Gascon. "But what the devil have I done to this savage?"

Father Griffen struck his forehead with his hand. "When I have read you this?" he exclaimed.

"Read what, Father?"

"Warning number one, to the Chevalier de Croustillac."

"Well?"

"Well! this warning comes from Devil's Cliff."

"You believe it to be so?"

"I am sure of it. They have learned of your project and they desire to force you to give it up."

"How can they have learned it?"

"You did not hide it on board the Unicorn. Some of the passengers, disembarking three days ago at St. Pierre, have spoken of it; this rumor has reached the counting house of Blue Beard and her business manager has informed his employer."

"I am forced to confess," replied the chevalier, after a moment's reflection, "that Blue Beard has singular means of corresponding with one. This is a queer little mail."

"Ah, well, my son, I hope the lesson will profit you," said the priest. Then he continued, addressing the two slaves who were carrying in the blinds and were about to raise them into place, "It is unnecessary, my children, I see there is nothing to fear."

The slaves, accustomed to a blind obedience, took away the impromptu defenses.

The chevalier looked at the priest with astonishment.

"Without doubt," said the good father, "the word of the dwellers at Devil's Cliff is sacred; I have nothing at present to fear from them, nor you either, my son, because you are warned, and you will necessarily give up your mad plan."

"I, Father?"

"How – "

"May I become blacker this moment than your two negroes if I renounce it."

"What do you say – after such a warning?"

"Well, who is to tell me that this warning comes from Blue Beard? It may come from a rival – from the buccaneer, the filibuster, or the cannibal. For I have quite a selection among the gallant admirers of the beauty of Devil's Cliff."

"Ah, well, what does it signify – "

"How? What does it signify, Father? But I intend to show these would-be wits what the blood of a De Croustillac is! Ah! they think to intimidate me! They do not know this sword which, look you, would move in its scabbard! whose steel would blush with indignation if I were to renounce my undertaking!"

"My son, this is madness, sheer madness – "

"And what a coward, what a sheep, would the Chevalier de Croustillac appear in the eyes of Blue Beard if he were so pusillanimous as to be daunted by so little!"

"By so little! but two inches higher and you would have been killed!"

"But as it was two inches lower, and I was *not* killed, I will consecrate my life to taming the willful heart of Blue Beard and to vanquishing my rivals, be they ten, twenty, thirty, one hundred or ten thousand," replied the Gascon, with growing enthusiasm.

"But if this act was the order of the mistress of Devil's Cliff?"

"If it was done by her order, she shall see, the cruel one, that I will brave the death to which she would send me, in order to reach her heart. She is a woman; she will appreciate such valor. I do not know if she is a Venus but I know that without wronging the god Mars I Polyphème Amador de Croustillac am terribly martial; and from beauty to courage there is but a step."

One must imagine the exaggeration and Gascon accent of the chevalier to have an idea of this scene.

Father Griffen hardly knew whether to laugh or to be appalled at the opinionated resolve of the chevalier. The secret of the confessional forbade his speaking, from entering into any details concerning Devil's Cliff; he knew not how to induce the chevalier to renounce his fatal intention. He had endeavored to do so, but in vain.

"If nothing can withhold you, my son, it cannot be said that I have been, even indirectly, an accomplice in your mad enterprise. You are ignorant of the position of Devil's Cliff; neither myself, nor my slaves, nor, I assure you, any of my parishioners will be your guide. I have instructed them to refuse. Beside the reputation of Blue Beard is such that no one would care to infringe my orders."

This declaration of the priest's seemed to make the chevalier reflect. He bent his head in silence then he began again resolutely: "I know that Devil's Cliff is some four leagues from this spot; it is situated in the northern part of the island. My heart will serve as a compass to guide me to the lady of my thoughts, with the assistance of the sun and the moon."

"But, madman," cried the priest, "there is no path through the forests which you would traverse; the trees are so thick that they would hide from you the position of the sun – you would be lost."

"I shall go right ahead; I shall arrive somewhere. Your island is not so large (be it said without disparaging Martinique), Father; then I shall retrace my steps, and I shall seek until I find Devil's Cliff."

"But the soil of the forest is often impassable; it is infested with serpents of the most dangerous species; I say to you that in what you propose, you are courting a thousand deaths."

"Ah, well, Father, 'nothing venture, nothing have.' If there are serpents I will get upon stilts after the manner of the natives of my country."

"Going to walk on stilts in the midst of creepers, brambles, rocks, trees overturned by storms? I tell you, you do not know our forests."

"If one always considered the perils of an undertaking one would never accomplish any good. Did you think of the deadly fevers when you tended those of your parishioners who were attacked with it?"

"But my object was a pious one; I risked death in the observance of my duty; while you rush upon yours out of vanity."

"Vanity, Father! A companion who has sacks filled with diamonds and fine pearls, and probably five or six millions more in gold! Zounds! what a 'vanity!'"

Having seen the futility of overcoming such unparalleled opinionativeness, the good priest said no more.

He conducted his guest to the room assigned to him, fully resolved to put every difficulty possible in the way of the chevalier the next day.

Inflexible in his resolve, Croustillac slept profoundly. A lively curiosity had come to the aid of a natural obstinacy and an imperturbable confidence in his destiny; the more this confidence had been, till then, disappointed, the more our adventurer believed that the promised hour was about to come to him. The following morning, at break of day, he arose and went on tiptoe to the door of Father Griffen's room. The priest still slept, not thinking for a moment that the chevalier would dream of starting off on a journey through an unknown country without a guide. He deceived himself.

Croustillac, in order to escape the solicitation and reproaches of his host, started at once. He girded on his formidable sword, a weapon very inconvenient to travel with through a forest; he jammed his hat well down on his head, took a staff in his hand with which to frighten the serpents, and with firm tread and nose in the air, though with a heart beating rather rapidly, he quitted the hospitable house of the priest of Macouba, and directed his steps toward the north, for some time following the extremely thick vegetation of the forest. He shortly afterward made a circuit of this dense vegetation, which formed an angle toward the east, and stretched indefinitely in that direction.

From the moment that the chevalier entered the forest, he did not hesitate in the slightest degree. He recalled the wise counsels of Father Griffen; he thought of the dangers which he was going to encounter; but he also invoked the thought of Blue Beard's treasures; he was dazzled by the heaps of gold, pearls, rubies and diamonds which he believed he saw sparkling and quivering before his eyes. He pictured to himself the owner of Devil's Cliff, a being of perfect beauty. Led on by this vision, he

entered resolutely the forest, and pushed aside the heavy screen of creepers which were suspended from the limbs of the trees which they draped.

The chevalier did not forget to beat the bushes with his staff, crying out in a loud voice, "Out, ye serpents, out!"

With the exception of the voice of the Gascon, there was not a sound.

The sun rose; the air, freshened by the plenteous dew of the night, and by the sea breeze, was impregnated with the aromatic odors of the forest, and its tropical flowers. The rest was still plunged in the shadow when the chevalier entered it.

For some time the profound silence reigning in this imposing solitude was only broken by the blows of the chevalier's staff on the bushes, and by his repeated cries, "Out, ye serpents, out!"

Little by little these sounds grew fainter and then ceased all at once.

The gloomy and profound silence which reigned was suddenly broken in upon by a kind of savage howl which had in it nothing human. This sound, and the first rays of the sun trembling on the horizon, like a sheaf of light, appeared to rouse the inhabitants of the great forest. They responded one after another until the uproar became infernal. The chattering of monkeys; the cry of wildcats; the hissing of serpents; the grunts of wild boars; the bellowing of cattle, broke from every direction with a frightful chorus; the echoes of the forest and the cliffs repeated these discordant sounds; one would have supposed a band of demons was responding to a superior demon's call.

