

THE MAIDS OF LA ROCHELLE

ELINOR M.
BRENT-DYER



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The Maids of La Rochelle

By

ELINOR M. BRENT-DYER

Illustrated by Nina K. Brisley

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Illustrations by Nina K. Talbot, née Brisley (1987-1978) have been omitted, as they are not yet in the public domain in Canada.

TO
MADGE RUSSELL
WITH LOVE AND
GOOD WISHES

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NOTE.

All the incidents and characters in this book are entirely imaginary, and have reference to no one in Guernsey or anywhere else in the Channel Isles.

Chapter I.

THE TEMPLES.

‘Janie! Don’t cry so, darling!’

There was no answer to the plea, save a dull sob and a little moan.

‘Janie!’

Still no answer. Anne rose, pushing back the heavy masses of black hair from her hot brow with a weary sigh. There was a lassitude in her young body as she crossed the firelit room which told of either illness or deep grief; but, whatever it was, she put aside her own feelings as she bent over the little huddled-up heap on the big Chesterfield.

‘Janie, what would daddy say if he could see you? It would break his heart to know you were fretting so.’

The bright brown head moved at that, and Janie flung out an arm and pulled the elder girl down to her.

Anne sat down and took the child in her arms. ‘Janie, you must try not to cry so. Daddy never liked any of us to be unhappy, you know. He may be looking at us, for all we know, and it would hurt him so to see you like this.’

‘Oh, Anne!’ gasped Janie, ‘I wish I could die, too!’

‘Hush!’ said Anne sternly. ‘You have no right to be so selfish. How should Elizabeth and I feel if you went, too? Don’t talk like that to Elizabeth, Janie. She has enough to endure.’

With an heroic effort Janie swallowed her sobs, and, struggling into an upright position, began to fumble for her handkerchief. The elder girl, understanding, slipped her own into the hot little hand; and, drawing the little sister closer, hugged her fondly.

‘You must try, Janie. Don’t let Elizabeth see that you have been crying. Come along and wash your face, and you’ll feel better then.’

‘Oh, Anne, I don’t believe I shall ever feel better!’ sighed Janie from the safe shelter of Anne’s arms. ‘Nothing can ever be the same again.’

‘No, it won’t be the same,’ replied Anne gently. ‘But you will feel better presently, because you will remember only how daddy loved you and wanted you to be happy.’

There was a little silence after this. Then Anne spoke again. ‘Listen, Baby. It’s nearly half-past four. Elizabeth will be in soon. Come and make yourself tidy, so that she won’t guess you’ve been crying again, and then let’s ask Mason to get tea ready.’

Janie agreed to this, and the two sisters left the room to try to wash away the tell-tale stains on the child’s face.

Six weeks before this, Elizabeth, Anne, and Janie Temple had been protected and petted by a loving father. Captain Temple, newly retired from the Navy, had seen comparatively little of his girls in their lives. As a young lieutenant of twenty-three, he had married a beautiful Italian girl, whom he adored. After eighteen months of a perfect idyll of married love, a little daughter, Elizabeth, had been born to them, and when, two months later, the young husband had been sent to a China station, the deep brown eyes and the dimpled fingers of the baby had comforted the girl-wife. Three years later he had returned to find that the tiny creature he had left had grown into a sweet, serious girl-child, with her mother’s exquisite face and deep eyes allied to his own fair curls, while the young wife had become a woman who was even more adorable than the girl he had left. When, a year later, a second daughter, Anne, arrived on the scene, their happiness seemed complete.

Anne had inherited her father’s fair skin and gray eyes, but the heavy, waveless hair which covered her head was as black as Elizabeth’s was golden, and the two children made an

exquisite contrast. Five months later Mrs Temple caught a slight chill; it became worse; pleurisy set in; and a week later her husband stood by the side of the grave which contained all that was left of the being he had most adored on earth. He went home to a house which seemed to him bereft of all joy. He could not even bear to see the children whom they had both loved so dearly. A young, unmarried sister volunteered to take them home with her and look after them for him, and he eagerly grasped at so simple a solution to his difficulties. For the next five years Elizabeth and Anne lived in a flat in London, and were surrounded by art students, the friends of their aunt, who attended the Slade school, and delighted to dress them picturesquely.

It seemed to the man, now sunk deep into the intricacies of his work, that his difficulties with regard to the children were settled for the next ten years or so. It was then that a long letter came from his sister, stating that she was shortly to be married to a fellow-student, and requesting him to make new arrangements for his little girls, since she and her husband intended wandering about the Continent for the next few years, and they could hardly take a couple of babies with them. Close on the heels of this came a telegram summoning him to Anne, who was down with pneumonia. He arrived to find that the child had only just escaped the jaws of death. Elizabeth, who was growing very quickly, was looking fragile, and his sister declared that she dared not take the responsibility of them any longer. Helplessly the man cast about him for some plan that would meet the difficulty. His two little girls came very near his heart during these days. The frail looks of the baby, who had been his wife's last gift to him, tore at his love. What would Giovanna have said to have seen the hollows at temples and cheeks, the big, sunken eyes? In his despair, he decided to do what he had vowed never to do—that is, to marry again. There was a certain lady whom he knew. She was three years older than himself, and very plain; but there had been a tender light in her eyes when he had taken her to see the children, and she had gathered little Anne to her with the lovely gesture of the born mother. It was this lady whom he chose. He explained to her in what was, surely, one of the oddest proposal scenes imaginable, that his best love lay in a Cornish graveyard, and that, had it not been for the needs of the two little girls, he would never have dreamed of marrying again, but under the circumstances it seemed the only thing for him to do.

Miss Weston heard him out in silence, and then she spoke. 'I am honoured,' she said, with a certain sweet dignity. 'I accept your offer.'

So Commander Temple and Agnes Weston married, and Elizabeth and Anne found a tender mother, who devoted her whole life to their service. Even the arrival of her own baby made no difference. Janie was a sturdy, healthy little person, who seemed to thrive on anything and everything, and Anne remained delicate long after the pneumonia was a thing of the past. Then, one day, a carriage accident deprived the children of their mother and Captain Temple of a wife, for whom he had conceived a deep and true affection.

She lingered a few hours in full consciousness, and all her thoughts were for the little girls. 'Send them to Miss Moulton's school,' she gasped, 'Hurst Ridge, Hurst, Sussex. She will look after them. I will—tell Giovanna—they are well—and—you love her still!'

Then, and then only, did she consent to take the morphia injection which would deaden the agony that was beading her brow with sweat. When it was all over, the nurse, who had been hastily summoned to the house, handed Captain Temple a slip of paper, with the name and address written down. 'Mrs Temple asked you to see about it, sir,' she explained.

Touched to the heart at this final instance of his wife's loving forethought, the captain went down to Hurst, and the upshot was that Elizabeth, Anne, and Janie found a fresh home—this time, one that lasted till Elizabeth was eighteen and Janie was nine; Anne, who came between them, being fourteen. The two elder girls adored their little sister, who was a startling contrast to them. Elizabeth and Anne were exceptionally lovely girls, Elizabeth in a fair Madonna way,

while Anne's was the wistful, haunting beauty of the Celt. Janie, on the contrary, was plain—almost ugly; but a certain quaintness redeemed her from that, and she was an exceptionally clever child, wherein she again differed from her step-sisters, who, though possessed of artistic powers, were not intellectual, as Janie gave promise of being.

It was just as Elizabeth had passed her eighteenth birthday that Miss Moulton, a gracious lady in the highest sense of the word, decided that she was getting too old to cope with her girls any longer, and wrote to the parents, explaining that she was breaking up the school, and that after the midsummer term it would exist no longer. There could be no question of any one else carrying it on, since it did not even pay for itself.

To Captain Temple, at that time with the South Atlantic Fleet, this came as a tremendous shock. He had no idea what to do with the girls. His sister and her husband had long since settled in Australia, and, in any case, they had a large family of their own. Once again, however, the Fates were kind. He happened to mention his dilemma to his commander, a serious-faced young man, who was half-French. 'I'm blessed if I know what to do!' said the worried man. 'Look round for another school, I suppose; but how the deuce am I to know what's a good school and what isn't?'

His second in command looked thoughtful. 'One of 'em's delicate, you say?' he asked.

'Yes; Anne. Nearly went out eight years ago with pneumonia, and she's never been strong since.'

There was a little pause. Then the commander spoke: 'You've heard me speak of my mother, sir?' he said diffidently.

His captain stared. He failed to see what this had to do with his problem. 'I don't understand, Ozanne,' he said.

'Well, sir,' replied young Ozanne; 'it just struck me that perhaps your girls might go to her. You see, sir, it's this way. My mother is a widow, as you know, and when my father died she went back to France, where she had always lived until he left the Navy. She took with her my cousin, Suzanne. But Suzanne is to be married in July, and I know the mater is feeling the idea of loneliness rather. Now, why shouldn't your kiddies go to her? She would like to have them—she adores girls! And it would be quite safe for them. She'd get them a governess, or something to keep their education going, and they'd all get a decent French accent.'

At first Captain Temple wouldn't hear of it; but Commander Ozanne was so pleased at his own idea, that he wrote to his mother about it. Madame Ozanne fell in with the suggestion enthusiastically. She herself wrote to the captain, and the upshot of it all was that the November of 1918 found the Temple girls in France, with a dainty, dignified lady of the old school. For five happy years they lived there, learning lessons which are not taught to the majority of English girls, and developing amazingly.

'I am proud of the girls,' Madame Ozanne wrote to Captain Temple in the summer of 1921. 'Elizabeth and Anne would grace any drawing-room, not only by virtue of their beauty, but also of their manners, their conversation. Jeanne is a charming child, and is already learning to tread in the footsteps of her sisters.'

In the summer of the following year Captain Temple retired, and Madame yielded up to him three girls, who were daughters to be proud of. Their French training had given them an aplomb, a self-possession, a graceful dignity too often lacking in English girls of their age. Their special talents had been carefully cultivated. Thus, Elizabeth, who wrote charming verses and fairy tales, had been put through a rigorous course of reading in English, French, and Italian classics, which did much to improve her style. Anne, who was artistic, had had the best masters possible, and already her original sketches and paintings gave promise of something unusual in the future; while Janie's general education had been attended to with a thoroughness which had given her excellent grounding.

They had said 'good-bye' to Madame Ozanne with tears, but had quickly cheered up on reaching the flat in London which their father had taken. Six weeks later had come the news of their old friend's quiet death; but although this cast a shadow over their happiness for a time, the shadow soon passed away, for they knew that, to Madame Ozanne, death meant reunion with the husband she had never ceased mourning.

Then, five weeks ago, had come that October day when their father had not 'felt very well.'

'It's old age creeping on, sweethearts,' he had said, with an attempt at his old cheery laughter. And he had bidden them never worry about him, but go to the Zoo as they had planned. He would be all right at home, and in a day or so's time he would be quite fit again.

They had gone as he had wished, but somehow their pleasure was dulled, and at two o'clock in the afternoon they had returned, full of an indefinable feeling of anxiety. They were greeted at the door of the flat by Mason, their father's sailor servant, who had insisted on coming with 'the cap'n' since his own time was up. Even before Mason had spoken, Elizabeth and Anne knew what had happened, and it seemed to them as if they had known all day, when the man, with shaking voice and tears in his eyes, told them that they were fatherless.

Captain Temple had been sitting in his arm-chair reading, when Mason had brought his lunch in on a tray. He had risen, and then, with graying face, had fallen forward. The man had hurriedly knelt down by his master, to find that life was already extinct. However, he had rung up their doctor, who had attended Janie some months previously during a bad cold. The doctor came; but he was not surprised. There had been heart-disease of some standing, and Captain Temple had known of it.

To the poor, grief-dazed girls, these two men were as helpful as they could be. But when Captain Temple had been laid in the quiet Cornish churchyard where, years before, his girl-wife had been laid, troubles seemed, to them, to pour in thick and fast. Like many sailors, their father had spent every penny of his pay. There had been no chance to save money from his pension, and all that came to the girls in addition to the small pension allowed by the Admiralty to Janie until she was sixteen, was some eighty pounds a year, the interest from the second Mrs Temple's very small fortune.

On this day in November, when our story first opens, Elizabeth had gone to their father's solicitor for an interview about their future. Neither she nor Anne was cut out for a teacher, and they had Janie to consider. But that morning a letter had come for her from Javotte, Madame Ozanne's old nurse, who loved them all devotedly, and it had made a suggestion which—or so it seemed to Elizabeth—promised to help them over the immediate future. She had left Anne and Janie at home, promising to return as quickly as possible, and even as the two younger girls returned to the sitting-room, where Mason was laying tea—he had insisted on staying on 'for the present'—her light footsteps could be heard running down the passage. Another minute and she was in the room with them, and holding out her hands as she exclaimed, 'It's all settled, and we are going to live in Guernsey!'

Chapter II.

'WE ARE GOING TO GUERNSEY.'

When Elizabeth made her sufficiently startling statement, there was an instant hubbub. Mason dropped the teaspoons he was holding, with the terse remark, 'Swelpme!'

Anne clasped her hands tightly together, and the colour flooded her pale face as she cried, 'Elizabeth! What do you mean?'

Janie fell over a footstool, and, remaining in her inverted position, gasped, 'Guernsey! Whatever for, Elizabeth? When?'

The creator of all this disturbance actually laughed—the low, sweet laugh that none of them had heard for those five dreadful weeks. 'How startled you all are! But it is really the best thing to do, and Mr Stebbings is going over with me himself next week!'

'So soon! Oh, Elizabeth, what does it all mean?'

'Pardon me, missie,' put in Mason at this point, 'but tea's nigh ready.'

Elizabeth turned to him. 'It will have to be good-bye to you for a while, Mason,' she said sorrowfully. 'We are so poor, and there won't be room for you where we are going. But as soon as we make our fortunes we'll send for you to buttle for us again.'

She ended her little speech with a wavering smile, as old Mason looked at her incredulously. 'You're never goin' to bid me up anchor an' leave you, Miss Elizabeth?' he said. 'This old craft don't want naught but 'is food, an' t' captain, 'e wouldn't like it!'

Janie, who had regained her feet, now slipped one of her hands into the mahogany-coloured fist of their old friend. Poor Elizabeth stretched out cool white fingers to him as she said, 'Oh, Mason, if we could only take you with us, we would. But we are going to a tiny cottage where there will only be three rooms, and we must learn to work for ourselves.'

There was a moment's silence. Then Anne struck in. 'You can go to your daughter in Devonshire, Mason,' she said softly. 'Think of the red Devon lanes, and the yellow primroses all astar in the spring!'

'Aye, aye, missie, I knows that,' he said, 'but t' cap'n wouldn't ha' liked it!'

'He would know that you would be with us if you could,' replied Elizabeth sadly. 'It is no pleasure to have to tell you this, Mason; but, indeed, we are driven to it.'

The old salt stood there, his eyes—the far-seeing blue eyes of the sailor—running over them all; then he picked up his tray and stumped to the door. 'I'll bring the tea,' he said gruffly, and went out.

Immediately Anne pulled Elizabeth towards a big chair, and settled her there. 'Sit down,' she said. 'You look tired, Sissie!'

'I'm not really more tired than usual,' replied Elizabeth, as she submitted to Janie's unlacing her boots and producing her slippers from a warm corner by the hearth. Then Mason brought in tea, and, when they were all cosily established, Elizabeth told them of the great decision to which she had come. 'I had a letter from old Javotte this morning,' she began. 'You shall read it after, but just at present I want to give you the gist of it. I wrote her, as you know, when—five weeks ago, and her answer is a suggestion that perhaps we should like to get away from everything for a few months. You remember she went to Guernsey three years ago to live with her son in his cottage near Rocquaine? Well, now he has married a Malouine, and she wishes to live in her native St Malo. But Jean is a good son, and he will not leave his mother alone, so she is to go and live with them, and she suggests that we have her cottage for a while. She will leave her own furniture for us; or she will sell most of it, and we can take our own. Now, what I feel is, that we can live much more cheaply in Guernsey than we can in

London. I therefore suggest that we write to Javotte and ask her to rent the cottage to us for the next few years, and we live there—for a time at any rate. What do you think?’