CHAPTER VII

THE CAVERN

While the chevalier sought a road to Devil's Cliff by which to traverse the forest, we will conduct our readers toward the most southern portion of the coast of Martinique.

The sea rolled with slow majesty at the foot of large rocks near a peak which formed a natural defense to this part of the island, and which rose in a perpendicular wall some two hundred feet in height. The continued beating of the waves rendered this coast so dangerous that a vessel could not touch at this place without being, inevitably, broken to pieces.

The site of which we speak had a wild and grand simplicity; a wall of barren rocks, of a dull red, was outlined on a sky of sapphire blue; their base was swallowed up in a whirl of snowy foam, hidden by the incessant shock of enormous mountains of water which broke upon these reefs in tones of thunder. The sun with all its strength threw a brilliant, torrid light on this mass of granite; there was not a cloud in the brazen heavens. On the horizon there appeared through a burning vapor the high land of the other Antilles.

At some distance from the coast, where the waves broke, the sea was of a somber blue, and as calm as a mirror. An object scarcely perceptible, because it offered little surface above the water, approached rapidly the portion of this island called Cabesterre.

Little by little, a long, light canoe was to be distinguished, whose stern and bow cut the sea evenly; this vessel, without sails, was impelled forward by the strength of the waves. On each seat was clearly seen a man vigorously rowing. Whether or not the coast was as unapproachable at three leagues as at this place, it was evident that the canoe was directed toward these rocks.

The object of those who were approaching seemed to be hard to understand. Presently the canoe was caught in the midst of the surf beating upon these reefs. Had it not been for the marvelous ability of its pilot, who avoided these masses of water following the frail bark and incessantly menacing it, she would very soon have been swallowed up.

At two gunshots from the rocks, the canoe reversed and rested, and took advantage of an interval in the succession of waves, at a moment of calm, which occurred periodically after seven or eight waves had broken into foam.

The two men, who by their clothing were easily seen to be European sailors, pressing their caps more securely on their heads, sprang overboard and boldly struck out for the shore while their companions turned at the edge of this calm, regained the open, and disappeared after having braved anew the fury of the mountainous waves with wonderful skill.

During this time the two intrepid swimmers, by turn submerged or cast up from the midst of the enormous waves which they adroitly traversed, arrived at the foot of the rocks in the center of a sea of foam. They appeared to be rushing upon certain death, and it looked as if they would be dashed to pieces upon the reefs. Nothing of the sort occurred, however. These two men seemed to perfectly understand the coast; they directed their course toward a place where the violence of the waves had hollowed out a natural grotto.

The waves, engulfing themselves under this roof with a horrible din fell back from it in a cataract into a smaller basin, hollow and deep. After some heavy undulations, the waves grew feebler; in the center of a gigantic cavern formed a little subterranean lake which, when full, returned to the sea by some hidden channel.

It required great temerity to so abandon themselves to the impulse of these furious waves which precipitated them into the abyss; but this momentary submersion was more frightful than dangerous; the mouth of the cave was so large that there was no danger of being bruised by the rocks, and the cloud of foam threw them into the midst of a peaceful pond, surrounded by a fine, sandy beach.

Sifting through the fall of water which bubbled at the entrance of this enormous roof, the light was feeble, soft, and bluish like that of the moon.

The two swimmers, breathless, deafened and wounded by the shook of the waves, emerged from the little lake and stretched themselves on the sand, where they rested for some time.

The larger of these two men, though he was dressed like a common sailor, was Colonel Rutler, a stanch partisan of the new King of England, William of Orange, under whose orders he had served when the son-in-law of the unfortunate James II. was only a stadtholder of Holland. Colonel Rutler was robust and tall; his face wore an expression of audacity, bordering on cruelty; his hair, lying in close, damp meshes, was of a deep red; his mustache of the same color hid a large mouth overshadowed by a hooked nose, resembling the beak of a bird of prey.

Rutler, a faithful and resolute man, served his master with blind devotion. William of Orange had testified his confidence in him by intrusting to him a mission as difficult as it was dangerous, the nature of which we shall know later on. The sailor who accompanied the colonel was slight but vigorous, active and determined.

The colonel said to him in English, after a moment's silence, "Are you sure, John, that there is a passage leading from here?"

"The passage exists, colonel, be easy on that score."

"But I do not perceive any –"

"By and by, colonel, when your view shall have become accustomed to this half light, like that of the moon, you will lay yourself down flat on your stomach, and there, at the right, at the end of a long natural passage in which one cannot advance except by crawling, you will perceive the light of day which penetrates through a crevasse in the rock."

"If the road is sure, it certainly is not easy."

"So far from easy, colonel, that I defy the captain of the brigantine who brought you to the Barbadoes, with his great stomach, to enter the passage which remains for us to travel. It is as much as I could do heretofore to glide through; it is the size of the tunnel of a chimney."

"And it leads?"

"To the bottom of a precipice which forms a defense for Devil's Cliff; three sides of this precipice are a peak, and it is as impossible to descend as to ascend it; but as to the fourth side, it is not inaccessible, and with the help of the jutting rocks one can reach by this road the limits of the park of Blue Beard."

"I understand – this subterranean passage will conduct us to the bottom of the abyss above which towers Devil's Cliff?"

"Exactly, colonel; it is as if we were at the bottom of a moat, one of whose sides is perpendicular and the other sloping. When I say sloping, that is simply a figure of speech, for in order to reach the summit of the peak, one must more than once hang suspended by some vine between heaven and earth. But when there, we find ourselves at the edge of the park of Devil's Cliff – once there, we can hide ourselves in some place and wait our opportunity –"

"And this opportunity is not far distant; come, come, you, who know so much, must, at one time, have been in the service of Blue Beard!"

"I told you, colonel, I came from the coast with her and her first husband; at the end of three months, they sent me back; then I left for San Domingo. I have heard no further word of them."

"And she – would you know her well?"

"Yes, as to her height and general air, but not her face; for we reached the coast at night, and once on shore she was carried in a litter to Devil's Cliff. When by chance she walked in the daytime, she wore a mask. Some say she is as beautiful as an angel; others, that she is ugly as a monster. I cannot say which are in the right, for neither I nor my mates ever put foot in the interior of the mansion. Those who perform the special attendance and service are mulattresses as mute as fish."

"And he?"

"He is handsome, tall and slender, about thirty-six years old, brown, with black hair and mustache, and has an aquiline nose."

"It is certainly he," said the colonel, when John had thus described him. "It is thus that he was always described; and it is not positively known that he is dead?"

"It is said he died on the voyage, but no one has ever really known."

"And no one doubts that he died?"

"Faith! no, colonel, because Blue Beard has been married twice since then."

"And have you seen these two husbands?"

"No, colonel, for when I arrived from San Domingo, only eight days since, you engaged me for this expedition, knowing that I could serve you. You have promised me fifty guineas if I will introduce you into this island, in spite of the French cruisers, which, since the war, do not allow any vessels to approach the coast, which is accessible, be it understood. Our canoe, however, was not interfered with, for, thanks to the sharp rocks of Cabesterre, no one could conceive that we could land on this coast of the island, and they have not watched that."

"And then, beside, no one would suspect our presence on the island, though, according to what you tell me, Blue Beard has a kind of police who keep her informed of the arrival of all strangers."

"At least, colonel, they say that the men who are so employed, at St. Pierre and Fort Royal, were on the watch and that a stranger who landed at Martinique did not escape their vigilance."

"All that is for the best; you shall have your fifty guineas. But, once more, you are very sure about this subterranean passage?"

"Be easy as to that, colonel; I have passed through it, I tell you, with a negro who was a pearl-fisher, and he it was who first took me through it."

"But you were obliged to climb the precipice in order to reach the park of Devil's Cliff?"

"Doubtless, colonel; since it was from curiosity to see this park, in which no one was permitted to enter, that I accepted the pearl-fisher's offer; being of the household, I knew Blue Beard and her husband were absent; I was then sure that I could pass through the garden after climbing the precipice; that was what we did, not without the risk of breaking our necks, however, a thousand times, but what would you have? I was dying with curiosity to see the interior of this place, which had been forbidden. It was a perfect paradise. What was most amusing was the surprise of the mulattress who guarded the entrance; when she saw us, myself and the negro, she could not conceive how we had been able to enter. We told her we had escaped her notice. She believed us; she put us out as quickly as possible, and she committed suicide rather than be punished by her employers."

After a few minutes' silence the colonel said abruptly, "This is not all; now there is no retreat, I must tell you everything."

"What then, colonel?"

"Once introduced into Devil's Cliff, we have a man to surprise and overcome; whatever he does to defend himself, a hair of his head must not be harmed, at least, unless he absolutely forces us to protect our lives; then," continued the colonel, with a sinister smile, "then two hundred guineas for you, whether we succeed or not."

"A thousand devils! you have waited rather long to say this to me, colonel. But, as the wine is drawn, it must be quaffed."

"Come, I did not deceive myself, you are a brave man."

"Ah, as to that, is the man whom you seek also strong and brave?"

"Well," said Rutler, after some minutes of reflection, "consider a little the first husband of the widow – a man tall and slender."

"The devil! he was slender, 'tis true; a rod of steel is, also, slender, but that does not prevent its being furiously strong. See here, colonel, that man was made of iron. He was so strong that I have seen him take an insolent negro by the middle and throw him ten feet from him, as if he were an infant,

though the black was larger and more robust than you. So, colonel, if the man you seek resembles that one, we would be unwise to bait him – as you say – "

"Less than you believe. I will explain to you – "

"And then," continued John, "if by chance the filibuster, the buccaneer or the cannibal who they say frequently visit the widow, should also be there, it would become somewhat embarrassing."

"Hear me; after what you have told me is there at the end of the park a tree where one could hide?"

"Yes, colonel."

"With the exception of the buccaneer, the filibuster or the cannibal no one enters the private habitation of Blue Beard?"

"No one colonel except the mulattresses who wait upon her."

"And except also the man whom I seek, be it remembered; I have my reasons for believing we shall find him there."

"Well, colonel?"

"Then nothing is simpler; we will hide ourselves in the thickest tree until our man comes to our side."

"That cannot fail to occur colonel because the park is not large and when one walks in it he is forced to pass near a marble basin not very far from the place where we shall be hidden."

"If our man does not take a walk after night comes, we will wait until he has gone to bed, and we will surprise him there."

"This will be easy, colonel, unless he calls one of Blue Beard's comforters to his succor."

"Be easy about that; for with your assistance I can place my hand on him and then though he were surrounded by a hundred men armed to the teeth he is mine; I have a sure means of obliging him to obey me; this concerns me. All that I require of you is to conduct me into the ambush from which I can spring upon him suddenly."

"This shall be done, colonel."

"Then let us be going," said Rutler, rising from the ground.

"At your orders, colonel; but instead of walking, we must creep. But let us see," continued John, bending down, "if we can perceive the daylight. Yes, it is there – but how distant it seems. Speaking of that, colonel, if, since I came by this road, it should have been stopped up by a landslide, we should cut, in such a case, a sorry figure! condemned to remain here, and to die of hunger or to eat each other! Impossible to get out by the gulf, seeing that one cannot remount a sheet of water as a trout ascends a cascade."

"That is true," said Rutler, "you appal me; happily, there is no likelihood of this. You have the sack?"

"Yes, colonel; the straps are strong and the skin impervious. We shall find our knives, our pistols and our cartridges in it as dry as though they came from an armory."

"Then, John, let us be starting; go ahead," said the colonel. "We must have time to dry our clothes."

"That will not take long, colonel; once at the foot of the precipice we shall be as in an oven; the sun shines full upon it."

John lay down on his face and commenced to glide into the passage, so small that he could scarcely enter. The darkness was profound; in the distance only, one could distinguish a faint light. The colonel followed, dragging himself over a damp and dirty soil.

For some time the two Englishmen advanced in this manner, crawling on their knees, on their hands, and on their stomachs, in total darkness. All at once John paused suddenly and cried in a frightened voice, "Colonel!"

"What is it?"

"Do you not notice a strong odor?"

"Yes, a fetid odor."

"Do not move; it is the serpent – 'Fer de lance' – we are lost."

"A serpent!" exclaimed the colonel, with horror.

"We are dead. I dare not advance; the odor is growing stronger and stronger," murmured John.

"Be quiet – listen."

In mortal terror the two men held their breath. All at once at some little distance they heard a continuous, rapid sound, as if something was beating the earth with a flail. The nauseating and penetrating odor which exhales from these large serpents became stronger and stronger. "The serpent is furious; it is his tail which is beating the earth thus," said John in a feeble voice. "Colonel, let us commend our souls to God!"

"Let us cry out and terrify the serpent," said Rutler.

"No, no, it would but precipitate itself at once upon us," replied John.

The two men remained for some moments a prey to the most horrible suspense. They could neither retreat nor change their position. Their chests rested upon the earth; their backs touched the rocks. They dared not make a movement of recoil for fear of drawing the reptile in pursuit of them. The air, more and more impregnated by the infectious odor of the serpent, became suffocating.

"Can you not find a stone at hand in order to throw at it," said the colonel in a low tone.

Hardly had he said these words when John uttered the most piercing cries and struggled violently, exclaiming, "Help! help! I die!"

Paralyzed with terror, Rutler strove to turn about, but he struck himself violently on the head against the side of the passage. Then, retreating as rapidly as he could with the assistance of his knees and hands, he sought flight by backing out, while John, in extremity with the serpent, made the most terrible and pitiful cries of terror and suffering. All at once these cries became fainter and inarticulate, as if the sailor was strangling. In fact, the enraged serpent, after having, in the obscurity, stung John in the hand, the throat and face, attempted to introduce its flat and lance-like head into the open mouth of the unfortunate man, and stung his lips and tongue; but this last assault finished the sailor.

The serpent, having satisfied his rage, withdrew his horrible fangs and took to flight. The colonel felt a damp, icy body touch his cheek; he remained motionless. The serpent glided rapidly along the side of the subterranean passage and escaped.

The danger past, the colonel remained some moments petrified with terror; he heard the last struggle of John; his agony was short. Rutler heard him make several convulsive shudders and that was all. His companion was dead. Then Rutler advanced and seized the sailor's leg. The leg was already cold and stiff; for the venom of the serpent works rapidly.

A new cause for fear assailed the colonel. The serpent, not finding an egress in the cavern, might return the same way it had gone. Rutler seemed already to hear a slight noise behind him. He could not proceed in advance, because the body of the sailor completely blocked the passage; flight by the rear was only to expose himself to an encounter with the serpent. In his terror the colonel seized the corpse by the two legs, to the end that he might drag it to the entrance of the subterranean passage and thus clear the only outlet to the cavern. His efforts were in vain. Whether his strength was paralyzed, he being in such a cramped position, or whether the poison had already distended the body, Rutler could not extricate it.

Not wishing to think that this only and last chance for salvation was taken from him, he found a means of detaching his belt and of fastening it to the feet of the dead man; he took it between his teeth, and, aiding himself by his two hands, pulled with all the energy of despair. He could scarcely cause even the slightest movement of the corpse. His terror increased; he sought his knife, in the mad idea of cutting up the body of the sailor. He saw soon the uselessness of this attempt.