She looked at them wistfully. Impulsive Janie made a dash and flung her arms round the dear sister who had mothered her so long. ‘Of course, *chérie*!’ she cried. ‘You are our own *sœur aînée*; it must be as you say. Anne, you agree? Yes?’

Anne lifted her eyes. ‘Yes, of course. But oh, Elizabeth! it seems such a tremendous step to take by ourselves!’

‘We must always take such steps by ourselves now,’ replied Elizabeth, with unconscious pathos in her sweet voice. ‘Who is there to advise us but ourselves?’

‘You go next week to prospect?’ Anne hurried to say, with a warning glance at Janie, whose tears seemed to be coming to the surface.

‘Yes; next Thursday,’ said Elizabeth. ‘I must see Javotte and make arrangements with her. Mr Stebbings is coming with me, and I shall stay for a week. Then I shall come back, and we must decide what we are going to take with us and what we shall sell. I shall go back again in November to get things ready, and you two will come over a fortnight later, and we shall settle down in La Rochelle.’

‘Is that what it’s called?’ asked Janie, with interest.

‘Yes! La Rochelle, Rocquaine Bay, Guernsey, will be our address when we are there. No, thank you, Anne—no more tea. I think I will just go to my room and change into a frock.’

Elizabeth got up as she spoke, and, gathering together her outdoor things, left the room. Anne rose and occupied herself in tidying up the hearth, while Janie sat considering the proposed arrangement from all points of view.

‘What about school?’ she said finally.

‘I expect there’s a school of some kind on the island,’ replied Anne, without looking up.

‘P’r’aps I sha’n’t go,’ ruminated Janie. ‘Elizabeth said something about reading and not going to school. We are awfully poor, aren’t we?’

‘Pretty bad.’

‘Anne; are you crying? Anne, *ma mie*, do not cry!’ Unconsciously Janie slipped into the soft French which came so naturally to all the girls. ‘You bid me not to grieve, but yourself suffer,’ she said. ‘Anne, you made me of a courage; can you not make it yourself?’

‘Yes!’ said Anne, half-laughing, half-crying. ‘But it’s hard sometimes, *Bébée*. And you must talk English, Janie. I sometimes think your five years in France have made you forget a good deal of your mother-tongue.’

‘I’m sorry,’ said Janie penitently. ‘But, you see, Anne *chérie*, I think in French half the time, and it is so much easier to say what one feels than in English. You think so, too—yes!’

‘Still, you must talk English,’ returned Anne firmly. ‘Ring for Mason to clear, Janie, and then run and fetch your *broderie*.’

‘Very well.’ And Janie did as she was told.

When Elizabeth came back, she found her sisters awaiting her, sewing tranquilly, for Madame Ozanne had insisted on their learning the fine needlework taught by the nuns in the near-by convent, and all three were accustomed to doing the most exquisite embroidery.

The evening passed quickly, and at half-past nine Elizabeth summoned them all to bed. Looking at her fair face with its quiet, steadfast eyes, Anne wondered. Could it be that Elizabeth was already recovering from the shock of their father’s death? She was answered when some instinct woke her at three o’clock in the morning, and sent her across the landing to the little room where Elizabeth slept. As she stood outside the door, shivering in her thin night-dress, she heard a little low sob, followed by a murmur of ‘Daddy!’

Quietly she opened the door and slipped in. There was a gasp of surprise, and then Elizabeth sat upright, her golden hair showering round her startled face, still wet with tears.

‘Anne! What is the matter? Are you ill?’

‘No. I thought—perhaps—you might want me. Don’t shut me out, Elizabeth. It’s so lonely for you!’

Anne slipped down on her knees beside the bed, and lifted a fair face, gleaming pearl-like between the heavy wings of her hair. Elizabeth looked at her younger sister in silence. ‘Do you know, Anne,’ she said irrelevantly, ‘you are a remarkable example of the Rossetti type? I never saw it so clearly before.’

‘Rossetti painted people with red hair for choice,’ replied Anne. ‘And don’t side-track that way, *ma mie*. Can’t you trust me, Elizabeth?’

‘Yes,’ said Elizabeth, ‘but I don’t want to burden you, Anne. Does it seem as if I were trying to manage things too much by myself?’

‘No—no! Only it is so lonely for you. Why should you bear the burden for all of us? Janie is only a baby, but I’m twenty, Elizabeth—quite old enough to take my share.’

‘You had better come in beside me,’ remarked Elizabeth practically. ‘It won’t make things any easier if you get a cold. Where is your dressing-gown?’

‘I forgot it,’ replied Anne, as she crept in beside her sister. ‘Sissie—’

The old baby-name, so seldom used between them now, broke down Elizabeth’s reserve. ‘It feels—so alone, Anne,’ she said, with quivering lips. ‘I have to be wise and thoughtful for us all, and it’s so difficult! I’m only twenty-four, and I know so little, Anne!’

Anne slipped warm, comforting arms round her. ‘Why, Sissie, I think you’re wonderful!’ she said. ‘We shouldn’t be able to do a thing without you!’ Unconsciously she drifted into the tenderer French, in which it is possible to express thoughts and feelings for which our cold Anglo-Saxon has no language save the baldest.

Elizabeth, made stronger by the low voice, murmuring the soft comfort, presently looked up, pushing the hair out of her eyes. ‘You are the dearest sister, Anne. I’m quite all right now; I feel brave again, and things will be better soon. I know it’s stupid of me to fret, for daddy is much happier now, and we have Janie to think of. I’m not often silly, Annette!’

‘You’re a heroine,’ replied Anne, with a convincing hug. ‘Now, I’m going back to my own quarters, or Janie will be wondering what has happened when she wakes up in the morning. Good-night, Elizabeth. Sleep well, *mignonne*!’

‘Good-night, Anne. You have been a comfort to me!’

Anne slipped quietly out and went to her own little white bed by the side of the one where Janie lay, spread-eagled, in the way in which Janie always did sleep. She soon drifted into dreamland again, and did not awaken until the gong sounded; and while her two sisters slept peacefully, Elizabeth was keeping ghostly tryst with father and mother.

‘I will take care of them,’ she murmured wistfully; ‘but oh, daddy, it is so hard!’

Chapter III.

A DREADFUL EXPERIENCE.

'Really off at last, Anne!' Janie's voice thrilled with excitement as she clutched at Anne's arm, and pointed out to where, beyond the piers, lay a waste of gray, tumbling waters, flecked with white caps. Above lay a leaden sky, low down on the horizon, while a chilling wind whistled round their ears and whipped the colour to their cheeks. Anne laughed in sympathy as she yielded to the excited child's pressure, and walked slowly along the deck. 'It's going to be rough,' she said, rather seriously. 'I do hope it won't be very bad!'

'Why, Anne!' Janie looked at her in wide-eyed amazement. 'I thought you were such a good sailor?'

'I am,' replied Anne briefly.

'Then, why—'

'Oh, lots of people aren't,' explained the elder sister hastily; 'and it's always so miserable if there are lots of people sick on board!'

'There aren't "lots" to be anything,' commented Janie. 'I hope I sha'n't be sick, Anne. Do you think I shall be? It would be so horrid! Such a sort of disgrace when daddy was a sailor! But I was all right coming over from France.'

By this time they had left the shelter of the piers, and Anne turned gray, brooding eyes on Chesil Bank, over which a continual white curtain of spume and froth was flung. Suddenly she shivered. 'Ugh! It's cold!' she said. 'Come round to the other side, Janie, out of the wind.'

The two sisters walked, more or less unsteadily, round the end of the saloon to the port side of the boat, and stood watching the tossing sea, while the few fellow-passengers who were braving the elements watched them with the interest Anne's lovely face always called up. Anne herself did not notice it. She was keeping an anxious eye on her little sister. Both she and Elizabeth were capital sailors; but she seemed to remember that her step-mother had never been able to go to sea at all, and she dreaded lest Janie had inherited the weakness. However, it seemed that her fears were unnecessary, for Janie chattered eagerly and excitedly, and the fresh colour in her cheeks never varied.

Relieved of her secret worry, Anne lent half an ear absent-mindedly to the child, while, in her own mind, she went over the events of the past few weeks. Elizabeth had gone over to Guernsey, accompanied by Mr Stebbings and his sister, an elderly spinster of a gruff exterior and a warm heart. The arrangements at La Rochelle were seen and approved of. Javotte, who had wept for joy when she beheld the eldest of the nurslings of her old age, would stay on until they all came over. Then she would go to a neighbour's for another fortnight, and see them comfortably settled in; and, finally, would depart for her beloved France. Much of her furniture would go with her, since Jean and his pretty Malouine intended buying very little at first; but she would leave them a huge Breton armoire in the kitchen living-room, and a certain amount of her wonderful Breton faience. They must bring over beds and some chairs and a few other necessities in the way of furniture; and, of course, a certain amount of table-linen. For bed-linen, Javotte insisted on their having half the store of old hand-woven sheets and pillow-slips which Madame Ozanne had given her when she had first gone to Guernsey.

'For the rest,' said Elizabeth, 'we will take our most treasured possessions, and as many books as we can manage, for our library must henceforth be Janie's school.'

A fortnight before the bleak November day which found Janie and Anne on the boat, the eldest sister had gone over with all the treasures they were taking with them. Certain other things were warehoused, and Mr Stebbings was arranging for the sale of the rest. The two

younger girls had spent that fortnight with the kindly lawyer and his sister, and now they had said 'good-bye' to England, and were *en route* for Guernsey and their new life. Anne had gone thus far in her thoughts, when she suddenly noticed that Janie's colour had vanished, and she was clutching at the rail with half-shut eyes and ghastly face.

'Oh, Janie!' cried the elder sister in self-reproach, as she flung an arm round the little swaying figure, and drew the child towards the saloon.

'It's—only—the ship!' gasped Janie between chattering teeth. 'If it would only be still—Anne!'

'Leave her with me, miss,' said the capable stewardess, as she came to meet them. 'She'll be all right with me.'

But Janie refused to be left. She clung to Anne with hands that were clammy with sweat, and between the awful paroxysms that seized her, implored her sister to stay. 'Anne! Don't go!' she gasped, lifting piteous brown eyes to the elder girl's face. 'Anne! Stay!' So Anne stayed. As time wore on, the child became seriously ill, and Anne dared not leave her, though the close atmosphere was turning her faint. Janie prayed to be allowed to die, to go to heaven, to have Daddy—anything, if only this dreadful ship would stay still! She implored Anne to ask the captain to stop; then became gray and speechless once more. Anne wrung her hands in hopeless misery. Finally, the child became unconscious, and lay like a log in her berth.

'Soon there now, miss,' said the good-natured stewardess. 'We're just getting to the Casquets. Your little sister will be all right as soon as she reaches land.'

'She looks so ghastly,' faltered Anne.

'Bless you, dearie, I've seen a-many look worse nor that. Just as well she can't feel it, pretty dear!' as the vessel heaved and swung to the turmoil of the sea.

To Anne's terrified eyes Janie looked dead. Her face was gray and drawn, and the long black lashes were slightly parted, showing a glimpse of her eyes between, which was thoroughly alarming to the inexperienced Anne. For the remaining hour and a half of their journey the elder girl stood by the berth, convinced that when the boat arrived at St Peter Port there would be no Janie to receive Elizabeth's welcome. At length the smoother movement of the boat told her that they were past the worst of it, and by-and-by the stewardess came with one of the ship's officers to help her get Janie on deck. With swift, deft hands the man rolled the unconscious child in a rug, and then, stooping down, lifted her tenderly. The movement roused Janie to semi-consciousness, and she moaned faintly as they passed up to the saloon, where two or three of the passengers were gathered, waiting to see how the little girl had fared.

'My dear, don't be so distraught,' said an elderly lady gently to Anne. 'It has been very bad, of course, but we are in harbour now, and the little one will soon get all right again. See, she looks more natural already.' And, indeed, the fresh air seemed to be reviving the child, so that the terrible gray hue left her face, and with it went that awful corpse-like effect that had so alarmed poor Anne.

Then the boat stopped, and as she stepped to the side she caught a glimpse of Elizabeth's fair face, more beautiful than ever; and beside her a bent figure in long coat and bonnet, who was surely Javotte!

The young officer bade her wait till the crowd had got off, and then he would take Janie to the conveyance that would be awaiting them. So Anne had to content herself with sitting by the little sister, and waving occasionally to Elizabeth, who was impatiently wondering whyever Anne did not hurry up. At length their friend of the strong arms appeared, and, stooping, lifted Janie up as easily as though she had been five instead of fifteen. Elizabeth cried out as she saw the little procession coming off the boat, and she ran forward, closely followed by Javotte.

‘Janie!’ she cried.

‘It’s all right, madam,’ replied the officer. ‘We’ve had a pretty bad crossing, and the poor kiddie has suffered, but she’ll be all right soon. Where is your taxi?’

‘Over there,’ replied Elizabeth, pointing.

‘A moment, mademoiselle,’ put in Javotte in rapid French. ‘I have here a little cognac for *la petite*.’

As she spoke she disinterred from the depths of her pocket a small flask, at sight of which the sailor’s face brightened. ‘That’s the stuff,’ he said heartily, as Javotte, with the deftness of the born nurse, managed to get some between the child’s teeth. Janie moved her head and moaned a little, but the blueness left her lips.

‘Get into the car, Elizabeth,’ said Anne. ‘Then you can take her on your lap, and I can sit on the floor. There are only our cases, luckily!’

Elizabeth climbed in, and the limp burden, which was Janie, was laid in her arms. Anne curled herself up in the opposite corner, cuddling the child’s feet, Javotte sat on the front seat, and the cases were piled into the tonneau. Then the chauffeur, a pleasant-looking lad of twenty-two or three, whom they later came to know as Raoul de Garis, clambered into his seat, and they were off. In the town young De Garis drove slowly, threading his way among motor-charabancs, tradesmen’s vans, and cars which seemed to throng the way up Mansel Street. But once they reached the outskirts of the town, he opened the throttle and the car leapt forward. Past cottages, and farms, and ugly modern houses, whose occupants obviously took in summer boarders; past long arrays of glasshouses and fields they went. Towards the end, they flashed by a fresh-looking post-office, and then tore on down a quiet, winding road, with the sullen gray sea lying before them. At the bottom of the road stood an hotel, a square barn-like building, whitewashed and bare, a veritable eyesore to artistic Anne. They turned to the left, and drove along a road running parallel to the sea, with sandy, faded bents between, and finally drew up before the door of a little cottage—one of three. Here Javotte clambered down with an agility surprising in one of her years. ‘Give me *la petite*, m’amselle,’ she said, and Elizabeth meekly obeyed, laying Janie in the old arms stretched out to receive her. Cradling the child as tenderly as though she were an infant, Javotte turned up the narrow, sandy path, murmuring incoherent caresses to her semi-conscious burden.

When Elizabeth and Anne entered the cottage, after settling with the driver, they found Janie lying on the old settle, her eyes open, and a faint smile on her lips.

‘Hullo,’ she said feebly.

‘Hullo, piccaninny,’ replied Elizabeth. ‘It’s bed for you to-day. I’m going to carry you up in a few minutes, and then we’ll tuck you in, and after a good sleep you’ll be all right again.’

She was as good as her word. An hour later saw the two elder girls sitting down to a nondescript meal that was half lunch, half tea, and altogether the sort of meal most women love and most men abhor, while upstairs Janie lay asleep, tucked up in a little camp-bed, the colour returning to her lips and cheeks, while old Javotte sat watching her with a grim tenderness which, hitherto, Anne only of the sisters had known.

Chapter IV.

ANNE TRIES CONCLUSIONS WITH A GOAT.

‘Anne!’

‘Uh-huh!’

‘Oh, Anne! Do wake up! I think you might—it’s fearfully late!’

‘Rubbish! Lie down again, Janie, and go to sleep.’

Thus Anne, in sleepy tones, that took away most of the command from her voice.

‘But, Anne, there’s a gorgeous sea on! I can see it through the windows. It must have been a frightful gale over-night!’

‘Janie, you are a regular little horror!’ declared Anne, sitting up at last, and rubbing the sleep mists out of her eyes, and shaking back the splendid masses of her hair.