The pistols and ammunition of the colonel were in the sack of skin swung over the shoulders of the dead man. He set himself to work to remove the sack from his companion; he did so after great difficulty. He then set himself anew to retreat to the entrance of the passage.

Once again in the cavern he felt faint, but the air revived him; he plunged his head into the cold water and seated himself on the sand. He had almost forgotten the serpent. A long hiss caused him to raise his head; he saw the reptile balancing itself a few paces above him, half coiled up on the rocks which formed the roof of the cavern.

The colonel recovered his coolness at the sight of this danger; remaining almost immovable, and using his hands only, he unfastened his pouch and drew from it a pistol and cocked it. Happily the charge and priming were intact.

At the moment that the serpent, irritated by the movement of Rutler, precipitated itself upon him, the latter aimed and fired. The serpent fell at his feet with his head crushed. It was of a blue-black, spotted with yellow, and some eight or nine feet in length.

Delivered from this enemy, and encouraged by his success the colonel made a final effort to clear out the only path by which he could pass. He glided anew into the passage, but, in spite of his strength, his efforts were in vain – he could not move the corpse of the sailor.

Returning to the cave, he examined it in every direction but could find no outlet. He could not hope for help outside; his shouts could not be heard. At this terrible thought his eyes fell upon the serpent. Here was a momentary resource; he knew that sometimes the famished negroes ate this flesh, which, though repulsive, was not poisonous.

Night came, and he found himself in profound darkness. The waves murmured and broke at the entrance of the cave; the waterspout precipitated itself with a crash into the lower basin.

A new fear took possession of Rutler. He knew that the serpents went in pairs and often rejoined each other at night; drawn by the tracks, the male or female of the reptile which he had killed would come in search of its mate.

The colonel's vigil became frightful. The slightest sound made him tremble, in spite of his courageous nature; he asked himself whether, in case he came through this horrible situation by a miracle, he should continue the enterprise he had commenced. At first he believed that he saw, in this adventure, a warning from heaven; then he accused himself of cowardice, and attributed his mad fears to the feeble condition in which he found himself.

Leaving the colonel in this difficult strait, we will transport our reader to Devil's Cliff.

CHAPTER VIII

DEVIL'S CLIFF

The moon, brilliant and pure, shed a light almost as strong as the European sun, and enabled one to distinguish perfectly the top of a very high rock, and surrounded by woods on all sides of a dwelling built of brick, and of peculiar architecture.

One could reach it only by a narrow path, forming a spiral around this species of cone. The path was bounded on one side by a mass of perpendicular granite; on the other by a precipice of which in the broad daylight one could not discover the bottom.

This dangerous road terminated in a platform crossed by a brick wall, of great thickness and edged with spikes.

Back of this species of glacis arose the walls surrounding the dwelling, into which one entered by a very low oak door. This door communicated with a large, square court, occupied by the outbuildings and other buildings. This court passed, one discovered a vaulted passageway leading to the sanctuary; that is to say, to the pavilion occupied by Blue Beard. None of the blacks or mulattoes who formed the large force of servants of the house had ever passed the limits of this passageway. The serving of Blue Beard was done through the intermediary of a number of mulattresses, who alone communicated with their mistress.

The house was built on a slope opposite the one by which access was had from the cliff. This slope, much less steep, and laid out in a number of natural terraces, was composed of five or six immense steps which, on all sides, commanded the precipice.

By a phenomenon frequent in these volcanic islands, a pond of about two acres' circumference covered almost all the length of one of the upper terraces. Its waters were limpid and pure. Blue Beard's residence was separated from this small lake by a narrow path of smooth sand, shining like silver. This house was of one story. At the first glance it seems to be constructed entirely of trees from which the bark had been removed. Its bamboo roof was steeply inclined and overlapped by some five or six feet the outer wall, which rested upon the trunks of palm trees driven into the ground, and formed a kind of gallery around the house.

A little above the level of the lake, in gentle declivity, was a lawn of turf as fresh and green as that of the most beautiful English fields; this was a rare thing at the Antilles, and was due to underground irrigation which flowed from the lake and gave to this park a delightful freshness. From this lawn, ornamented by baskets of tropical flowers, opened a garden composed of large variegated shrubs, the slope of the ground being such that one did not see their trunks, but only their enameled tops of the freshest color; then, beyond these trees, on a terrace lower still, was a large orange and citron grove covered with fruit and flowers. In the daytime, seen thus from above, one would have said it was a carpet of perfumed snow strewn with golden balls. At the extreme horizon the slender stems of the banana and cocoanut trees, formed a splendid retreat and overlooked the precipice at the bottom of which was the subterranean passage of which we have spoken, and in which Colonel Rutler was then imprisoned.

Meantime, let us enter one of the most remote portions of this mansion. There we will find a young woman of from twenty to twenty-three years; but her features are so infantile, her figure is so tiny, her freshness so youthful, she would easily pass for sixteen. Robed in a muslin gown with flowing sleeves, she is reclining on a sofa covered with Indian silk, brown in color, embroidered with golden flowers; she leans her white forehead on one hand, half-hidden by a wilderness of loose curls of reddish blond tint, for the young woman's hair is dressed *à la Titus*, a profusion of silky curls falls on her neck, her snowy shoulders, and frames her charming little face, rounded, firm and rosy as that of a child.

A large book, bound in red morocco, lies at the side of the divan on which she is stretched, and is open before her. The young woman reads attentively, by the light of three perfumed candles, which rest in a little silver gilt candelabra, enriched by exquisite chasing.

The eyelashes of the pretty reader are so long that they throw a slight shadow on her cheeks, where are to be seen two charming dimples. Her nose is of a rare delicacy; her mouth curved and crimson, and her beautiful blue eyes large and expressive; her whole face presents a ravishing expression of innocence and candor. From the edge of her muslin gown appear two feet like Cinderella's, shod in white silk hose and Moorish slippers of cherry satin embroidered with silver, which one could hold in the palm of one's hand. The attitude of this young woman leaves to the imagination an exquisite whole, in spite of her slight figure. Thanks to the width of her sleeve, which has fallen back, one can admire the ravishing outline of a rounded arm, polished like ivory, and having at the elbow a charming dimple. Her hand which turns the leaves of her book is worthy of such an arm; the nails, very long and of the transparency of agate. The tips of the fingers shade to a deep rose color, such as is imparted by the henna of the Orientals.

The figure of this charming creature recalls the ideal Psyche, the lovely realization of a beauty so fleeting that it passes with the first flower of youth. Certain organizations retain their first youth a long time, and as we have said, in spite of her twenty-three years, Blue Beard is of the number of these privileged persons.

For this is Blue Beard. We will no longer hide the name of the inmate of Devil's Cliff from our readers, but will say she is called Angela. Unfortunately, this celestial name, this candid face, contrasts singularly with the diabolical reputation which this widow of three husbands possesses; and who it is said has as many consolers as she has had husbands. The course of this story will enable us to condemn or vindicate Blue Beard.

At a slight sound which she hears in the adjoining room, Angela lifts her head suddenly, like a gazelle on the alert, and seats herself on the edge of the sofa, throwing back her locks by a graceful movement.

At the moment she rises, exclaiming, "It is he!" a man raises the *portière* of the room. Not sooner does the iron fly to the magnet than does Angela to the newcomer. She throws herself into his arms, and twining them about him in a kind of tender fury, covered him with caresses and passionate kisses, and joyfully cries, "My tender friend – my dear James!"

This first ebullition over, the newcomer takes Angela into his arms as if she were a child, and carries his precious burden over to the sofa. Then Angela, seated on his knee, takes one of his hands in hers, passes her beautiful arm about his neck, draws his head to her, and looked at him with eager delight.

Alas! were the scandal-mongers right in suspecting Blue Beard's morality?