Janie, from her little camp-bed in the opposite corner of the room, looked at it admiringly. ‘You have gorgeous hair, Anne,’ she said wistfully. ‘When can I let mine grow? Do you think it will ever be so lovely as yours?’

‘Oh, don’t talk rubbish!’ retorted Anne, as she climbed out of bed, with a groan for the icy chill of the morning air. ‘And get up, Janie. It always takes you ages to get dressed.’

‘It’s so freezing,’ complained Janie. ‘Besides, there won’t be room for both of us to get dressed at once.’

‘*Quelle bêtise!*’ exclaimed Anne impatiently.

‘Oh, Anne! And you always say I forget my English and talk in French,’ said Janie reproachfully. ‘But you are of a foreignness yourself—yes!’

‘Janie, stop talking nonsense and get up! You never hear either Elizabeth or me talking that idiotic broken English,’ returned Anne, who by this time had brushed out her hair, and screwed it up into a tight plait, preparatory to going downstairs for the cold tub which they had to have in the little kitchen. ‘I’m going down now, and mind you are ready to go when I come back.’ With this she whisked out of the room, leaving the baby-sister to snuggle down under the bedclothes again. But not for long. For, just as Janie had cuddled down, a wild yell rang through the cottage, followed by a scramble of feet.

In an instant the little girl had bounded out of bed and pattered to the top of the stairs, where she was speedily followed by Elizabeth, looking more Madonna-like than ever in her long white night-dress, with her fair curling hair streaming round her.

Together they peered down the stairs into the kitchen, and there they beheld a sight which reduced them to helpless laughter. Sitting curled up on the table, her feet well out of reach, was Anne; while round the table charged a remarkably active young billy-goat, who seemed to be extremely annoyed at his victim’s inaccessibility.

On hearing their laughter Anne turned a scared face in their direction, and promptly waxed indignant. ‘Come down and help me,’ she demanded. ‘Don’t squat there, giggling like two hyenas!’

The goat’s attention, too, was diverted towards them, and he made a tentative step or two in their direction.

‘*Mon dieu!*’ gasped Janie. ‘But if he should mount the stairs!’

However, he thought better of it, for, evidently considering that a certain victim was better than two uncertain ones, he once more turned his attentions to Anne, who could only stay where she was, shrieking wildly in a mixture of French and English, while her sisters clung together at the head of the stairs, literally helpless with laughter.

‘Elizabeth!’ screamed the indignant Anne.

Checking herself as well as she could, Elizabeth replied, 'Well?'

'Come downstairs! Attract his attention!'

'I—I'll try!' And Elizabeth cautiously descended three steps, and then, leaning over the handrail, she called persuasively, 'Goat! Goat! Come along, then, poor fellow!'

'Idiot!' commented Anne ferociously from the table. 'As if any goat would come for *that*! And come down farther!'

Accordingly Elizabeth descended three more steps, and tried whistling. The goat looked at her with contempt in his yellow eyes. Did the stupid she-thing on the stairs really imagine that he was going to come for that? He whisked round to the other side of the table, forestalling Anne's intention of getting away and fastening herself into the big living-room. At this point Janie, looking more Puck-like than ever with her pink pyjamas and tousled head, slipped past her eldest sister, and crept to the foot of the stairs. The goat caught sight of her, and promptly made a flying leap in her direction. On the way he encountered the tub of cold water, which startled him considerably, for he landed in it with a mighty 'splash.'

Anne slid off the table, and succeeded in reaching the living-room in safety, while Janie, with a yell which might have been heard down on the beach, fled up the stairs, grabbing at Elizabeth in half-delighted terror. Their unwelcome guest, now furiously angry, made a charge to the foot of the stairs, and with screams the two rapidly withdrew to the larger room shared by Anne and Janie. The goat, finding himself thus robbed of all his victims, turned his attention to the tub, and butted it viciously, sending the water flying in all directions, if one might judge by the sound.

'Quick, Janie! Dress!' gasped Elizabeth, as she dashed across the narrow landing to her own room. 'You must just wash to-day.'

Thus adjured, Janie tumbled into her clothes, gave her hair one or two perfunctory taps with a brush, and presently met her eldest sister, now fully clad, upon the landing. 'What shall we do?' she inquired. 'Just listen to him, Elizabeth.'

'The whole place looks as though we had been in an earthquake,' sighed her sister. 'We must find out his owners, and make them come for him at once.'

'All very well,' replied Janie, with a grin. 'But how are you going to find out? We certainly can't cross the kitchen floor while he is there.'

'I know we can't,' responded Elizabeth. 'I'm going to climb down that spout outside, and go and inquire at that cottage over there, where the De Garis's live. I know, they keep goats, so perhaps he is one of theirs.'

'More likely he belongs to the Le Mesuriers,' said Janie. 'They are of a carelessness surprising.'

'Well, one of them, anyway. Come and help me to get out of the window.'

Luckily, Elizabeth was not called upon to risk her neck on the crazy pipe, for just as they reached the window they heard a gay whistle, and, looking out, recognised the whistler as one of the numerous De Garis family, who lived in the near-by cottage. Janie, who after a fortnight knew most of the people round about, called him by name. 'Peter! Peter de Garis!'

He looked up, raising a round olive face, with dancing black eyes. 'M'selle!' he answered.

'There's a goat in the kitchen,' called Janie. 'Do go and see if it's one of your mother's. You will go? Yes?'

'But certainly, m'selle.'

He scrambled over a low stone wall which separated the tiny garden from the road, and peered in at the window of the kitchen. 'It is Brunet,' he called presently to the anxious watchers above. 'He is wicked, that one. Wait, m'selle; I go to fetch a rope.'

He vanished in the direction of his own home, and presently reappeared, bearing a rope, and followed by sundry of the junior members of his family.

Janie, leaning out of the window, named them all. 'There's Héloïse,' she announced. 'And Bonita and Julian are there, and Marcel is bringing Francis.'

'Oh, stop talking, Janie, and let me talk to Peter,' said Elizabeth impatiently. Then to Peter, 'How are you going to get in?'

'As Brunet has done, m'selle,' he replied. 'Your door is not fastened.'

And with this he boldly marched in, and in a few minutes came out backwards, hauling a reluctant Brunet along by the rope, which had been flung over his horns. Bonita and Julian at once hurled themselves upon the animal, and dragged him away with them, while Héloïse, housewifely instincts well to the fore, stalked into the kitchen, and, when the sisters came downstairs to thank Peter properly, was hard at work mopping up the mess on the floor with her apron.

'*Mon dieu*, child, take the floor-cloth!' exclaimed Elizabeth, unhooking that useful article from its nail and passing it to her. 'But what a thing to do—to take one's apron!'

Héloïse looked up with a grin. 'Eess dirrty,' she remarked, as she fell to work with the floor-cloth.

Peter meanwhile was busily engaged in clearing out the grate, and when Elizabeth tried to assure him that there was no need, said placidly, 'I will do it, m'selle. It is a pleasure.'

Elizabeth thought of Anne shivering in the next room in her night-dress and dressing-gown, and racked her brains to think how on earth she was to get this obliging youth out of the kitchen for long enough to allow her sister to get upstairs again. While she was puzzling over it, Janie came down, with her big coat over her arm. 'Where are you going?' demanded the elder girl.

'Out,' responded Janie briefly, as she vanished into the living-room, carefully shutting the door behind her. A minute later there was a soft exclamation from Anne; but not until her two sisters emerged did Elizabeth understand. Under cover of her coat Janie had brought Anne's clothes down to her, and the elder girl had dressed in the living-room.

By that time the kitchen fire was well alight, and, having finished his good services by fetching three buckets of water from the well, and emptying out what was left in the tub after Brunet's impromptu bath, Peter collected his sister, and they departed, followed by the heartfelt thanks of the three sisters.

'They are very kind indeed,' said Elizabeth, as she shut the door and set about making the coffee. 'I do think the Guernésiais are good to strangers.'

Anne looked at her, laughter glimmering in her gray eyes. 'Do you really think it's all mere kindness?' she asked.

'Why, what else should it be?' asked Elizabeth, in astonishment.

'Curiosity, *ma chérie*! People like ourselves do not live in fishermen's cottages every day. We are enigmas to them, and so they are very glad of a chance to know more about us!'

'Anne!'

'True, nevertheless! Don't look so hurt, *mon chou*. It is the way of the world—and what would you?'

Elizabeth sighed; but she had no opposition to offer to Anne's worldly wisdom. Common-sense told her that there was more than a mere grain of truth in what the younger girl had said. But a cloud passed over her sweet face. Anne once said, 'Elizabeth would like to think every woman a Madonna, and every man a Galahad; and it hurts her to find that it is not so!' And this remark was true. Elizabeth Temple, for all her steady common-sense and quiet calm of mind, was an idealist, and Anne's keener vision was often the one thing that saved her from foolish trustfulness. She would have preferred to believe that Peter and Héloïse had given their help from motives of pure friendship, rather than from curiosity. However, at this moment Janie came to demand if they were ever going to have breakfast.

‘The fire is alight and blazing,’ she declared. ‘The table is spread; there remains only to make the coffee and bear it in.’

‘Janie! I wish you would talk English, and not that awful polyglot nonsense that is neither French nor English!’ exclaimed her eldest sister.

Janie raised apologetic brown eyes to the fair face so unlike her own. ‘I forgot, Elizabeth. It is so difficult to remember.’

‘But you must try,’ replied Elizabeth sternly. ‘Otherwise, Anne and I will have to send you to school to the Ladies’ College, and you will not be able to be with us during the week.’

‘It is so short a time since we have left *la belle France*,’ pleaded Janie.

‘Oh, come along to breakfast,’ called Anne. ‘I’m always telling you about your English, Janie! And there isn’t any money to send her to school, Elizabeth, so why trouble her? Come; I have made the coffee, and already it cools.’

Chapter V.

‘MISS’ OZANNE.

It was two hours later that Janie came dancing into the cottage, brown hair all ruffled by the wind, cheeks glowing, and eyes sparkling. ‘Elizabeth!’ she called. ‘Where are you?’

‘Upstairs,’ replied Elizabeth. ‘Don’t come up; I’m coming down in a minute.’ A minute later she appeared, clad in a rose-pink overall, with a blue duster tied over her head, for she had been ‘turning out’ her own bedroom. Two days previously Javotte’s son had come to fetch his mother home to St Malo, and the three girls had settled down to a life of domestication, varied by the pursuit of their hobbies. It being a Saturday, Anne had set off for St Peter Port and the marketing three-quarters of an hour before, and Janie had accompanied her as far as St Peter’s-in-the-Wood, where she had left the bus, called at the post-office to buy some stamps, and then walked home, literally revelling in the mighty gusts of wind which almost took her off her feet. For, in the sea-bound Îles Normandes the west wind is a mighty tyrant during the winter. However, all his raging had no ill effects upon the Temples. Janie, in particular, bloomed in the climate, and Elizabeth, remembering the dreadful day, now nearly three weeks before, when it had seemed that the baby sister had been brought to Guernsey only to die, felt a deep glow of thankfulness. ‘What do you want, Janie?’ she inquired, as she emptied her dust-pan. ‘And have you dusted the living-room?’

‘*Ma foi*, no! I have forgotten! But I will do it now; only, dear Elizabeth, may I go to tea with Mélie Lihou this afternoon?’

‘Who on earth is Mélie Lihou?’ demanded Elizabeth.

‘Her father is a grower. She lives at Grâce à Dieu—that white house on the Peter Port road with a round garden, just after St Pierre du Bois. They get their milk from the Berthelot farm, too, and she’s often there when I am. She’s ever so nice, Elizabeth; and to-day I met her with her mother when I got off the bus at the post-office, and Mrs Lihou said would you let me come? Mr Lihou will bring me back in the car to-night. Please, may I?’

‘Yes, I suppose so,’ replied Elizabeth slowly. She fully recognised the fact that Janie must have friends of her own age, and she recognised the house as being one from which she had seen a motherly-looking woman issue. The little sister had plenty of common-sense, and might be trusted to make friends with no one of whom her sisters were likely to disapprove. ‘How old is Mélie?’ she asked.

‘Fourteen,’ replied Janie. ‘She came back with me to see if I could come—she’s waiting by the wall, and watching the sea. It is lovely to-day, isn’t it?’

She darted out as she spoke, and Elizabeth presently saw her chattering eagerly to a small, slight girl in a big navy-blue coat and scarlet tam-o’-shanter. After a few minutes’ talk the stranger turned away, waving her hand, and Janie returned to the cottage to hang up her hat and coat, and don an overall like her sister’s, before she collected her dusters and set to work on the living-room.

Elizabeth, moving about in the little kitchen, heard her crooning to herself in the way that was peculiarly Janie’s own when she was pleased about anything, and smiled happily. At any rate, so far as the family baby was concerned, the move to Guernsey had been a success. ‘And if only I can get on with my writing,’ she thought to herself, ‘and Anne’s pictures get taken, it will be splendid.’ She finished her work, and then went into the living-room, which was the largest room in La Rochelle.

It was a wide, low room, with raftered ceiling and yellow-washed walls. The floor, the rafters, and the doors were all of oak, black with age, for La Rochelle had been built three

hundred years previously. In the huge old-fashioned fireplace burned a fire of sea-wrack and wood picked up on the shore. The clear flames leaped up gaily, flickering on the old steel and irons with a merry light. At the two long, low casements hung curtains of yellow net to match the walls; at one end of the room was Javotte's huge Breton armoire, older, even, than the cottage itself; at the other stood the little rosewood cottage piano, which had been her own twenty-first birthday gift from Madame Ozanne. The table in the middle of the floor belonged to the same period as the armoire, and so did the four heavy chairs ranged round the wall. The quaint settle by the hearth was of later date, but it fitted in well with the rest of the room. In one corner an old grandfather clock, with beaming brass face, ticked away solemnly; along the wall under the windows, and in the two corners on either side of the fireplace, were low bookshelves, literally crammed with books. The only pictures on the walls were two remarkably fine engravings, one of Beethoven, the other of Tennyson. Janie had filled a huge Breton jug with sprays of ivy, and it stood near the clock; while a low bowl of the same pottery, containing Christmas roses, adorned the high old chimney-piece. The whole atmosphere of the room was one of quiet contentment and refinement. Of course, the cottage was somewhat exceptional. It had belonged to an artist three years previously, and he had altered and added to it, luckily without altering the character of the place. Javotte's son had taken it over from him as it stood, and had dug up part of the field that went with it, turning it into a kitchen-garden, whence most of the vegetables used in La Rochelle came. Elizabeth noted the daintiness of her little kingdom with a sigh of satisfaction. Janie, engaged in putting some books back on the shelves, heard her, and turned round.

'What is it, Elizabeth?' she asked.

'Nothing, *petite*. I was only thinking how much we have to be thankful for,' replied the elder girl.

'The goat this morning, for instance?' suggested Janie, with a chuckle.

Elizabeth laughed as she smoothed the brown hair, which looked rather like a golliwog's at the moment. 'Yes—even that. It was very funny.'

'Anne didn't think so,' replied Janie, getting up and dusting her hands with a corner of her overall. 'She was furious when I took her clothes to her.'

'Yes; I suppose she would be. And then, I couldn't get that ridiculous boy to go away.'

'It was funny, wasn't it?' chuckled Janie. 'I wish I'd been able to get a snap of her when she was squatting in the middle of the table.'

'I should think Anne is glad you couldn't do anything of the kind,' laughed Elizabeth. 'What time are you going to the Lihous', Baby?'

'Mélie asked me to arrive at three,' replied Janie. 'Won't it leave you alone, Elizabeth? I had not thought of that.'

'I shall be all right, *chérie*. I am going to be so very busy with my new tale.'

'And Anne will return before five o'clock,' added Janie, with satisfaction; 'so all goes well.'

Then she consented to fetch her needlework, and sit down to it while Elizabeth wrote letters.

At two o'clock Janie set out on her long walk, for when it was possible to walk and not take the bus, the sisters did so. Elizabeth waved 'good-bye' to her from the window, and then returned to the living-room, where she made up the fire before going to the great armoire and taking from one of its shelves an attaché case. This she unlocked, and drew from it a pile of closely-written manuscript, which she laid on the table, together with a sheaf of fresh paper. She examined her fountain-pen, hunted up some blotting-paper, and then settled down to steady work.

It was only occasionally that she could get to work like this, for in her locked case Elizabeth treasured a very great secret. Her sisters knew that she scribbled short stories and verses; but neither of them had the smallest idea that she was contemplating a book, and she was very shy about it—it seemed such a big undertaking. Now she glanced rapidly through the last few pages she had written; then she set to work, and for some time nothing was to be heard save the crackling of the fire, the solemn tick-tack of the old clock in the corner, and the sound of the pen flying across the sheets. Presently the clock chimed three, and Elizabeth paused long enough in her task to put fresh logs on the fire, and draw the curtains right back. At about ten to four she heard the sound of an engine, and knew it was the motor-bus from St Peter Port. Rapidly she collected the finished sheets together and put them into the case, which she locked and returned to the armoire, before going to the door to welcome Anne, whom she expected by that bus; but no Anne appeared. Indeed, the only passenger set down was a little girl of eleven or twelve, who looked irresolutely about her. Elizabeth was fascinated by her face. Not that she was beautiful, or even pretty. It was rather an odd little face than otherwise, with strongly-marked features, heavy black brows, and a sallow skin. She had a quantity of straight black hair which she wore cut in a broad fringe across her forehead, and then hanging in a thick, lank mass down her back and far below her waist. She was oddly dressed, too, in a scarlet be-caped coat, with a little black hat with a scarlet band round it.

Elizabeth was about to withdraw into the house again, for the west wind was cold, when the small personage glanced round, and, seeing her, walked up to her, holding out a well-gloved hand, and saying in clear, well-bred tones, ‘Good-afternoon; I wonder if I may trouble you to direct me to some hotel where I can get tea?’

Elizabeth gasped. The extreme self-possession of the child was distinctly startling, almost as much so as her old-fashioned speech; but the young lady herself took no notice of the start, for she went on, ‘or, perhaps, you could give me tea yourself?’

‘I shall be pleased to do so,’ replied Miss Temple gravely. ‘Will you come in?’ She held the gate open as she spoke.

The small stranger glanced at her with shrewd eyes. ‘I beg your pardon,’ she said. ‘I see I have made a mistake—you are a lady.’

‘May not ladies keep cafés?’ asked Elizabeth, struggling to keep her amusement out of her voice.

‘I do not doubt but that some do,’ replied the small girl seriously; ‘but I do not think you do.’

‘You are right; I do not,’ said Elizabeth quietly. ‘At the same time, if you care to drink a cup of tea with me, I shall be enchanted.’

‘Indeed, the pleasure will be mine. May I not know who is my hostess?’

‘My name is Temple,’ returned Elizabeth, leading the way into the living-room. ‘Elizabeth Temple. And you are—’

‘Miss Ozanne!’ was the startling reply.

Chapter VI.

‘WHAT SHALL I DO WITH PAULINE?’

Battling with a violent inclination to laugh, Elizabeth seated her small guest on the settle, and hung the kettle on the hook which depended on a long chain in the middle of the fireplace. Miss Ozanne watched her proceedings with interest.

‘That is surely an unusual method of boiling a kettle,’ she remarked. ‘I have never, hitherto, seen it done so.’

‘It is the old method,’ explained Elizabeth, as she brought delicate old Chelsea ware from the armoire, and laid it on a snowy cloth. ‘Would you not like to remove your coat? You find the fire a little warm? Yes?’

‘Thank you. I should like to dispense with my outer wraps,’ replied Miss Ozanne, and proceeded to take off her hat and coat—her gloves she had already removed. She watched her hostess with a grave politeness, making occasional remarks which might have come from a prim maiden lady of sixty or so; and Elizabeth replied to them suitably, wondering to herself the while who the child was, and why she was there. That she belonged to gentlefolk was obvious. That she was continually with grown-up people was also obvious. What the aforesaid grown-up people were thinking of to let such a mere baby roam about by herself was rather more than the girl could understand. She made the tea, wondering if she dare question her odd little visitor at all. At this point there was the sound of light, rapid footsteps outside, then the door opened, and Anne came in, laden with parcels.

‘Hullo, Elizabeth,’ she said. ‘I left the bus at St Peter’s-in-the-Wood, because I remembered that we were short of cheese, and I had forgotten to get any in town.’

At this juncture her eyes fell upon the guest, and she started. ‘Why—’ she began.

Miss Ozanne, however, was quite equal to the situation. ‘I believe I saw you on the bus,’ she observed, holding out a diminutive paw with an air of *savoir faire* that literally took Anne’s breath away. ‘Your sister, learning that I was seeking an hotel in order to get some tea, was charming enough to invite me here.’

Anne’s gray eyes opened widely, but she was possessed of a strong sense of humour—far more so than Elizabeth—so she promptly replied, ‘The honour is ours.’

‘Tea is ready, dear,’ interposed her sister. ‘Will you not remove your outdoor things and sit down?’

‘Where’s Janie?’ asked Anne, as she complied with this request.

‘She has gone to have tea with a little girl named Mélie Lihou,’ explained Elizabeth.

‘Is Janie another sister?’ inquired Miss Ozanne.

‘Yes,’ replied Anne. ‘She is our youngest sister.’

‘Ah, you are fortunate!’ sighed the guest. ‘I am an only child, for one cannot count a half-brother twenty years older than myself, can one?’

‘I should say that depended on the brother,’ said Anne drily.

‘Oh, he means well,’ replied Miss Ozanne, with condescension. ‘But he bores me sometimes. He bored me to-day, so I thought I would take a little trip into the country in order to give him time to recover his temper. He is my guardian, you see. I am an orphan.’

Had she been laying claim to the crown of the British Empire, she could not have uttered her last sentence with more of an air. But her hostesses exchanged glances.

‘Do you mean you have run away, and no one at home knows where you are?’ asked Anne bluntly.

‘There was no question of running away,’ was the dignified rebuke she received. ‘I merely took advantage of the fine weather to learn something of the island. We have not lived in Guernsey very long, you see—only six weeks. In all that time I have visited only Fermaine Bay and L’Ancresse. My Mademoiselle disliked walking, and my half-brother is too busy to take me about. But to-day Mademoiselle has gone home; and, as I said before, Paul bored me, so I just came away on the bus. That is all.’

‘And when do you propose to go back?’ demanded Anne.

‘I believe there is a bus which leaves Rocquaine at six o’clock or thereabouts. I will return to St Peter Port on that.’

‘But, my dear child,’ began Elizabeth, ‘your brother will be dreadfully anxious about you, I am sure.’

‘So much the better,’ returned Miss Ozanne calmly. ‘He will value me the more when I return.’

‘How did he bore you?’ asked Anne suddenly.

‘He was rude to me about Mademoiselle,’ was the reply. ‘You see, she is the fourth I have had since mamma died two years ago; and I believe he was rather anxious that she should stay. I was not, so she has gone, and he was annoyed.’

‘You have not been in Guernsey long, then?’ queried Anne, apparently idly.

‘No; only for six weeks. Before that we lived in Jersey. But Paul has taken up a practice here—he is an advocate—and so we came to live in Peter Port.’

‘Ah! we have only been in Guernsey a fortnight,’ said Anne, ‘so I have scarcely had time to learn Peter Port thoroughly; I wonder if I know where you live?’

‘Possibly; it is Le Mesurier Square, No. 19,’ replied Miss Ozanne innocently, quite unaware of the fact that she was being skilfully pumped. ‘A big house at the corner, with dark blue curtains.’

‘No! I don’t think I know it.’ Anne got up from the table. ‘Will you please excuse me, Elizabeth? I have just remembered a postcard I ought to have sent off, but forgot.’

Elizabeth nodded, and Anne vanished. Ten minutes later she came back, and, in answer to the elder girl’s raised eyebrows, she nodded her head slightly. Miss Ozanne was by this time engaged in looking at some snapshots of Brittany, so missed this little piece of by-play.

‘Is it not strange,’ she remarked sweetly, ‘that your former guardian should bear the same name as myself? I do not know her, of course; but I expect she was some connection of ours.’

‘Most probably,’ replied Anne. ‘Elizabeth, if Miss Ozanne will excuse you for a minute, I should like your advice.’

‘Oh, please,’ said Miss Ozanne. And with this gracious waiving of the rites of hospitality, they left her to the views, and retired to the kitchen, Anne carefully closing the door behind her.

‘Well?’ said Elizabeth.

‘All right,’ replied Anne, in French. ‘I got them on the ’phone. That poor fellow was nearly mad with worry. He is coming out in the car to fetch her, and I said we would keep her till he came.’

‘She really is an extraordinary child,’ commented Elizabeth.

‘Been too much with elder people,’ replied Anne. ‘Come along, now, and let us keep her amused till he arrives. It’s a pity Janie isn’t here!’

They returned to the living-room, and devoted themselves to the task of entertaining Miss Ozanne. It was a comparatively easy matter. She examined all their views, commenting on them much as an elderly maiden lady might have done. Then she turned the conversation on themselves.

‘What quaint names you have,’ she observed. ‘I like them, you know. Really, they are most restful after the surfeit of Gladyses, Gwendolines, Marjories, and Phyllises we are having nowadays.’

At this point Anne choked audibly, while Elizabeth sat biting her lips. Fortunately Miss Ozanne was so full of her subject that she did not notice.

‘My own name is Pauline,’ she went on. ‘It seems rather absurd to have Paul and Pauline in the same family, does it not? I have often wished Paul would let me use his other name, Heriot; but he seems to have a foolish prejudice against it, and will not hear of it.’

‘How sad,’ said Anne solemnly. ‘But have you no other name yourself?’

‘No; I am just Pauline.’

At this point a motor was heard; and presently there was the sound of steps on the pebbled path, and then a knock at the door.

‘I will go,’ said Anne.

She returned almost immediately, bringing with her a tall young man, who had the same dark eyes and hair as the child. There the resemblance ended, for Paul Ozanne was unusually good-looking. As soon as she saw him, his little step-sister rose with a good deal of dignity. He took no notice of her, however, for he was responding to Elizabeth’s greeting.

‘Mr Ozanne, is it not? I hope you have not worried terribly about your little sister.’

‘Yes; I am Paul Ozanne,’ he said. ‘And you, I know, must be Miss Temple. I cannot thank you for your goodness to Pauline. I feared something had happened to her.’

‘Please sit down, Mr Ozanne,’ said Elizabeth. ‘Oh, permit me. My sister, Anne. It was Anne who rang you up.’

‘I am deeply grateful to you, Miss Anne,’ he said. ‘I had had a really terrible afternoon. I feared Pauline had fallen over the cliffs somewhere in the dark. As you know, it is not too safe along by Petit Bot and Moulin Huet; and, of course, I had no clue as to her whereabouts.’

Here Miss Ozanne considered it time that she spoke up for herself. ‘I consider you were foolish, Paul,’ she said. ‘I am not a baby.’

‘Indeed, you make me think you are much more of a baby than I had thought,’ he replied sternly. ‘If it had not been for Miss Temple’s goodness, I do not know what might not have happened to you. Well, one thing is certain. I cannot go through another afternoon like this, and as it seems impossible to get any one who will stay with you, I must send you to a boarding-school.’

The child went white, but her dignity would not let her cry. ‘Shall I get ready to go?’ she asked.

‘Yes; it is time,’ he replied sternly.

‘Come upstairs with me,’ said Anne. ‘You would like to wash your hands and brush your hair, would you not?’

She assented gravely, and followed Anne upstairs to the room shared with Janie. Meanwhile Paul Ozanne had turned to Elizabeth.

‘A bachelor is so helpless,’ he said. ‘I am fond enough of the child, but I don’t seem able to manage her. Miss Temple, I am a perfect stranger to you, and I have no right to trouble you at all; but I know so few women. Tell me, what should I do with Pauline?’

‘You say no governess will stay with her?’ queried Elizabeth.

‘None will stay longer than five months. You see, my poor step-mother had the child always with her until her death. When she died, she begged me not to send Pauline to school, as she disliked schools for girls. I have done my best, but she will submit to no one. She isn’t like other children.’

There was a moment’s silence. Then Elizabeth made up her mind.

‘Mr Ozanne,’ she said, ‘let matters rest for a week or so, and bring Pauline over to have tea with us next Saturday. In the meantime I will think it over, and see what I can advise. Believe me, I sympathise with you, for we have a younger sister to bring up and educate, too.’

‘You are very good,’ he said. ‘I can never thank you sufficiently.’

Then Anne and the child came in, and ‘good-byes’ were said.

When the guests were gone, Elizabeth told Anne of the little episode. ‘Was I wrong, Anne?’ she asked anxiously. ‘It was such an unconventional thing to do, but he seems in such trouble about the child. Do you think I ought not to have suggested it?’

Anne’s reply was most reassuring. ‘I don’t see what else you could have done, Sissie dear. As for Pauline, I don’t for one instant think she ought to go to school yet. She would just be unutterably miserable. No school-girl on earth would understand her as she is.’

‘No; I think you are right there,’ agreed Elizabeth. ‘We must think things over, and see what we can suggest on Saturday.’

‘And in the meantime it would be a good idea to wash up the tea things,’ observed Anne, as she began to clear away. ‘No; I’ll do it. You go and read or sing.’

But while Elizabeth’s sweet voice flooded the cottage with melody, she murmured to herself, ‘Oh, Sissie, Sissie! I sha’n’t keep you much longer. Pauline Ozanne’s difficulties will soon be solved if that young man has his own way!’

Chapter VII.

WITCHCRAFT.

‘Anne, will you come and brush your hair in my room to-night? I want to talk to you.’

Anne looked up from the frock she was making for Janie, surprise in her eyes. ‘Yes; of course I will, if you want me,’ she said—matter-of-factly, however.

It was nearly a week since the Saturday which Janie persisted in calling ‘happenings’ Saturday. During that week the arrival of ‘Miss’ Ozanne had been most thoroughly discussed, especially by the youngest Miss Temple, who was utterly disgusted at the thought of what she had missed.

‘You were out to tea at the Lihous,’ Anne finally reminded her. ‘You can’t have everything, you know.’

‘I know; but I do wish I had seen Miss Ozanne!’ For neither Elizabeth nor Anne would call the strange child anything else.

‘You’ll see her on Saturday,’ said Elizabeth comfortingly. ‘And you can ask Mélie to tea on Friday if you like.’

‘I should; but I don’t think she can come,’ replied Janie. ‘Her school hasn’t broken up yet, you see.’

‘Well, then, ask her for Saturday week,’ suggested Anne. ‘Don’t ask her for Saturday, though. Miss Ozanne will be quite enough for one day!’

‘All right. That will be splendid!’ And Janie ran off, quite happy.

Concerning the chief reason for the Saturday visit, neither of the girls had said anything. Elizabeth, full of plans for the lonely child, was also busy with household matters. And twice Anne had taken Janie for a long walk, thus—all unknown to herself—giving her sister a chance of getting on with the precious book. Anne, on the other hand, had said nothing, because her mind was too full of what she had seen in Paul Ozanne’s eyes as he had looked at her lovely sister. The Temples had been brought up in almost nun-like seclusion, but Anne was swift to recognise love when she saw it. That Elizabeth knew nothing about it, she felt sure. What she would think about it did she learn of it, the younger girl could not decide. At any rate, Elizabeth’s sweet calm, which was so great a part of her charm, was not to be disturbed. So much Anne had decided.

‘We know nothing about him,’ she thought. ‘He may be everything he ought to be; but he may not. Anyhow, it may never come to anything, so I shall just say nothing. If he really loves her—and I’m pretty certain he does, whether he knows it or not—they’ll find out sooner or later. And that will be settled.’

Having come to this decision, Anne left the matter alone. The first intimation that there would be any discussion of the Ozanne affair had not come till this Thursday night, when Elizabeth asked her to come to her room for hair-brushing.

‘I wonder what she’s decided,’ ruminated the younger sister, as she sat embroidering a spray of flowers on a cuff with exquisite stitches. She cast a glance at her sister. Elizabeth was writing at the table, busy with a short story of Breton life, which, she hoped, would add five or six guineas to her bank balance. There was nothing in her face save a deep interest in her heroine. Anne nodded to herself as she turned back to her sewing, and there was silence in the cottage for a little while. Then Elizabeth got up, gathering together her sheets.