The man whom she receives with such familiar ardor is of the copper color of a mulatto; he is tall and supple, active and robust; his noble and fine features show nothing of the negro type; a profusion of jet black curls frame his forehead; his eyes are large and of velvety blackness; under his thin lips, red and moist, shine the most beautifully enameled teeth. This beauty, at once charming and manly, this appearance of strength and elegance, resembles the noble proportions of an Indian Bacchus or of an Antinous.

The mulatto's costume is such as certain filibusters then generally adopt when on shore. He wears a waistcoat of rich maroon velvet, with buttons of filigree gold; large Flemish boots of like material and ornamented with the same style of button, which extend the length of the thigh, being met by a belt of orange silk, in which is stuck a poignard richly chased; and, finally, long leggings of white kid embroidered in many colored silks after the Mexican style, show a leg of the finest outline.

Nothing could be more striking or pretty than the contrast between James and Angela thus grouped. On the one hand, blond tresses, alabaster tints, rosy cheeks, infantile grace and elegance; on the other, the bronze tint, ebony locks, and manner at once assured and manly.

Angela's white dress is outlined on the somber colors of James' vestments; and thus the fine and supple figure of Blue Beard is accentuated.

Fixing her great blue eyes on the black eyes of the mulatto, the young woman amuses herself by turning back the embroidered collar of James' shirt, in order to admire the better his sunburned neck, which in color and shape rivals the most beautiful Florentine bronze.

After prolonging this unconventional performance, Angela gives the mulatto a noisy kiss under his ear, takes his head between her two hands, mischievously rumples up his black locks, gives him a little blow on the cheek, and says, "That is how I love you, Monsieur Hurricane."

A slight sound is heard behind the tapestry forming the *portière*, and Angela calls, "Is it you, Mirette? what do you wish?"

"Madame, I am coming with the flowers and will arrange them in the stand."

"She hears us!" said Angela, making a mysterious signal to the mulatto; then she amuses herself laughing madly at and rumpling her lover's hair. He takes her little caprices with complaisance, and contemplates her with love. Then he says, smilingly,

"Child! because you look only sixteen, you think everything is permitted you." Then he adds in a tone of gentle raillery, "and who would think, seeing this little rosy, ingenuous face that I hold on my knees the most notable scamp of the Antilles?"

"And who would think that this man, who speaks in so sweet a voice, is the ferocious Captain Hurricane, the terror of England and Spain?" cried Angela, breaking into a laugh. The mulatto and the widow express themselves in the purest French, and without the slightest foreign accent.

"What matters it," she cries, smilingly, "it is not *I* whom they call Blue Beard."

At these words which appear to call up sad memories, the little widow, with a coquettish pout, gave a hardly perceptible tap to the end of Captain Hurricane's nose, indicating by a movement of her hand that in the neighboring room one can hear him, and says with a mischievous air, "That will teach you to speak of trespassing."

"Fie! the monster!" says the captain, breaking into a laugh; "and what of remorse, then, madame?"

"Give me a kiss of remorse, then, and I shall –"

"May Lucifer assist me! It takes a woman to be chief of criminals! Ah, my dear, you are well named; you make me tremble! Suppose we have supper."

Angela touches a bell. The young mulattress who had overheard the above conversation enters. She wears a dress of white linen with bright stripes, and has silver rings on arms and ankles.

"Mirette, have you arranged the flowers," said Blue Beard.

"Yes, madame."

"You have been listening?"

"No, madame."

"However, it does not matter; when I speak it is that I may be heard. Make ready the supper, Mirette."

Then, addressing herself to the captain, "What wine do you prefer?"

"Sherry, but let it be iced; this is a notion of mine."

Mirette goes out for a moment, and shortly reappears and begins to prepare the table.

"By the way, I forgot to tell you of a great event," says Blue Beard's companion.

"What then? has one of my deceased husbands returned to life?"

"Faith, almost."

"Now? Ah, Master James, Master James, no more of your wicked pleasantries," cries Angela, with a frightened air.

"No, it is not a dead man, a ghost, but a very living pretender who demands your hand in marriage."

"He wishes to marry me?"

"He wishes to marry you."

"Oh, the unhappy wretch! is he then weary of life?" cried Angela, laughing.

Mirette, at these words, makes the sign of the cross while superintending the spreading of the board by two other mulattresses who are carrying bottles of Bohemian glass, engraved with golden arabesques, and plates of the most magnificent Japanese porcelain.

Blue Beard continues, "This lover of mine is not a countryman, then?"

"By no means! for in spite of your wealth, my dear, I defy you to find a *fourth* husband, thanks to your diabolical reputation."

"Where does he come from, this would-be husband, my dear James?"

"From France."

"France! he comes from France to espouse me, the deuce!"

"Angela, you know that I do not like to hear you swear," says the mulatto, with pretended seriousness.

"Pardon, Captain Hurricane," replies the young woman, dropping her eyes with a hypocritical air. "I only meant to signify that I find your news very astonishing. It appears that my reputation has reached Europe."

"Do not be so vain, my dear. It was on board the Unicorn that this worthy paladin heard you spoken of, and by the mere mention of your riches he has become enamored, yes, madly enamored of you. This, I trust, will take down your pride."

"The impertinent fellow! and who is this man, James?"

"The Chevalier de Croustillac."

"Who?"

"The Chevalier de Croustillac."

"This is the name of the pretender to my hand?" And Angela breaks into a merry peal of laughter which nothing can arrest, and the mulatto finally joins in her merriment.

The two have scarcely subsided when Mirette enters preceded by two other mulattresses who carry a table sumptuously set out in gilded dishes. The two slaves place the table near the divan; the captain arises to take a chair, while Angela, kneeling on the edge of the sofa, uncovers the dishes one after another, and examines the table with the air of an epicurean kitten.

"Are you hungry, James? As for me, I am famished," says Angela. And as if to prove without doubt this assertion, she opens her coral lips and shows two rows of ravishing little pearly teeth which she clinches twice.

"Angela, my dear, you were certainly badly brought up," said the captain, helping her to a portion of dorado, served with ham and an appetizing sauce.

"Captain Hurricane, if I receive you at my table, it is not that you may scold," said Angela, making an almost imperceptible grimace to the mulattress. Then she continues, attacking her fish bravely, and pecking at her bread like a bird, "If he scolds me, Mirette, I will not receive him again?"

"No, mistress," said Mirette.

"And I will give his place to Rend-your-soul, the buccaneer?"

"Yes, mistress."

"Or to Youmäale, the cannibal?"

"Yes, mistress."

"You hear that, sir?" said Angela.

"Never mind, my dear, I am not jealous, you know that; beauty is as the sun, it shines for all the world."

"Because you are not jealous, then, I will pardon you. Help yourself to what is before you. What is that, Mirette?"

"Madame, the roe of fish fried in pigeon's fat."

"Which is not equal to the fat of quail," says the captain, "but it must have the juice of a lemon while it is warm."

"See what a glutton! Ah! but my future spouse, I had forgotten him. Pour me some wine, Mirette."

The filibuster, corsair as he is, forestalls the mulattress and pours out some iced sherry for Angela.

"It must be that I love you, to drink this, I who prefer the wines of France." And Blue Beard drinks resolutely three drops of the sherry, which puts fresh life into her lips and blue eyes and tinged her cheeks a carmine hue.

"But to return to my future spouse. How is he? Is he agreeable? Is he worthy to join the others?"

Mirette, in spite of her passive submission, cannot prevent a tremor in hearing her mistress speak thus, although the poor slave must be accustomed to these atrocious pleasantries, and doubtless many greater enormities.

"What ails you, Mirette?"

"Nothing, mistress."

"If you are unwell – "

"No, mistress."

"You would be sorry to see me marry again? I shall not do so for a long time. Go, child." Then, addressing Captain Hurricane, "And the Chevalier de – de – what did you say was his name?"