‘Finished?’ queried her sister, with interest.

The authoress nodded. ‘Yes. Oh, Anne! I really do think it’s the best I’ve ever done! I hope they’ll take it.’

‘Where will you send it?’ demanded Anne.

Elizabeth pondered the question for a moment. ‘I don’t really know,’ she began. Then she broke off, listening. ‘Anne, wasn’t that a car I heard?’

‘A car? Along the Rocquaine road at this hour? Nonsense, Elizabeth! You are dreaming, *ma chérie!*’ Nevertheless, she, too, listened intently. There was silence again; then the unmistakable sound of a motor was borne to them.

‘It must be the doctor,’ said Anne. ‘No one else would come down here at this time of night.’

‘It’s stopping,’ said Elizabeth.

‘Good gracious! Well, unless it’s Mr Ozanne to say that that imp has run away again, I can’t think what it can be. Listen! Yes; he’s coming to the door. Good gracious, Elizabeth!’

Elizabeth made no reply as she left the room and opened the outer door. Anne listened anxiously to the voices outside.

‘Good-evening! This Mrs de Garis’s?’ It was a strange voice.

‘No,’ replied Elizabeth. ‘She lives in the next cottage farther down the road.’

‘Ah, thanks! Er—I say—I’m a stranger here, doing locum for Dr Fuzzey. Can you tell me if the good lady speaks English?’

‘Yes; but very brokenly, of course. The children all speak it quite well.’

‘Thanks,’ said the voice again. ‘Well, good-evening.’

‘Good-evening,’ said Elizabeth.

There was the sound of retreating footsteps, and then Elizabeth shut the door and came in.

‘The doctor going to the De Garis’s,’ she said.

‘H’m! That’s funny,’ replied Anne thoughtfully.

Her sister paused in her task of clearing away writing materials, to stare at her. ‘Anne! What on earth do you mean?’

‘I met Mrs de Garis this morning,’ explained Anne. ‘She told me that the baby had been over-looked.’

‘Anne! Talk sense!’

‘My dear girl, that’s exactly what she said—neither more nor less. You know what a belief in witchcraft they all have.’

Elizabeth was silent for a few moments. ‘Perhaps it isn’t the baby,’ she said at length.

‘Perhaps,’ replied Anne briefly. ‘At any rate, whoever sent for the doctor, I’m sure it wasn’t Mrs de Garis.’

‘Then who could it be?’

‘I don’t know. Peter, perhaps. He’s a younger generation. But if it is the baby, then I don’t for one instant believe they’ll let him look at it.’

‘Anne! Of course they must! Why, it might die.’

‘Then it’s been ill-wished,’ replied Anne, looking very splendid and very tragic with the sombreness in her gray eyes, and the droop to her lips.

Elizabeth looked at her. ‘Anne, you don’t believe it?’

‘No; of course not. But that poor woman does. Oh, Sissie! Can’t you see the tragedy of it? The baby is ill—pining away; and she thinks it’s witchcraft that’s killing it.’

‘It seems almost impossible in the twentieth century,’ began Elizabeth, but checked herself, for there was the sound of rapid footsteps, and then there came a knock at the door. Anne, who was nearest, went out, and presently came back with the young doctor, who looked both perturbed and indignant.

‘I couldn’t help coming!’ he burst out. ‘I want you to come back with me and try to persuade that fool of a woman to let me attend to her baby!’

‘She says it’s witchcraft, doesn’t she?’ queried Anne.

He turned to her, looking at her as if he had only just realised her presence.

‘Yes; she says that the wise-woman, or whatever they call it, from Torteval, is coming to break the spell. She showed me some queer burr-like things on the windowsill which, she says, are the spell. I never heard of such tomfoolery in my life! Witches!’ And he snorted violently.

‘La Sorcière Blanche,’ murmured Anne thoughtfully. ‘Yes; we knew that in Brittany too. I’m sorry, doctor, but I’m afraid nothing my sister or myself might say would do any good. For one thing, we don’t know them well enough; and for another, there is nothing so hard to alter as a belief in witchcraft.’

‘But in these days! It’s impossible!’ exploded the doctor.

‘If you are English,’ replied Anne. ‘I suppose it does seem so to you. But, you see, we have lived in Brittany for some years, and we know how hard witchcraft beliefs die there. Mrs de Garis belongs to the older generation, and she retains all her faith in the old beliefs—why, it’s only a hundred years or a little more since witches were burnt in Guernsey.’

‘Well, I can’t help that. I’m going straight to the authorities about it,’ he declared.

‘I don’t know how far they will be able to help you,’ said Elizabeth. ‘Is the baby very ill?’

‘I don’t know. The wretched woman refused to let me come near it. If the poor little creature dies, I shall have her brought up for manslaughter!’

‘I don’t know if you can,’ replied Anne. ‘English law doesn’t hold good here, you know. The Channel Isles have their own laws.’

‘I’ll move heaven and earth to have this nonsense put a stop to!’ he retorted. Then, apparently realising all at once how unconventional a visit he was paying, he added, ‘You must think me quite mad. Why, you don’t even know who I am. My name’s Chester—Peter Chester. I say, I don’t always knock up perfect strangers at eleven o’clock and scatter my views on them.’

‘It is rather an exceptional case, isn’t it?’ said Elizabeth, with her sweet smile. ‘Our name is Temple; and we have lived here only three weeks. That is why Mrs de Garis would pay no attention to anything we said. If you think it would be any use, one of us will go over, of course; but I’m afraid Anne is right, and she wouldn’t listen.’

‘Who sent for you?’ asked Anne. ‘Peter?’

‘If Peter is a shock-headed youth of eighteen or thereabouts, it was,’ replied the doctor. ‘Well, I must go now. I’ll come over again in the morning and see if I can do anything then. Good-night.’

When she had seen him off the premises, Anne returned to the living-room with a grave face. ‘Elizabeth, isn’t it terrible?’

‘Yes; it is,’ replied Elizabeth. ‘I’m going over there now to see if I can be of any use.’

Anne shook her head. ‘It won’t be any good. She won’t let you do anything. We’re aliens, you see.’

‘All the same, I can’t go to bed and think of that poor mite suffering, perhaps unnecessarily. I won’t be long, dear; wait for me.’ With this, she went out, only to return ten minutes later to confess that Mrs de Garis would not allow her to cross the doorstep. ‘She got fearfully excited,’ she explained. ‘She shouted at me in Norman-French—I’m not sure she didn’t curse me—and then she slammed the door in my face. And I could hear the baby moaning. Oh, Anne!’

‘It’s no use fretting about it,’ responded Anne. ‘You’ve done your best, Sissie. I’m sorry for the baby’s sake, but you can’t do any more. Let’s put the lamp out and go to bed—it’s late.’

But as they went upstairs, Elizabeth sighed deeply at the thought of the poor suffering baby. Anne vanished into her own room when they reached the landing, but presently

reappeared ready for bed, her beautiful hair falling in soft waveless masses to her knees. 'I'm going to sleep with you to-night, Sissie,' she said, as she proceeded to brush out her silken locks with long, even strokes of the brush. 'Yes, I am!' as Elizabeth turned a protesting face to her. 'You'll worry about that baby all night if you're left to yourself. And, anyway, I want to.'

'But you don't like sharing a bed,' objected her sister. 'You always say you can't sleep.'

'I want to spend to-night with you,' replied Anne stubbornly. 'Please let me, Sissie.'

Elizabeth said no more. As a matter of fact she was rather thankful than otherwise that Anne insisted. She finished brushing her own fair curls, and tied them back. Then she came and got into bed, whither Anne had already betaken herself.

'What have you decided about Miss Ozanne?' asked the latter, when her sister had settled herself comfortably.

'It's difficult to know what to do,' replied Elizabeth. 'As you say, she certainly isn't fit to go to school.'

'No; she certainly isn't,' agreed Anne. 'At the same time, apparently no governess can be got who will stay with her, and that sort of thing is so bad for any child.'

'You speak truly!' replied Elizabeth, slipping into the softer French tongue. 'Yet, what to do? Of a truth, I am puzzled.'

'The best thing,' said Anne slowly, 'would be to let her join some other children for lessons, to prepare her for school-life later. You agree?'

'Yes, truly,' began Elizabeth eagerly, then stopped.

'You have thought of something, *ma mie*?'

There was a moment's silence; then the elder sister replied, 'Yes; I have thought. Only, it may seem of a strangeness.'

'Tell me what you have thought.' Anne's tone was seductively sweet as she spoke.

'It is—it is that she should come here every day and do lessons with Janie.'

'So I thought,' replied Anne quietly. 'Indeed, Elizabeth, it seems to me the only solution of the problem. Of course, we must ask her brother, but I believe he will be rejoiced at the thought. It seemed to me that he would be willing to do anything for the little sister.'

'Of course, we do not really know them,' began Elizabeth, but was silenced by her more impetuous sister.

'Of what matter? I feel sure that he will gladly agree. They have the automobile in which to fetch her. She can work with Janie. She will be here from ten till three every day, and she will be safe. For I do not think she will try to make excursions from us.'

'We—we must permit him—to pay us,' faltered Elizabeth, her face burning in the darkness.

'Truly we must do that,' replied Anne. 'But it need be no great matter; and only a sufficiency to prevent his feeling that he lies under obligations to us. You would not have it otherwise?'

'Oh no,' replied Elizabeth.

There was silence after that. Then Anne spoke again. 'Shall you tell Janie?'

'No; I think not. At any rate not until we have heard what Mr Ozanne has to say.'

'I thought you would say that. Now let us sleep. Good-night, *ma bien-aimée*.'

'Good-night, *belle petite*,' returned Elizabeth lovingly. '*Le bon dieu* guard thee!'

Once more silence fell, and when the moon presently peeped in at the window, the sisters were fast asleep, and La Rochelle was wrapped in dreams.

Chapter VIII.

JANIE ENCOUNTERS THE WHITE WITCH.

Friday morning dawning bright and serene, brought with it no hint of the events that were to happen during the day. Janie was the first to get up—for a wonder. As a rule the baby of the family lay till the last moment, and then only turned out because either Anne or Elizabeth had pulled the bedclothes off her. On this morning, however, she rolled out on to the floor shortly after seven. The elder girls, tired out with the happenings of the night before and their protracted conversation, were still peacefully asleep. Having assured herself that Anne was not in the other camp-bed, and therefore would not be awakened, Janie lit a candle, and proceeded to dress herself with all haste. She left a note on her pillow, simply stating she had gone out, and would be back in time for breakfast. Then, looking more Puck-like than ever in her pointed green cap, she stole downstairs in her stockinged feet, carrying her shoes in her hand. The bolts of the door would have made too much noise for her to draw them, but she had no intention of waking up her sisters that way. Instead, she made her way into the living-room, unlatched the window, opened it, and climbed out.

A small, slight figure loomed up out of the gray dusk, which was already beginning to brighten.

‘Is that you, Miss Janie?’ breathed a voice.

‘Yes; it is I,’ replied Janie, intent on putting on her shoes. ‘Don’t talk loudly, Héloïse, or my sisters may hear and call me back.’

‘Miss Temple kem over last night,’ said Héloïse, in subdued tones. ‘Peter had sent the doctor, and mother wouldn’t have him in. Then Miss Temple kem, and she was angry!’

‘Who was? Elizabeth?’ queried Janie, with interest.

‘Noh, noh! My mother! She would not let Miss Temple come in, and she cursed her—yes!’

‘How horrid of her!’ Janie stood stock still in the middle of the road. ‘Why did she curse Elizabeth?’

‘It iss of noh use to send doctors,’ explained Héloïse. ‘La Sorcière Blanche was coming, and my mother she iss dis-tracted. She would not hurt Miss Temple. But you must keep hidden, and not let her see you.’

‘Very well,’ agreed Janie, ‘but you must hide me somewhere where I can see everything—and hear, too!’

‘Oah, yess,’ said Héloïse. ‘Now, wait here.’

She slipped away into the little dark cottage which was her home, leaving Janie pleasurably thrilled. The whole truth of the affair was that Janie, on meeting Héloïse the afternoon before, had been informed that the baby had been ‘over-looked’; and that, in accordance with the custom generations old, her mother had sent for the wise woman, or, as Héloïse called her, ‘La Sorcière Blanche,’ in order that she might undo the spell. Héloïse, herself, was partly scornful; but she was sufficiently Guernésiaise to have a sneaking belief in the power of witches; so when the English girl had asked her if she really believed in the spell, she had wriggled uncomfortably, and tried to evade the question.

Janie, with five years of her life spent among the Breton folk, was keenly interested, and more than half-credulous. Then she had confided to Héloïse that she had never even seen a witch, much less been present at a witch spell-breaking ceremony. The Guernsey child looked at the alien with shrewd eyes, and declared that it would be a pleasure to let Janie see it. The white witch would not be able to come to the De Garis’ household until early the next

morning, as she had to attend to a little business at the other end of the island, connected with a cow whose milk had unexpectedly run dry. If Miss Janie would get up early, Héloïse would meet her outside of La Rochelle and smuggle her into 'Romaine,' the De Garis's cottage, and then she could see and hear everything for herself. Janie very well knew that if she were to ask permission, it would be refused her. Neither Anne nor Elizabeth would countenance such a proceeding. Of that she was sure. Therefore she decided to go first, and ask after. Hence the need for care in speaking quietly at La Rochelle.

It had seemed great fun, when she and Héloïse had planned it the afternoon before. Standing outside the cottage in the semi-dusk of a December morning, Janie was not so sure of the fun; besides which, her conscience had begun to wake up. If she had been alone much longer, it is probable that she would have scurried back to La Rochelle; but just then Héloïse appeared round the corner, beckoning to her, so Janie followed, feeling thoroughly uncomfortable.

'Up here,' whispered Héloïse, pointing to an outside ladder which led to a loft over the kitchen.

Up it Janie went nimbly, followed by the other child. When they reached the top, Héloïse pointed to a sort of trapdoor, and, with a whispered admonition to be quiet, wriggled through, leaving her friend to follow her. The floor of the De Garis's loft was rotten in a good many places, and there were great holes in the planking through which the light from the kitchen lamp came up with an eerie effect. A low moaning came, too, at intervals, and the moaning was accompanied now and then by a low sob, as the poor superstitious mother crouched over the cradle where the sick baby lay. The whole effect was as uncanny as it could well be, and Janie would have given much to have found it all to be just a dream, and to have awakened to find herself in her own little bed at La Rochelle, with the sound of Anne's regular breathing coming to her from the opposite corner. However, it was no use wishing, so she huddled down in the corner beside Héloïse, who was beginning to feel rather panicky herself. A long sliver of wood had been torn away from the planking just in front of them, and through the hole thus made Janie found she could see everything fairly well. The baby's cradle was near the fire, and by it Mrs de Garis sat, her hair dishevelled and a white agonised look on her face that hurt Janie.

Sitting on a chair at the other side of the fireplace, his feet stretched out, his hands in his pockets, was Peter. He looked thoroughly disgusted. He had gone into Peter Port the evening before on purpose to fetch the doctor, and it had all been of no use. His mother had refused to allow the Englishman to set foot in the house. Worse; when Miss Temple had come over to see if she could help, she had been cursed, and the door had been slammed in her face. Peter possessed a warm regard for Elizabeth, whose fair beauty had enchained his youthful heart, and he felt very bitter that she should have been treated in this way. Besides, he felt that, as the man of the house for these past eighteen months, his mother should have listened to him. Therefore, he looked on at the proceedings with a coldly disapproving eye. The younger children were clustered about the room in various nooks and corners, whispering together in an awed manner. Then Héloïse pulled Janie's sleeve, and, pointing to some curious dark brown objects on the window-sill, not unlike chestnut burrs, whispered that those were the spells! Janie shivered. The tense atmosphere of the place was getting on her nerves, and she felt thoroughly scared.

Just at that moment there came a heavy portentous rapping on the door. At a sign from her mother, who remained kneeling by the baby's cradle, Bonita got up and opened it. For a moment nothing happened; then there was a soft 'Hsh—Hsh,' and the White Witch entered.

Janie stared at her with fascinated eyes. She was a little old woman, with brown wrinkled face and nut-cracker jaws. Her uncovered hair was white as snow, and so were the beetling

eyebrows which overhung her eyes. She wore black—a black gown and a black shawl, and she leant on a finely-carved black stick. She came into the room without a word, while Bonita shut the door carefully. Then she looked round her, and gave vent to a low cackle of laughter. ‘Héloïse de Garis!’ she called in a shrill, cracked voice, ‘bring down that stranger you have in the loft!’

Janie knew enough of the Norman-French, which is the mother-tongue of the Îles Normandes, to understand what was being said, and her flesh literally crept at this uncanny prescience. Oh yes, this was a witch right enough! No one but a witch could have known she was up there. The rest of the De Garis family were staring upwards, open-mouthed. If she had not been so terrified, Janie must surely have laughed at their expressions. As it was, she shrank back against Héloïse, who had begun to whimper.

‘Héloïse de Garis,’ came that dreadful cracked voice again, ‘are you coming, or must I fetch you?’

With a little scream Héloïse scrambled to her feet and staggered across the floor, followed by a terrified Janie, who was inwardly vowing that, if only she got safely away, she would never again meddle with witches to the day of her death.

There was an opening in the floor of the loft, and from it a ladder led from it to the kitchen. Down this the two girls went, till finally they stood in the presence of the White Witch, fixing them with black eyes as bright as Héloïse’s own. Those eyes had a terrible fascination for Janie. Under their spell, she lifted her own brown ones to the witch’s face. The witch, herself, took no notice of Héloïse, who stood beside her, sobbing. She looked steadily at the little English girl in a deathly silence that could be felt. Just as Janie was on the verge of screaming, the old woman suddenly gave vent to her cackling laugh. ‘So!’ she said in her Norman-French, ‘a foreigner! come to see the witch!’ Janie looked at her, absolutely dumb with terror. No one else in the room moved. This terrible old woman dominated them all. The witch suddenly bent forward, bringing her face so near to the child’s that her bushy eyebrows almost touched her. ‘An English child!’ she said. ‘Ah, well! there is a companion for you, English child. There is a separation which is not a separation. There is death behind you, and tears before you. But if you will struggle, you will meet the rainbow at the summit of the mountains.’ She paused with a low chuckle. Then her mood suddenly changed. ‘Begone!’ she screamed in English, pointing to the door. ‘Begone!’

Janie needed no second bidding. She tore at the latch, raised it, dashed from the cottage, and sobbing, gasping, well-nigh sick with terror, rushed up the road to La Rochelle, where she burst into the living-room, literally falling into the arms of Anne, who gazed at her in dumbfounded silence.

‘Anne! Anne!’ gasped Janie.

Anne sat down on the floor, and hugged the terrified child to her, while Elizabeth came running downstairs to see what had happened. It was a long time before they got at any sense, and by that time Janie was so spent by what she had gone through, that she was only fit for bed, whither they packed her off when they finally understood. Even then she refused to go unless one of them would stay with her, so they spent the day taking it in turns to sit beside her. But it settled any further doubt in Elizabeth’s mind as to the advisability of asking Pauline Ozanne to share Janie’s lessons. The sooner the little sister had some friends of her own class the better. If Paul Ozanne would agree to it, Pauline should come to them on Monday, even though Christmas was only ten days off.

Janie gradually fell asleep, and when she woke up she was almost her normal self again. But it was a long time before she did anything else of which she knew her sisters would disapprove; and she left witches and witchcraft alone after this.

Chapter IX.

AN ANCIENT BELIEF.

It was about eleven o'clock on that same morning that Anne, walking briskly homewards from St Peter's-in-the-Wood, whither she had been to make some necessary purchases, heard the ting-ting of a bicycle bell, followed a moment later by a cheery hail of 'Miss Temple!'

She turned round, and saw Dr Chester beside her. 'Good-morning,' she said gaily. 'So you are fulfilling your word about coming out to see the De Garis baby?'

'Rather,' he replied enthusiastically. 'I'm going to do my level best, anyhow.'

'Well, let's hope it's still alive,' responded Anne. 'They had a White Witch there this morning.'

'Good lord!' he exclaimed, genuinely appalled. 'Isn't it terrible to think that such things can be in the twentieth century?'

'Well, but Guernsey is scarcely England,' replied Anne. 'As far as that goes, I believe they hold much the same kind of beliefs in the lonely parts of Devon and Cornwall. And I know in the Scottish Highlands they believe in bogles, and goblins, and kelpies.'

'Yes; but to sacrifice a child's life—for that's what it comes to,' he returned. Then, with a twinkle, he asked, 'Have you seen the White Witch? What is she like?'

'No; I haven't seen her,' said Anne seriously, 'but my baby sister has. And got the fright of her life!'

'Oh! How was that?' he asked.

So Anne told him as much as she could remember of Janie's garbled account of her morning visit to the De Garis's. 'She's in bed now,' she finished up. 'She's still so scared that she won't be left. My elder sister is with her till I come back; then I shall take my turn.'

He looked grave at this account. 'Is she a very highly-strung kiddie?' he asked.

'Yes; she is rather,' returned Anne. 'She always takes things very intensely. When our father died, three months ago, we thought she would be ill with grief. She is better now, but it still comes over her at times.'

He nodded thoughtfully. 'I see. Well, Miss Anne, I don't want you to think I want to drum up another patient; but I'd like to have a look at her. She sounds rather over-strung, and a fright like this morning's is good for no child.'

'I think we should be very glad for you to see her,' replied Anne, watching the swaying of her basket, which he had slung on to his handle-bars.

He followed her glance. 'Are you wondering why I'm on a push-bike this morning?' he asked her. 'The truth is, the car is out of commission.'

At the old familiar term Anne's eyes brightened, and she turned to him impulsively. 'You are Navy?' she exclaimed.

'I was. Four years of it during the war, and two years after,' he replied. 'How did you know?'

But Anne, paying no attention, was hurrying on. 'Which fleet were you with? Oh, I wonder if you knew Daddy?'

'I was with the North Sea Fleet for a time,' he said. 'Then I was transferred to the South Atlantic, and—why, I thought I had seen you before! Are you Captain Temple's daughter—Captain Temple of the *Bellesaurus*?'

'Yes,' said Anne. 'That was Daddy's ship.'

'Then, of course I know you. I've seen your photos in his cabin. Nevin—did you know Nevin?—doctor of his boat, was a pal of mine, and I used to dine in the wardroom of the

Bellesaurus sometimes. Nevin went sick once, and the Owner—your father, I mean—had a poisoned hand, and I used to go over and dress it.’

‘Did you know the commander, too?’ asked Anne.

‘What! Ozanne? Well, rather! I say, this is an example of the long arm of coincidence, isn’t it?’

Talking gaily, they reached La Rochelle, where Dr Chester left Anne, promising to come in and see Janie after he had attended to the De Garis baby. Anne ran into the house, and excitedly called Elizabeth to come and hear the news. Janie was sleeping, so the elder sister came downstairs. She agreed with Anne that it was delightful to meet some one who had known their father; but she was not quite so thrilled as her younger sister, though she was glad to hear that the doctor was coming in to look at Janie.

‘I feel rather worried about her,’ she said. ‘She is so imaginative and nervy; I’m afraid this fright will have upset her thoroughly. Listen! There she is calling. Go to her, Anne. I must do some oddments.’

Half-an-hour later Dr Chester put in an appearance, looking both hot and angry.

‘Wouldn’t they let you see the baby?’ asked Elizabeth sympathetically, after she had greeted him.

‘No,’ he replied. ‘The boy did his best, but the woman wouldn’t hear of it. Said that a doctor was no use, that La Sorcière Blanche, as she calls her, had done all that was necessary, and then told me to get out. Cursed me, I rather think.’

‘That is probable,’ said Elizabeth. ‘She cursed me last night. I went over after you had gone to see if I could do anything for them, and she cursed me, and slammed the door in my face.’

‘She must be mad!’

‘No. She is perfectly sane, although, I believe, she is breaking her heart over the baby. But it’s in their blood. The younger generation, who go to school and learn to speak English—and often leave the island when they are grown up—declare that it is all nonsense, I believe. But I wonder how much of their protesting is true. When you belong to a race of people that believe that when the fairies were driven from England they came over here, and killed all the men and married the women—well, you are one of a race that is steeped in wizardry.’

‘I say, they don’t really believe that, do they?’

Elizabeth nodded. ‘Oh yes. Many of the older generation do. They say that is why the people are so small. I don’t know if you’ve ever noticed, but the true Guernésiaise is always short and slight—and very dark.’

‘I hadn’t noticed,’ he replied. ‘They are of the French breed, of course. That would account for it.’

‘Not in their eyes,’ replied Elizabeth. ‘Will you come and see Janie now?’

Upstairs he quickly made friends with Janie, and soon discovered that, except for natural reaction after the shock, she was all right.

‘Keep her in bed to-day,’ he told Elizabeth, ‘and don’t leave her alone if you can help it. She’s of a very highly-strung temperament, but there is nothing wrong with her. Keep her in the open air, and don’t let her do too many lessons for the next six months. Give her plenty of milk and eggs. That’s all she needs.’

Greatly relieved, Elizabeth saw him off at the door, and then returned to the house, where she set to work to finish up her household duties. She had barely begun when there was a knock at the door, and, on opening it, she found Peter de Garis outside.

‘Mademoiselle,’ he began formally in the Norman-French, which was his native tongue, ‘I come to apologise for my mother’s behaviour to you last night and for Mademoiselle Jeanne’s fright this morning.’

‘You could not help either,’ said Elizabeth gently. ‘Indeed, Janie has only herself to blame, for she knew that she was doing wrong in interfering in a private affair.’

‘I am sorry that my mother will not have the doctor,’ said Peter, with an eloquent gesture, ‘but—what will you? She belongs to the past generation, and faith in the White Witches is a part of her. I can do nothing—nothing!’

‘How is the baby?’ asked Elizabeth.

‘He is no better. I think he will die,’ was the laconic response.

‘Oh, I am so sorry,’ murmured Elizabeth.

He shrugged his shoulders. ‘It must be, if it must be.’

This fatalistic statement did not disturb Elizabeth as it might have done one of pure English blood. Her Italian mother had bequeathed to her a large share of Latin resignation before what seems unalterable, and her life in France had deepened it, although, of the two, she was the more English in temperament; Anne, with her impulsiveness, her hot friendships, and equally hot enmities, seeming at times all Italian. There was a moment’s pause; then Peter turned away. ‘Good-morning,’ he said.

Elizabeth watched him as he sauntered off down the road to L’Erée. She felt very sorry for him, for she knew that he was fighting against heavy odds.

In the afternoon she took her writing up to the bedroom, and sat with Janie, while Anne, who had been feeling restless, set off for a long walk.

‘I’ll go round the coast to Cobo,’ she said, ‘and then cross into the Peter Port road. It will be a delightful walk, and I want to get out.’

‘Well, wrap yourself up well,’ was all Elizabeth’s response. So Anne set off, looking, in her old raincoat and gray tam-o’-shanter, lovelier than ever.

Janie, who was sitting up in bed reading, leaned forward to look out of the window. ‘The sea is quite calm to-day,’ she remarked. ‘The Friday Folk will have a quiet night for their dance.’

Elizabeth looked up from her writing in utter astonishment. ‘The—what did you say?’

‘The Friday Folk. Don’t you know? On Friday night the witches come and dance on the sands of Rocquaine Bay. Héloïse told me so.’

‘Janie, I will not have you spending your time thinking of such rubbish,’ said her sister sternly. ‘You’re getting as bad as any islander of them all.’

Janie removed her gaze from the sea, and turned to look at her sister.

‘There are more things in heaven and earth!’ she began; but Elizabeth stopped her with a rapid gesture.

‘I dare say there are. But all the same I should prefer you to think of something else. Personally, I should have said you’d had enough of witches for one day!’

‘It was horrible this morning,’ agreed Janie. Then with a rapid transition into French, she went on. ‘What has so terrified me is that she knew we were there. She could not have seen us—no! For we were as still as mice.’

‘She probably saw you going up that outside ladder arrangement,’ replied Elizabeth. ‘And I do wish, Janie, you would remember to speak English. I don’t want you to forget your French, but really you are sometimes more French than English. If Pauline Ozanne comes for lessons—’

‘What!’ cried Janie amazedly, sitting bolt upright. ‘What did you say, Elizabeth?’ Elizabeth felt annoyed with herself. She had had no intention of telling Janie anything about it until she had seen Paul Ozanne. However, it was done now, and seemed best to explain her ideas, so she said, ‘As Mr Ozanne seems to find Pauline a difficulty, I am going to propose to him that she should come here and do lessons with you for a while.’

‘But she’s only twelve; I’m fifteen,’ objected Janie.

‘You may be fifteen in years,’ replied Elizabeth, ‘but you might, sometimes, be five, judging from your behaviour.’

‘Blatherskites!’ retorted the youngest Miss Temple.

‘Janie! Where did you get hold of such a dreadful expression?’ gasped Elizabeth.

‘Mason used it. Do you not like it? I thought it was very English,’ said Janie innocently.

‘No, I do not like it! Please don’t use it again,’ replied her sister, on whom the innocence was thrown away. ‘I most sincerely hope Mr Ozanne allows Pauline to come. Her conversation may help to improve yours.’ And with this she turned again to her writing.

Janie chuckled naughtily to herself as she took up her book again, and there was silence in the room for the next hour.

When four o’clock came, Elizabeth put away her writing, and after lighting the lamp, ran downstairs to prepare the tea. Left to herself, Janie peered out of the window, up the dark road, in an endeavour to see if Anne were coming. Finding it useless, she once more immersed herself in *The Heart of Midlothian*, following Jeanie Deans’s adventures with such interest that she was quite startled when Elizabeth brought up the tray.

‘Has Anne come in yet?’ queried the invalid, as she sat up, prepared to enjoy a good tea.

‘Not yet,’ replied Elizabeth. ‘I expect she will be here shortly. But meanwhile it is nearly five, and I want my tea, so I thought we wouldn’t wait.’

‘I wonder where she is,’ said Janie. ‘I say, isn’t the wind rising? Listen, Elizabeth! I expect the *gens du vendredi* will be coming in its tail. I’m glad I’m not out in it!’

‘I don’t suppose Anne is,’ replied Elizabeth. ‘I expect that when she got to Cobo she found herself more tired than she thought, so she took the bus into Peter Port, and is coming out on the five o’clock to Pleinmont.’

‘Then she won’t be here till nearly six,’ ruminated her youngest sister. ‘May I have some more toast, please? You were a dear to make dripping toast, Elizabeth; I do love it so!’

Elizabeth passed the toast, but it was never taken, for at that moment there was the sound of flying footsteps up the path; the door was burst open, and then slammed; and then there was a scurried scramble up the stairs, and Anne literally fell into the room, her clothing drenched, her black hair flying loose and dripping wet, her face white, and her eyes wide with terror, while from the road outside came a volley of hoarse shrieks which sounded scarcely human, mingled with high-pitched cackles of unearthly laughter.

Chapter X.

JAN GANTS Y TAN.

At the first sound Elizabeth had sprung to her feet, her face white with horror, while Janie, with a wild scream of '*Les gens du vendredi! Les gens du vendredi!*' went underneath the bedclothes with a despatch which, on some other occasion, would have raised shouts of laughter. Anne, panting and breathless, was the only one to retain her common-sense.

'It's Mrs de Garis!' she gasped. 'Chased me down the road! Baby died this afternoon, and she says we ill-wished it! Awful old woman with her!'

'That's the White Witch,' wailed Janie, who had come to the surface again. 'Oh! I wish I'd never gone there this morning! Listen! What are they doing?'

There was the sound of a conference going on underneath the window. As nearly as she could follow the rapid Norman-French, Elizabeth learned that Mrs de Garis was urging her allies to burn La Rochelle, where the black witches who had brought about the baby's death were.