"Chevalier de Croustillac."

"Have you seen him?"

"No; but knowing his plans and that he intends, at all hazards, and in spite of the efforts of the good Father Griffen, to come here, I begged Youmääle, the cannibal," says the captain, looking at Angela in a singular way, "to address a little warning in order to induce him to renounce his projects."

"And you did this without letting me know, sir? What if I do not wish to rebuff him, this pretender; for, after all, this Croustillac is a Gascon, and I never married a Gascon."

"Oh, he is the most famous Gascon that has ever gasconaded on the earth; with that, a figure indescribable and assurance unbounded; and as to the rest, sufficient courage."

"And Youmääle's warning?"

"Has accomplished nothing. It glided off the undaunted soul of this man as a ball from the scales of a crocodile; he started out this morning bravely, at break of day, to traverse the forest, with his pink silk hose, his rapier at his side, and a staff to frighten the serpents. He is still there, without doubt, at this hour, for the road to Devil's Cliff is not known to all the world."

"James, I have an idea!" cries the widow joyfully; "let him come here and amuse us; that we may torment him. So, he is in love with my riches and not myself! So, he would espouse me, this fine knight errant. We will see as to that! Well? You do not laugh at my idea, James. What ails you? But moreover, you know, sir, that I will not be thwarted; I will make a feast for this Gascon. If he is not devoured by the wildcats or killed by the serpents I will have him here to-morrow. You go to sea to-morrow; tell the cannibal and Rend-your-soul to bring him to me."

The captain, instead of joining in the gayety of Blue Beard, according to his custom, is serious, pensive, and seems to reflect deeply.

"James! James! do you not hear me?" cries Angela, impatiently, tapping her foot. "I want this Gascon. I want him."

The mulatto makes no reply; he draws with the forefinger of his right hand a circle about his throat, and looks significantly at the young woman. She understands this mysterious sign; her face all at once expresses both sorrow and distress; she rises suddenly, runs to the mulatto, falls on her knees before him and cries in a touching voice, "You are right. My God! you are right! I am insane to entertain such a thought. I understand you."

"Rise, Angela, calm yourself," says the mulatto. "I do not know if this man is to be feared, but he is a stranger, he may come from England or France, and – "

"I tell you I was mad! that I was jesting, my dear James! I forgot that which I never ought to forget – it is frightful."

The beautiful eyes of the young woman fill with tears; she bends her head, and takes the hand of the mulatto, over which she weeps silently for some minutes.

Hurricane kisses tenderly the forehead and tresses of Angela, and says gently, "I never wish to recall these cruel memories. I should have said nothing to you, assured myself that there is no danger in bringing this imbecile to you as a plaything, and then – "

"James, my friend," cries Angela sadly, interrupting the mulatto, "my love, what do you think then? for a childish caprice that I would expose you, you whom I love most dearly in the world?"

"There! there! be calm," replies the mulatto, lifting her up and seating her near him; "do not be frightened; Father Griffen has informed himself as to the Gascon, he is only ridiculous. In order to be more certain, I will go to-morrow and speak with him at Macouba, and then I will tell Rend-your-soul, who is fortunately hunting on the coast, to discover this poor devil in the forest, where he has, no doubt, lost himself. If he is dangerous," says the mulatto, making a sign to Angela (for the slaves were still present awaiting the conclusion of supper), "the buccaneer will relieve us of him and cure him of the desire to know you; if not, as you never have any amusement here, he shall bring him to you."

"No, no, I do not wish it," says Angela. "All the thoughts which come to me, now are of mortal sadness – my disquietude returns."

Angela, seeing that the mulatto would not eat any more, arose; the filibuster imitated her, and says, "Reassure yourself, my Angela, there is nothing to fear. Come into the garden, the night is fine, the moon magnificent. Tell Mirette to bring my lute; in order to make you forget these painful thoughts I will sing you the Scotch ballads you love so."

So saying, the mulatto passes one arm around the figure of Angela, and clasping her thus, he descends the few steps leading to the garden. On leaving the apartment Blue Beard says to her slave, "Mirette, bring the lute into the garden, light the alabaster lamp in my bed-chamber. You can go, I shall not need you again to-night. Do not forget to say to Cora and to the other mulattresses that to-morrow begins their service." Then she disappears, leaning on the arm of the mulatto. This last order of Angela was occasioned by a habit she has had, since her last widowhood, of alternating every three days the service of her women.

Mirette carries a very beautiful ebony lute incrustated with gold and mother of pearl, into the garden. After an interval of some moments, the filibuster's voice is heard singing with infinite grace and pathos the Scotch ballads which the chief of royalist clans always sang in preference during the protectorate of Cromwell. The voice of the mulatto is at once sweet, vibrant and melancholy.

Mirette and the two slaves listen with delight during some moments. At the last lines, the voice of the filibuster becomes moved, tears seem to mingle in it – then the songs cease.

Mirette enters Blue Beard's chamber in order to light the alabaster lamp, which throws a soft and veiled light on the surrounding objects. This room is splendidly furnished in Indian stuff with white ground embroidered with flowers; a mosquito net of muslin, fine as a spider's web, envelopes an immense bed of gilded wood with a headboard of plate-glass, which appears thus in a slight mist.

After executing the orders of her mistress, Mirette withdraws discreetly, and says to the two slaves with a malicious smile, "Mirette lights the lamp for the captain, Cora for the buccaneer, and Noun for the Caribbean."

The two slaves nod their heads with an intelligent air, and the three go out, after carefully closing and locking the door which leads to the outbuilding of this special domain of Blue Beard.

CHAPTER IX

NIGHT

We had left the chevalier when he had penetrated into the forest, which was alive with the cries of all the animals which peopled it. For a moment stunned by the tumult, the Gascon bravely pursued his course, turning his steps ever toward the north, at least toward what he believed to be so, thanks to his astronomical knowledge. As the priest had foretold, he could not find any path through the forest; decayed vegetation, tall shrubs, vines, trunks of trees, an inextricable undergrowth, covered the ground; the trees were so thick that the air, light and sun, penetrated with difficulty through this veil of foliage, among which exhaled a warm moisture almost suffocating produced by the fermentation of vegetable matter which to a great extent thickly covered the earth.

The heavy perfume of tropical flowers so saturated this suffocating atmosphere that the chevalier experienced a kind of intoxication, of faintness. He walked with a slower step, he felt his head become heavy, exterior objects became indifferent to him. He no longer admired the leafy colonades stretching out as far as the eye could see, into the shadows of the forest. He cast a careless glance at the sparkling and varied plumage of the parrots, birds of paradise and other birds joyfully crying out and pursuing the golden-winged insects or snapping in their beaks the aromatic woods of the Indies. The gambols of the monkeys, balancing themselves on the garlands of passion vines, or springing from tree to tree, did not even bring a smile to his lips. Completely absorbed, he had strength only to contemplate the end of his perilous journey. He thought only of Blue Beard and her treasures.

After some hours' walk, he began to observe that his silk stockings were inconvenient for traversing a forest. A large branch of thorny wood had made a great hole in his coat; his breeches were not irreproachable by any means; and more than once, feeling his long sword embarrass him by catching in some plants which obstructed his path, he involuntarily turned to chastise the importunate object which took the liberty of interfering with his progress.

Either by chance, or thanks to the frequent use of his staff, with which he beat the bushes continually, the chevalier had the good fortune not to encounter any serpents. Toward noon, worried and fatigued, he paused in order to pick some bananas, and climbed a tree in order to breakfast at his ease. To his joy and surprise he found that the leaves of this tree, rolled into cornucopias, held clear water, fresh and delicious to the taste; the chevalier drank several of those, put his remaining bananas into his pocket, and continued his journey.

According to his calculation, he must have traveled nearly four leagues, and could not be very far from Devil's Cliff. Unhappily the chevalier's calculation was not exact, at least, as to the direction in which he believed himself to have gone; for he had estimated the distance traversed correctly enough, but he was, at midday, a little further from Devil's Cliff than he had been when he entered the forest. In order not to lose sight of the sun (which he could with difficulty discern through the treetops), he had necessarily been obliged to lift his eyes frequently to the heavens. Now, the road was almost impenetrable, and he was also obliged to be on the watch for serpents; thus, divided between the sky and the earth, the attention of the chevalier went somewhat astray. However, as it was impossible to believe that he could a second time be deceived in his calculations, he took fresh courage, certain of reaching the end of his journey.

About three o'clock in the afternoon he commenced to suspect that Devil's Cliff receded in proportion to his approach. Croustillac became harassed; but the fear of passing the night in the forest spurred him on; by means of walking forward steadily he finally reached a kind of indentation between two large rocks. The chevalier drew his breath, expanding his lungs.

"Faith!" cried he, removing his hat and fanning himself with it, "I am then at Devil's Cliff. I seem to recognize it, though I have never seen it. I cannot, however, lose myself. I have love for a compass; one can follow this in the antipodes without deviating a hair's breadth. It is very simple; my

heart turns toward wealth and beauty, as the needle to the pole! for if Blue Beard is rich, she must be beautiful; and, further, a woman who can rid herself so quickly of three husbands must love change. I shall prove a new fruit to her – and what a fruit! After all, the three men who are dead got what they deserved, because they were in my path. What assures me of the physique of Blue Beard is that only a very pretty woman could permit herself such irregularities, such methods – a little offhand to be sure – of breaking the conjugal chain. Zounds! I shall see her, please her, seduce her. Poor woman! She does not dream that her conqueror is at hand! If – if – I wager that her little heart beats strongly this very moment. She feels my approach, she divines it, her presentiment does not deceive her. She will be overcome – happiness will arrive on the wings of love!"

Thus saying, the chevalier threw a glance on his toilet. It did not escape his notice that it was slightly disordered; his stockings, originally purple, then pale pink, had become striped, zebra-fashion, with a number of green rays, since his journey in the forest; his coat was ornamented with various holes fancifully arranged, but the Gascon made this reflection aloud, if not very modest, at least very consoling: "Faith! Venus arose from the sea without any covering; Truth had no more on when she emerged from the well; and if beauty and truth appeared without a veil, I see not why – love – Beside, Blue Beard must be a woman who will understand me!"

Completely reassured, the chevalier hastened his steps, climbed the face of the rocks, and found himself in an inclosure of the forest, even more somber and impenetrable than that which he had quitted. Others would have lost courage. Croustillac said to himself, on the contrary "Zounds! this is very clever. Hiding her habitation in the most dense forest is a woman's idea. I am sure the more I push on into these thickets the nearer I approach the house. I consider I have already arrived. Blue Beard, Blue Beard, finally I behold thee."

The chevalier cherished this precious illusion while the daylight lasted, which was not long; there is little twilight in the tropics. Soon the chevalier saw, with astonishment, the summits of the trees little by little obscure themselves, and assume a fantastic appearance in the great mass of the forest. For some moments there remained a half-shade, here and there lighted by the bright reflection of the sun, which seemed as red as the fire of a furnace, for he was "making his couch in the wind," as they say in the Antilles.

For a moment the vegetation, so brilliantly green, took on a purple tint; the chevalier believed that nature was painted a living red, what was perceived being a mingling with the tints of the heavens. "Zounds!" exclaimed the chevalier, "I did not deceive myself; I am near this infernal place, this illumination proves it. Lucifer is without doubt making a visit to Blue Beard, who, in order to receive him, is lighting the furnaces of her kitchen."

Little by little these warm tints disappeared, they became pale red, then violet, and were swallowed up in the amethyst of the evening skies. As soon as the shadows wrapped the forest in their arms, the plaintive cries of the jackals, the sinister hooting of the owls, proclaimed the return of night. The sea breeze, which always rises after the setting of the sun, passed like a great sigh over the tops of the trees; the leaves shivered. The thousand nameless, vague and distant cries which one hears only at night, began to resound from all quarters.

"Of a truth," said the chevalier, "this is a pretty figure to cut! To think I am not a hundred steps, perhaps, from Devil's Cliff, and that I am compelled to sleep under the stars!"

Croustillac, fearing the serpents, directed himself toward an enormous mahogany tree which he had observed; by the aid of the vines which enveloped this tree on all sides, he succeeded in reaching a kind of fork, formed by two large branches; here he installed himself, comfortably, placed his sword between his knees, and commenced a supper of the bananas, which fortunately, he had kept in his pockets. He did not experience any of the fears which would have assailed many men, even the bravest, placed in such a critical situation. Beside, in extreme cases the chevalier had all kinds of reasoning for his use; he said: "Fate is implacable against me, it chooses well – it cannot mistake –

instead of addressing itself to some rascal; to some wretch, what does it do? It bethinks itself of the Chevalier de Croustillac thus: 'Here is my man – he is worthy of struggling with me.'"

In the situation in which he found himself the chevalier saw another providential circumstance no less flattering to him. "My good fortune is assured," he said: "the treasures of Blue Beard are mine; this is the final trial to which the aforesaid Fate subjects me; it would be bad grace in me to revolt. A brave man does not complain. I could not merit the inestimable recompense which awaits me."

By means of these reflections the chevalier combated sleep with success; he feared if he yielded to it he would fall from the tree; he ended by being enchanted by the obstacles which he had surmounted in his course to Blue Beard. He would know how to value his courage, he thought, and be alive to his devotion. In this excess of chivalrous feeling, the chevalier regretted even that he has not had a serious enemy to combat and not to have had to struggle alone against pitfalls, thorns and the trunks of trees. At this moment a strange cry drew the adventurer's attention; he listened, and said, "What is that? One would think that the cats were holding their Sabbath. I know, now, because of these cats, that the house cannot be far distant." But Croustillac deceived himself. These were not domestic cats but wildcats, and never were tigers fiercer; they continued to make an infernal uproar. In order to quiet them, the chevalier took his staff and struck on the tree. The wildcats, instead of flying, approached him with furious and redoubled cries. For a long time these woods had been infested by these animals, who were not inferior to jaguars in size, strength and ferocity; they attacked and devoured young kids, goats, and even young mules.

In order to explain the hostile assault of these carnivorous beasts which surrounded the chevalier, who had been discovered by their powerful sense of scent, we must return to the cavern in which Colonel Rutler was immured. We know that the corpse of the sailor John, dead from the sting of the serpent, completely obstructed the subterranean passage by which Rutler could alone leave the cavern. The wildcats had descended the precipice, scented the corpse of John, approached it first timidly, then, emboldened, had devoured it. The colonel heard and knew not what to think of these ferocious cries. At daybreak, thanks to the gluttony of these animals, the obstacle which prevented Rutler from leaving the cavern had entirely disappeared. There remained in the subterranean passage only the bones of the sailor, and these the colonel could easily remove.

After this horrible feast, the wildcats, fed but not appeased by this new repast to them, felt a taste for human flesh; they abandoned the foot of the precipice, regained the wood, scented the chevalier, and their carnivorous ferocity was increased.

For some time fear withheld them, but, encouraged by the immobility of Croustillac, one of the boldest and most famished slowly climbed the tree, and the Gascon saw, all at once, near him two large, brilliant, green eyes, which shone out of the midst of the obscurity. At the same instant he felt a vigorous bite at the calf of his leg. He drew back his leg abruptly, but the wildcat held on and fastened its claws in his flesh, and gave a deep, furious growl which was the signal of attack. The assailants climbed up from all sides and the chevalier saw about him flaming eyes and felt himself bitten in many places at once.