Then came a masculine voice—Peter de Garis sternly ordering his mother to put a stop to all this nonsense and come home. But the distracted woman was beyond all reasoning, and what would have happened it is hard to say, but at that moment there was the sound of a motor horn, and the excited crowd scattered, while a voice, unmistakably Dr Chester's, demanded to know the meaning of the disturbance. Apparently Peter explained, for there was a murmuring sound, followed by a yell of execration. But Dr Chester knew how to deal with crowds. A few short, sharp orders were followed by something said in a gentler tone; and then came the sound of some one sobbing. Anne, leaning over Janie's bed, saw two or three women leading some one, presumably Mrs de Garis, away. The rest slowly dispersed in knots of twos and threes, and finally there were left only the old woman, Peter, and the doctor.

La Sorcière Blanche looked up at the young man from beneath her shaggy brows. When she spoke, her voice came slow and clear, so that the listeners at the window could understand everything she said.

'A fine evening, my son,' she observed. 'There will be many another such ere you and your desire are one. Best not loiter near Rocquaine shore on a Friday night, or even Marie Lihou will not save you, do what she may for the fisher-folk.' Then, with an eldritch yell of laughter, she raised her skinny hand. At the same moment there came a terrific blast of wind, bringing with it seaspray and sand, and momentarily darkening the road. When it was over, only Peter de Garis and the doctor were there. The old woman had vanished completely.

The elder man spoke with Peter for a few minutes. Then the boy turned, and made his way across the bents to his home, while the doctor turned in at the gate of La Rochelle. At once the spell which seemed to have held them all broke, and Elizabeth turned to her sister.

'Anne! You are dripping! You must change at once. I'll see the doctor.'

'All right!' Anne awoke from her trance, and began to strip off her soaking garments, while the elder girl ran downstairs to admit their new friend. He refused to come in, however, having merely called on his way to Pleinmont—whither he had been summoned—to leave a quieting draught for Janie in case she needed it. When Elizabeth returned she found Anne had slipped out of her wet clothes, and now, in her dressing-gown, with her hair spread over her shoulders that it might the more quickly dry, was squatting before the fire, placidly refusing to answer the string of questions which Janie poured forth. When the eldest sister appeared, she sprang to her feet, pushing back her hair with an impatient gesture.

'Come along, Elizabeth! What an age you've been!'

‘Only a few minutes,’ replied Elizabeth, as she took her seat at the tray, and poured out tea. ‘The toast is behind you, dear, on the fender.’

‘And now,’ said Janie from the bed, ‘I want to know all about everything. Why did those people chase you, and how did you get wet? Oh yes! and why are you so late?’

‘It’s a long story,’ said Anne thoughtfully. ‘Really, Elizabeth, I do believe we’ve had more adventures this last week than in the rest of our lives put together!’

‘Only had three,’ objected literal Janie. ‘My one this morning, and the one just now, and your one. Why, you’re all wet.’

‘That’s part of the Mrs de Garis,’ responded Anne. ‘You know, I really think that woman is mad. If you’d heard her screaming, “Kill her! Kill the witch!” you’d have thought so, anyhow. I thought my last hour had come. I’ve never run so quickly in my life.’

‘But how did it all start?’ demanded Janie.

There was a moment’s pause while Anne took another piece of toast. Then, ‘Well, as a matter of fact, I suppose it began with Jan gants y tan,’ she said.

‘But he’s a Breton spirit,’ objected Elizabeth.

‘I know; but we’re near enough to Brittany,’ returned Anne. ‘All right, Janie. I’ll tell you the whole story, but you mustn’t interrupt. And one thing, Elizabeth, witches mayn’t exist in England, but I shouldn’t like to say that they didn’t exist in Guernsey! I’m more than half inclined to believe that old story about the fairies killing off the Guernsey men and marrying the women. Certainly there is something in the Guernésiaises that is not quite canny.’

‘Nonsense, Anne! Besides, you used to say that about the Bretons,’ objected Elizabeth.

‘Well, it’s true,’ replied Anne decisively. ‘Listen! I set out, as you know, about two o’clock, and I walked round the bay, past L’Erée, till I came to that old fortress place. You can go round behind it, you know; there’s no need to go right round the point. So I went that way, and got on to the high-road that leads to Cobo. The wind was beginning to rise then, and the sea looked magnificent—heavy, sullen, gray waves with white caps breaking here and there. It must have been near half-tide when I reached Cobo, for a good part of the bay was uncovered. Like an idiot, I never took the trouble to see if it were rising or falling. All I did see was a lonely pinnacle of rock, which seemed to have flames rising from it.’

‘Cool!’ said Janie, deeply interested. ‘What was it? A wrecker’s fire?’

‘If you wait, you’ll find out,’ replied her sister crushingly. ‘Well, I scrambled over the sea-wall and down on to the rocks. There is a certain amount of sandy stretch there, you remember, so I wasn’t long in getting across it. Then I had to get across some more rocks, all covered with seaweed. It was rather a climb, but I set off. As I told you, I thought the tide had not yet turned, and that I had plenty of time. I remembered, after, that I thought I heard some one shouting; but at the time I didn’t take any notice.—Janie, if you interrupt again, I won’t tell you. I’ll wait until we go to bed, and then tell Elizabeth by herself.’ For the irrepressible one had given vent to an ejaculation of ‘Goodness me!’

‘Don’t be cross, but do go on!’ implored Janie.

Anne glanced at her, but went on. ‘Well, as I told you, I scrambled over the rocks, though it wasn’t too easy, for the rocks were just one mass of slimy, sticky, slithery seaweed, and I slid rather. In fact, I’ve got two or three bruises and a nasty scrape. But I didn’t care; I’d just made up my mind to get there and see what it was. I was so keen on the fire, I never noticed the sea, till, suddenly, I saw the light literally leap off the rock and come dancing towards me. Honestly, girls, I thought my last hour had come! I was rooted to the spot; couldn’t move for anything! What would have happened I don’t know, but just then I heard a splash! That woke me! I looked round, and saw the sea absolutely racing in! With that awful light dancing towards me, and the water on each side, it’s a wonder I didn’t go mad! I just shrieked like a wild thing, and then I simply tore over the rocks. It was dreadful! The sea was coming in like

a mill-race, and I knew that one part of the rocks was lower than the rest. Elizabeth! Janie! when I reached it, it was like going over a sodden sponge. The sea was lifting the weed, and I couldn't be sure that I shouldn't plunge into some foot-hole with every step. I honestly think that if it hadn't been for that ghastly flame flickering behind me, I should have given it up and stayed where I was. But I daren't face that! Then I heard voices, and then my arms were seized, and I was hauled madly up above the rocks—just in time. A wave drenched me as they dragged me up. When I looked back, there were no rocks—and there was no fire!

Anne's voice, as she made this last statement, was literally blood-curdling.

Elizabeth shivered, while Janie wriggled out of bed and huddled down between them. There was a deathly silence; then the narrator took up her tale again.

'It was two men who had rescued me. They had seen me going, and knew the tide was coming up. They had shouted; but, as I told you before, I didn't listen. They saw the light, and they said it was one of the *gens des hocques*—that's the same as your *gens du vendredi*, Janie. I must have looked an awful sight, for my hair was all anyhow, and I lost my cap when I was tearing back. They were awfully decent, but I couldn't wait; I wanted to get home. Then, when I got to L'Erée, that wretched woman was there, standing talking to that awful old object. She set up a screech when she saw me, and yelled that I was a witch—"La sorcière noire," she called me. I knew she meant mischief; she looked half-demented! So I just flew down the road. And that's all.'

'Quite enough, too,' said Elizabeth. 'Oh, Anne! How can I ever feel happy about you again when you are out?'

'Well, you won't find me going to investigate mysterious lights again,' replied Anne, with a shaky laugh. 'Nor climbing about seaweed-covered rocks unless I know that the tide is going out.'

'It must have been dreadful,' said Janie gravely.

'It was! You can't think how awful I felt when I realised that that Thing was behind me, and the sea was galloping in like that!'

'But there are no such things as witches,' remonstrated Elizabeth. 'It was a will-o'-the-wisp probably.'

'You can call it what you like. I know what I think,' returned Anne. 'Well, my hair's dry now, and I've had enough tea, so I'm going to make myself respectable. Elizabeth, the fire in the living-room is out. Let's stay up here to-night, and not bother to light it again.'

'Oh yes, do,' implored Janie, as she returned to bed. 'Can't we close the shutters, too?'

Elizabeth willingly consented, so the shutters were closed, and the three settled down to a peaceful evening after the thrills and excitements of the day.

'I hope those dreadful people won't come back,' said Janie, when they were all comfortably established.

'I don't suppose they will,' replied Elizabeth. 'Mrs de Garis is safely in her house now, and that awful old creature vanished. Besides, the doctor said he would call in on his way back from Pleinmont. I'll ask him then if it's all right; but I'm sure it is.'

'I hope it is,' said Anne. 'I don't want any more adventures for a long time to come!'

However, the doctor, when he called again, reassured them. Mrs de Garis was asleep, under the influence of a sleeping-draught he had given Peter for her; and the rest of the people were in their cottages, and unlikely to turn out again on such a wild night, the more so because it was Friday, and the *gens du vendredi*, as many of them devoutly believed, would be holding witches' sabbath on the shores of Rocquaine Bay.

'Thank goodness for that!' said Anne, when her sister returned with the doctor's verdict. 'All the same, Elizabeth, I'd sooner deal with human beings than witches! I only hope Marie Lihou, whoever she is, will keep watch over us as well as over the fisher-folk.'

‘She’s our Lady of the Chapel on Lihou Island,’ put in Janie. ‘Of course she’ll keep watch over us. And do come and sleep with us to-night, Elizabeth. It’s more cosy that way.’

Elizabeth laughed, but she gave way to their united protestations, and, secretly, was rather thankful to think that she had not to go to her lonely bedroom that night.

Chapter XI.

A LITTLE TEA-PARTY.

As Anne said later on, it was quite a relief to have a quiet day after the strenuous happenings of Friday. Paul Ozanne came on the Saturday afternoon, bringing Pauline with him. After a little conversation, Elizabeth sent her out with Janie, and they rather shyly laid their plan before him. To say that he was grateful is to express matters mildly. 'If you wouldn't mind the bother and the trouble,' he said, 'I shall be only too glad to accept. Pauline is such an—unusual child, I could not send her to school. I can't get any one to stay with her, for much the same reason. My profession will not allow me to devote as much of my time as I should like with her; and, really, I've come to the end of my tether where she's concerned. I've had an awful week of it, worrying over her. I never know what she's going to take into her head to do next. There's one thing, Miss Temple. She's awfully keen on you, and it is possible to persuade her to do things. Order her about, and she'll see you farther before she'll move one step in the direction you want.'

'Janie is exactly the same,' said Elizabeth, with a smile. 'She can be as obstinate as a mule when she likes. We shall be very glad to have Pauline here, Mr Ozanne. I want Janie to have friends, but the friends she has been making lately are not the kind I wish. We have had some rather trying experiences since we last saw you.' And she told him about the De Garis baby and the White Witch.

He was deeply interested, but he showed no surprise. 'I am a Guernsey man myself,' he said. 'I lived here for the first sixteen years of my life—till my father married again, in fact—and I know that the old beliefs die hard.' He was more serious over the account of Anne's experience in being chased by the women. 'I hope it's all right,' he said. 'A mob knows no law when it is aroused.'

'Mrs de Garis seems quite normal to-day,' put in Anne, speaking almost for the first time. 'I saw Peter, and asked him how his mother was, and he said she had slept all the night, and was better this morning.'

'Probably you will hear nothing further about it, then,' he said, in a relieved tone. 'I am sorry she called you black witches, though. That's the sort of thing that sticks in these parts.'

'Oh, they'll forget it presently,' said Anne easily. 'Not one of us knows the first thing about casting spells, so we certainly can't live up to any reputation of that kind.'

'No; of course not. But if anything round about goes wrong—if a cow runs dry, for instance, or a horse falls lame—they will think you had a hand in it.'

Elizabeth nodded. 'Yes; I suppose they will,' she said thoughtfully. 'Well, we must just hope that such a thing does not happen.'

'What would they do if it did?' demanded Anne.

'Probably get that White Witch your small sister saw this morning to break the spell. I don't think they'd attempt to do you any real bodily harm. If they do think you capable of wizardry, they'll probably give you all a very wide berth.'

'So much the better!' retorted Anne. 'If that Héloïse child is going to tell Janie any more about witches and fairies, it will be just as well to put a stop to that friendship!'

'Oh, Anne!' said Elizabeth reproachfully, her memory busy with Anne's declaration of the night before about the mysterious fire on the rocks, that it was Jan gants y tan.

Anne looked at her, and then exploded with laughter. 'You are thinking of glass-houses, Elizabeth! You know you are!' she cried. 'But I'm not one-fifth as bad as Janie!'

The other two joined in her laughter, while Elizabeth gasped, 'I should hope you were not! Janie is really dreadful,' she went on, turning to the visitor. 'She adores fairy stories still, although she is fifteen. When we were living in Brittany with Madame Ozanne, the old nurse she had, Javotte, used to tell us endless stories about the Breton spirits—Jan gants y tan among them; and Janie simply revelled in them.'

'Who is Jan gants y tan?' inquired Mr Ozanne.

'A wicked spirit,' returned Anne promptly. 'His name means John with the gloves of flame. He hunts mortals; but what he does with them if he catches them, I have never found out.'

'Rather an unpleasant gentleman to meet, I should fancy,' commented Mr Ozanne. 'How do you get away from him?'

'Fling cold iron in his way,' responded Anne. 'Like most evil spirits, he can't bear it. If you haven't any, you must make the sign of the Cross, and call upon the Holy Trinity and Our Lady to save you.'

'But, of course, it is all a great deal of nonsense,' put in Elizabeth gently.

He looked at her, a certain sombreness in his dark eyes. 'If you knew the islanders as I do, Miss Temple, I don't think you would say that quite so readily. I have known strange things to happen here. Why, there's a farm-house not so far from here where they have one wall at the end of the room whitewashed because a ghost is confined in the wall, and whitewash is the only thing that keeps it there.'

'What would happen if they papered the wall for a change?' asked Anne curiously.

'They did once,' he replied; 'but they soon stripped the paper off and whitewashed the wall again.'

'Why?' asked Elizabeth involuntarily.

'The spirit came out and did all kinds of mischief. China was found in broken heaps on the floor; pictures were wrenched from their place and ripped across; the cows went dry; the fowls refused to lay; people got no peace at night, for the bedclothes would be pulled off them, and very often they were beaten black and blue. In the end they got the priest from the parish church to come and exorcise it. Then they whitewashed the wall again, and whitewashed it has remained. All the trouble ceased as soon as they had done that.'

'And do you really believe all that trouble was owing to the evil spirit?' asked Elizabeth.

'I am a Guernsey man, as I told you before, Miss Temple,' he answered. 'I don't say I think the supernatural powers do quite as much as the country-folk think they do; but I do say that here, at any rate, there have been, and still are, strange happenings that cannot be accounted for in any ordinary way.'

A little pause followed, then the guest turned again to Elizabeth. 'Did I not hear you speak of a Madame Ozanne who lived in Brittany? I wonder if that was the widow of my father's cousin? Cousin Louis was in the Navy, but he died many years ago, leaving her a widow with one child—a boy two or three years older than I—and she went back to France with him. She was a Frenchwoman, I remember. Now, wait a minute; her name was Roxanne, I think.'

'Roxanne Julie,' said Elizabeth softly. 'Yes; it is the same. She acted as our guardian until this June. We were with her for five years. We always called her "Marraine," although, of course, she was godmother to none of us.'

'Julian Ozanne and I used to be good pals,' said Mr Ozanne. 'I knew he had gone into the Navy, but lost sight of him. Of course, he was older than I, which made a difference. Have you news of him lately?'

'He is married now,' replied Elizabeth, 'and has two little girls, Suzanne and Louise. His wife is a friend of ours, and some day we are going to Brittany to stay with them. Louise is my godchild.'