This attack was so unexpected, the assailants were of such a singular kind, that Croustillac, in spite of his courage, remained for a moment stupefied; but the bites of the wildcats and, above all, his deep indignation at having to combat with such ignoble enemies, aroused his fury. He seized the most venturesome by the skin of his back, and in spite of several blows from his claws, threw him heavily against the trunk of the tree and broke his back. The cat gave some frightful cries. The chevalier treated in like manner another of these creatures which had leaped upon his back, and had undertaken to devour his cheek.

The band hesitated. Croustillac seized his sword, and using it as a poignard, pierced several others, and thus put an end to this attack in a novel manner, saying, "Zounds! to think Blue Beard does not know that the brave Croustillac has been nearly devoured by wildcats, even as if he were but a chicken hanging on a hook of a larder!"

The remainder of the night passed peacefully, the chevalier sleeping but little. At daybreak he descended from his tree, and saw extended at his feet five of his adversaries of the night. He hastened to quit the scene of his exploits, at which he blushed, and, convinced that Devil's Cliff could not be far off, he resumed his journey.

After having walked thus vainly, after his vigil, the gnawing of his stomach, occasioned by a famished feeling, warned him that it was in the neighborhood of noon. His delight may be imagined when the breeze bore to him the delicious odor of roasted meat, so fine, so penetrating, and so appetizing that the chevalier could not prevent himself from passing his tongue across his lips. He redoubled his speed, not doubting, this time, that he had arrived at the end of his troubles. However, he saw no sign of habitation, and knew not how to reconcile this apparent solitude with the exquisite odor which grew more and more tantalizing.

Unobserved himself, and without being heard, and walking rapidly, he arrived at a kind of clearing, where he stopped a moment. The sight which greeted his eyes was worthy his notice.

CHAPTER X

A BUCCANEER

In the midst of a close thicket appeared a cleared space forming a long square; at one of its extremities was an ajoupa, a kind of hut made of branches attached to the trunk of a palm tree, covered with long polished leaves of balisier and of cachibou. Under this shelter, which guaranteed protection from the rays of the sun to whoever might retire therein, a man was stretched upon a bed of leaves; at his feet some twenty dogs lay sleeping. These dogs would have been white and orange if their original color had not disappeared, owing to the blood which covered them. Their heads and breasts were completely stained by reason of copious eating.

The chevalier could but indistinctly see the face of the man, half hidden in his bed of fresh leaves. Not far from the hut was a covered fire where, cooking slowly, after the fashion of buccaneers, was a year-old boar. The stove or gridiron was formed by four forks driven into the earth, on which were hung cross-pieces, and on these were laid small poles, all of green wood.

The boar, still with its hide on, was stretched on its back, the belly open and empty; strings attached to its four feet held it in this position, which the heat would otherwise have disturbed.

This gridiron was raised above a hole four feet in length, three wide, and of great depth, filled with broken charcoal; the boar cooked by the equal heat of this steady and concentrated brazier. The cavity of the animal was half filled with lemon juice and cut spices, which, combined with the fat, which the heat caused to slowly ooze out, formed a kind of interior sauce which smelled very appetizing.

This immense roast was nearly cooked; its skin began to frizzle and crack; what was visible of the flesh through the gravy was red and tempting. Finally, a dozen large yams, of yellow and savory pulp, were cooking in the ashes, and exhaled a fine odor.

The chevalier could restrain himself no longer; carried away by his appetite, he entered the inclosure, and in so doing broke down some branches. One or two of the dogs awoke and ran at him with a menacing air. The man, who was dozing, arose abruptly, looked about him with an amazed air, while the entire pack of hounds manifested the most hostile objection to the entrance of the chevalier, bristling and showing their formidable teeth. Croustillac recalled the history of the assistant of Rend-your-Soul being devoured by his dogs, but he was not intimidated; he raised his staff with a menacing air, and said, "To heel, varlets; to heel, varlets!"

This term, imported from the kennels of Europe, made no impression on the dogs; they assumed an attitude so menacing that the chevalier struck some blows at them with his staff. Their eyes burned with ferocity; they would have precipitated themselves upon Croustillac had not the buccaneer, coming out of the hut with a gun in his hand, cried in a species of dialect, part negro, part French, "Who touches my dogs? Who are you that come hither?"

The chavalier bravely put his hand on his sword and replied, "Your dogs would devour me, my good fellow, and I foil them. They would employ their teeth upon me as I would mine if I had before me a morsel of that appetizing boar, for I am lost in the forest since yesterday morning and have a most infernal hunger."

The buccaneer, instead of replying to the chevalier, remained stupefied at the odd appearance of this man, who, staff in hand, had traversed a forest in pink stockings and coat of taffeta and embroidered vest. On his side, Croustillac, in spite of his hunger, contemplated the buccaneer with no less curiosity. This hunter was of middle height, but agile and vigorous; his only clothing, short drawers and a shirt which was loose like a blouse. His clothing was so much stained with the blood of bulls or boars which the buccaneers skin in order to sell the hide and smoke the flesh (the principal branch of their traffic) that the linen appeared tarred, it was so black and stiff. A belt of bull's hide embellished with its hair confined the shirt about the buccaneer; from this belt hung, on one side, a

sheath of compartments, revealing five or six knives of various lengths and divers shapes; from the other, a pouch. The hunter's legs were bare to the knees; his shoes were without fastening, and of a single piece, according to a custom there, and in use among buccaneers.

After skinning a bull or some large boar, they carefully loosen the skin of one of the front extremities, from the breast to the knee, and turn it back like a stocking which one pulls off; after having completely detached it from the bones, they then put their feet into this supple and fresh skin, placing the large toe a little more toward the place which covered the knee of the animal. Once shod in this manner they tie up with a sinew that portion which extends beyond the end of the foot, and cut off the surplus. Then they raise and pull up the remainder of the skin halfway up their legs, where they fasten it with a leather strap. In drying, this species of boot assumes the shape of the foot, remaining perfectly soft, supple, and wearing a long time, it being impervious, and proof against the sting of serpents.

The buccaneer looked curiously at Croustillac, leaning on his gun, a kind especially used by buccaneers; these guns were made at Dieppe and St. Malo. The figure of the hunter was rough and common; he wore a cap of boar's skin; his beard was long and bristling; his look ferocious.

Croustillac said resolutely, "Ah, comrade, would you refuse a morsel of this roast to a gentleman who is famished?"

"The roast is not mine," said the buccaneer.

"How? to whom, then, does it belong?"

"To Master Rend-your-Soul, who has his depot of skins and buccaneer supplies at Caiman's Point."

"This roast belongs to Master Rend-your-Soul," cried the chevalier, surprised at the chance which had brought him in contact with one of the happy lovers of Blue Beard, if these slanderous stories were true. "This roast belongs to Rend-your-Soul," repeated Croustillac.

"It belongs to him," said the man with the long gun, laconically.

At this moment was heard a shot which echoed through the forest. "That is the master," said the man.

The dogs recognized, doubtless, the approach of the hunter; for they began to bark joyfully, and dashed off through the undergrowth in order to reach the buccaneer.

Warned of the return of the master, the man, whom we will call Peter, took out one of his largest knives, approached the wild boar, and in order the better to moisten the venison, stabbed the flesh several times, without injuring the skin, for the plentiful mixture of lemon juice, spice and fat which filled the belly of the boar was running out. Each of these incisions caused such appetizing odors to rise that the chevalier, inhaling this exquisite odor, almost forgot the approach of Rend-your-Soul. However, the latter appeared, followed by his dogs, jumping and pressing about him.

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