At this moment the door opened, and Janie and Miss Ozanne entered. Janie looked none the worse for her fright of the previous day, while Miss Ozanne, in her crimson cashmere frock, with its lace frill in the neck, looked, as Anne said, as though she had stepped out of a children's annual of twenty-five years ago. Paul Ozanne looked quickly at her and then at Janie, who wore a short blue skirt and white silk shirt blouse, with a big bow of black ribbon at the collar. 'Pauline,' he said, 'I have been arranging with Miss Temple that you shall come here every day and do lessons with her.'

Then a miracle happened. The little sallow face slowly flushed, and the big dark eyes grew soft with pleasure. At once the extraordinarily plain elf was transformed, and Pauline Ozanne was pretty—more than pretty. Anne fairly gasped; but Elizabeth, with a smile, said, 'Will you come, Pauline? Janie and Anne and I will love to have you, if you will.'

'I thank you,' replied Pauline, in her clear, grave voice. 'It will be a great pleasure to me to do so. When do we begin?'

'On Monday, I think,' said her hostess. 'I know Christmas is little more than a week away, but we might as well begin at once, don't you think? I'm sure Janie would like it.'

'But of a certainty—yes!' cried Janie.

'I shall be very glad,' said Miss Ozanne, in unruffled tones. 'I think Janie and I will prove very pleasant to each other, and I shall work for you!'

Anne smothered a laugh at the prim speech, but Elizabeth's eyes grew dark with tenderness. Poor little girl! She seemed to have no childhood in her. Janie, beside her, was a mere infant. Of course, Janie had lived in France, and was also partly Irish. But what kind of life had this other child led to make her like this? Paul Ozanne, watching her, guessed the tenor of her thoughts. Involuntarily he looked again at his little step-sister, who was now sitting on the settle, feet neatly crossed, hands folded in her lap. Janie, on the other hand, was dancing about, helping Anne, who had risen to get tea ready. The difference between the two children was so marked that even he could see it. Pauline's dress was surely rather out-of-date. Their old nurse always attended to things like that, but surely the child would have looked better in a skirt and blouse such as Janie wore. And there was her hair. Dimly he felt that that was all wrong too, although he was not sure that he wanted it cut short as the other child's was. Still, couldn't she wear it fastened back? His eyes wandered from her to the others. Elizabeth was helping Anne with her preparations for tea. She was dressed in a frock of some soft, black material, which hung in graceful folds round her, and which emphasised the delicacy of her colouring. Anne's blue-gray gown was of the same kind of stuff, and made in similar style. Both moved about with a quiet grace and ease of movement which was very pleasant to the man accustomed to the somewhat indifferent administration of servants. If only they would teach his little sister the same graciousness and dignity of poise, he would ask nothing more. Again he turned his gaze on Elizabeth, with her nimbus of fair hair. If only a man could have such a being always in his house, what a delightful place the world would be!

Elizabeth, feeling his glances, turned to him with a smile. 'Can you cut bread, Mr Ozanne?' she asked gaily.

'Can I not?' he replied. 'Cutting bread is my only domestic accomplishment!'

'Then will you cut it for us now? Anne is making scones in the kitchen—we always love them hot from the girdle—and I want to make the tea, and Janie's ideas on bread-cutting might suit a hungry navvy, but don't agree with ours.'

'I'm your man,' he laughed. 'Give me the dagger—or rather the bread-knife!'

'Then, perhaps Pauline would help Janie to make the toast,' went on Elizabeth. 'We all love hot cakes and hot buttered toast for tea. Don't you, Pauline?'

'I do not know,' replied Pauline gravely. 'I have never made toast; but if Janie will show me how, I shall have much pleasure in trying.'

‘Toasting-forks this way,’ said Janie cheerfully. ‘See, Pauline, you may have mine. Look at the little man on the handle. That is the Imp of Lincoln. Julian Ozanne gave it to me three years ago. He got it in Lincoln when he and Colinette were spending their *lune de miel* on the Norfolk Broads. He brought us each something. Elizabeth had a door-knocker, and Anne a bell.’

‘It is very unusual,’ replied Pauline, as she took the fork on which Janie had impaled a slice of bread. ‘Must I hold this in the flames?’

‘*Mon dieu, non!*’ exclaimed Janie, with a lapse into French.

‘Janie, for goodness’ sake speak English!’ exclaimed Anne, who had come in in time to hear this. ‘It’s simply dreadful, Mr Ozanne,’ she went on. ‘She either speaks French all the time, or else the most awful broken English imaginable!’

‘Blatherskites!’ retorted Janie, rolling the forbidden expression round her tongue as a delicious morsel.

Paul Ozanne collapsed, and Anne followed him. Janie’s pronunciation of the word was inimitable. Pauline looked at them rather disapprovingly.

‘That is not French,’ she observed.

‘It’s Irish, as a matter of fact,’ said Anne, with a chuckle. ‘Don’t use it, Pauline, whatever you do!’

‘No, I shall not. I do not find it a pretty word,’ returned the young lady sedately.

‘Now, Janie, my child,’ laughed her sister, ‘you hear that?’

‘Oh, well, it was but to prove to you that I speak English not only well, but colloquially also,’ replied Janie tranquilly.—‘Come, Pauline, you must hold the bread so till it is of a golden brown. Then one turns it and toasts the other side also.’

‘You see,’ said Anne helplessly to their other guest. ‘Absolutely hopeless, isn’t it?’

He laughingly agreed; but to him there was something unusually charming in the touch of foreign accent and expression which Janie showed.

With so many helpers, tea was soon ready, and then, after a merry meal, the two Ozannes departed, Paul promising that Pauline should be at La Rochelle by ten o’clock on Monday morning.

‘I think Pauline is of a peculiarity,’ said Janie, as she helped her sisters to wash up the tea-things after the guests had gone.

‘You are of a peculiarity!’ retorted Anne.

Elizabeth said nothing. She was wondering to herself whether she dare suggest that Pauline’s hair should be plaited back from her face, and her frock changed for a jumper and skirt.

Chapter XII.

MISS OZANNE, PLAYWRIGHT.

'Isn't it wet? Do you think it will clear before this afternoon?'

Anne raised her eyes from the stocking she was darning, to say, 'I don't know. Perhaps.'

'Oh, what is the use of that! And it's rained every day for a fortnight now. I do think it might stop sometimes!' And Janie turned aggrievedly to the window again.

'Well, what else do you expect in February?' demanded Anne. 'It isn't generally sunny weather then.'

'To-morrow's the first of March. It ought to be fine now. Just look at it!'

The outlook was certainly anything but pleasant. A gray mist of rain poured down unceasingly. The shore-road was covered with puddles, which were gradually spreading. The stiff gray-green bents had a sodden and unappetising look, while the curtain of rain hid the sea from view, although it could be heard—a long ceaseless roll on the rocks below. Occasionally—*very* occasionally—a solitary wayfarer passed, plodding steadily along, generally in the direction of Pleinmont, and the motor-bus made its usual journeys; but that was all.

Anne and Janie were alone, for Elizabeth had gone into St Peter Port to do some shopping and to inquire after Pauline, who was having a siege with the dentist, and had not been over to La Rochelle for a day or two. Janie had very much wanted to go with her eldest sister, but as she had recently had a violent cold in her head, Elizabeth had decreed that she must stay at home with Anne.

'If it is fine this afternoon, you can come in on the bus,' the eldest sister had said. 'I expect Pauline would be glad to see you. But I can't have you going out in the rain. You would only catch fresh cold, and it isn't worth it.'

It must be confessed that Janie was scarcely a pleasant companion that morning. She fidgeted at the window till Anne called her to come and do some work, instead of standing there grumbling.

'Come and get on with your knitting,' said the elder girl. 'You can't do any good by growling like that. It won't stop the rain, Janie.'

'I never said it would!' retorted Janie.

'Perhaps not. But I'm tired of listening to you, and I'm not going to stand it any longer,' snapped Anne, who was rapidly losing her patience. 'It isn't very cheerful on a wet day. You might think of other people occasionally.'

'Ditto!' was the amiable response. 'I'm not going to knit.'

'Then get a book and read! But for Heaven's sake do something! You're like a bear with a sore head this morning!'

'You're another!'

Anne raised her eyebrows, but she said no more; only darned away without paying further attention to her young sister. Janie found this quiet ignoring of her intolerable, but she was not yet ready to say she was sorry for her rudeness, so there was an uncomfortable silence in the room.

It was broken by the sound of hurried footsteps outside. Then Janie gave a cry of joy. 'Mélie!' she exclaimed, and ran to the door eagerly. She came back in a few minutes, bringing Mélie with her. Anne and Elizabeth liked the child, who had been to tea several times. She was nicely mannered, and both Pauline and Janie were friendly with her. Mrs Lihou, a fresh, sonsy woman, who came from Devonshire, had been very kind to the Temples; but she was a

busy person, for Mélie was one of five, three of whom were boys, and there was plenty to do at Grâce à Dieu.

‘Isn’t this a very wet day for you to be out, Mélie?’ said Anne. ‘Janie wanted to go into town this morning with Elizabeth, but we decided it was raining too heavily for her.’

‘Oh, I never mind the rain,’ replied Mélie. ‘I’m accustomed to going out in all kinds of weather, you know. Mother sent me down to say that she’s got to go over to England unexpectedly by the next boat, and is there anything she can fetch for you? She’s going to London, and if you would like anything brought she’ll be very glad to bring it.’

‘It’s very kind of your mother, Mélie,’ replied Anne; ‘but I don’t think there is anything we want, thank you, dear.’

‘You are sure? Well, then, I must go, because I have to help mother to pack. She’s taking me this time—and Claude. Maud is staying behind to look after father, and Oscar and Lionel. So I sha’n’t see you for a while, Janie. Good-bye, dear. Give my love to Pauline, please.’ Then Mélie skipped away with a flurry of scarlet tam-o’-shanter and long brown plaits; and Janie returned to the living-room, quite cheered up for the moment. She fetched her knitting—a long scarf—from the armoire and settled down to it comfortably, while Anne picked up another stocking and examined it closely. She was still a little inclined to stand on her dignity, for Janie had really been very rude; but it was not in any of them—and certainly not in Anne—to bear malice. So when the baby sister suddenly flung her knitting on to the floor, and, regardless of the darning needle, which was perilously near her eyes for a moment, collapsed on her knees at the elder girl’s side, and snuggled up with a propitiatory gesture, she was not repulsed.

‘Sorry—I was such a little pig!’ murmured the younger girl rather unevenly. ‘I didn’t mean to be!’

‘No, Baby! Of course you didn’t. It’s only the weather,’ replied Anne, with a reassuring hug. ‘I was cross, too.’ They sat together for a minute or two; then Anne, with a far-away gaze in her gray eyes, said softly, ‘Janie, are you happy here, little one?’

She had spoken in the softer language they all loved, because it was so much easier to express their thoughts in it than our tongue-tied Anglo-Saxon. Janie’s brown eyes—the lovely eyes, liquid brown, never seen in those of purely Teuton blood—opened widely as she replied, ‘But yes, my sister, I have you and Elizabeth. There is nothing else I could have that I want.’

Anne noticed the slight emphasis on the ‘could.’ Janie very rarely talked of her father nowadays, but the elder girls knew well enough that that did not mean that she had forgotten. More than once Anne, coming up to bed after she had gone, had found her sleeping with wet lashes and damp pillow, which told their own story. The first bitterness of the loss had worn off, but Janie Temple was very faithful by nature, and it would be years before the wound ceased aching.

‘You like Pauline and Mélie, do you not?’ was all she said.

Janie nodded her head. ‘Oh yes! Mélie is delightful, and Pauline is so droll, is she not?’

‘She is better than she was,’ replied Anne thoughtfully. ‘She talks more naturally now, and she is less prim and precise in her ways. I think it has done you good, too, Janie. Your English is much better than it was.’ Janie laughed as she got to her feet and picked up her knitting.

‘I know it is. Pauline used to stare at me so, and then she began to correct me, and I couldn’t stand that, so I just don’t give her the chance.’

‘No, I suppose not,’ replied Anne, joining in her laughter. ‘Janie! I do believe the rain is ceasing at last, and you will be able to get into town this afternoon after all!’

‘Oh, Anne! So it is! How enchanting that will be! I am so awfully tired of Rocquaine!’ exclaimed Janie. ‘But you—you will be left alone. What will you do?’

‘Don’t trouble about me,’ replied Anne easily. ‘I want to finish that series of sketches of Guernsey, and, if it only clears up, the light will be just what I want. Elizabeth is coming out on the three o’clock bus, so she will be here before it gets dusk; and if I do feel lonely, I shall shut the door and go for a stroll up to Torteval. I’m not likely to meet any spirits there, as it’s inland, and, anyway, it’s not Friday.’

‘No; that’s true,’ agreed Janie. ‘Isn’t it nearly time for lunch, Anne? I’m awfully hungry!’

‘When aren’t you?’ smiled Anne, as she began rolling up her work. ‘Here, catch! These are yours.’

‘Oh, Anne! Have you mended them for me? You are a dear!’ exclaimed Janie, who hated mending of all kinds, and most particularly darning.

Lunch was soon prepared, since it consisted principally of omelet with a stick or two of endive, brown bread and butter, some apples, and a cup of excellent *café au lait*. When it was finished, and the china had been washed up and put away, Anne collected together her sketching materials, while Janie scampered upstairs to change from her woollen jumper into a fresh blouse, and brush out the short hair that gleamed like silk round her face, and put on her outdoor things. She was quickly ready, and then came downstairs, just in time to catch the motor-bus to town.

‘Give my love to Pauline,’ called Anne. ‘Tell her I hope she’s about finished with the dentist, and will be able to come out to-morrow!’

‘Rather,’ replied Janie; and then they drove off.

The road from L’Erée to St Peter Port is practically without incident. After turning by the hotel you pass the old barracks on your left, and, except for a few farms and private houses, there is nothing until you come to the small village of St Pierre du Bois, with its two shops and cluster of cottages. Beyond that it is practically open country, with occasional glimpses of the sea on either hand until you reach the outskirts of St Peter Port, save for the little village of Forest, of which one can only say that in summer-time it looks very pretty. In the winter, when the gardens are bare and flowerless, it has little to recommend it. The entrance into St Peter Port is not impressive, but going down one of the steep narrow streets that lead down to the quay where the motor-buses stop is not without its thrills. To-day they went down past the St Julian’s Theatre, where big bills announced the latest attraction in the way of films. Janie knew, because Mélie had told her, that in the summer various companies came with quite good plays and musical comedies.

‘I saw *The Naughty Wife* and *The Lilac Domino* last summer,’ Mélie said. ‘They were fine!’

Once on the quay, Janie climbed out of the bus, and then made her way up Fountain Street till she reached the top. There she turned up one of the side streets that branched off to the right. Along this she trotted, turned up a little alley-way, and so found herself in a square, composed of dignified-looking Georgian houses. Arrived here, she walked sedately along until she came to the corner house, a large one, with windows hung with dark-blue curtains. Up the steps she ran, and tugged at the old-fashioned bell. Almost immediately the door was wrenched open, and Pauline stood on the threshold, welcome in her eyes and voice as she cried—‘Janie! Oh, Janie! How lovely of you to come! Come in!’ And she dragged her friend into the hall and up the stairs into a large book-lined room on the first floor.

‘I’m in here for to-day,’ she said. ‘Throw your things down. Oh, Janie! I have had such a bad time, and it’s been so dull.’

‘You look fairly rotten,’ said Janie candidly. ‘What have you had done?’

‘Three stopped and two out,’ replied Pauline. ‘Oh, and it did hurt! But Paul was very good to me. He brought me this book’—she waved one of Miss Oxenham’s entrancing school

stories as she spoke. 'It's lovely! All about country dancing! And last night—oh, Janie! I'm going to read it to you now!'

'Read what?' demanded Janie, as she dropped cap and coat on the nearest chair. 'Have you gone mad, Pauline?'

'No; but, oh, I do feel so excited! I never thought it would be so easy!'

'Oh, do explain, and don't dither about all over like that!' implored Janie. 'What have you been doing?'

With swelling chest and consciously uplifted head, Pauline produced a bundle of manuscript from a side-table.

'A story?' queried her guest.

'No!' Miss Ozanne could scarcely speak for pride. 'A play!'

Chapter XIII.

THE PLAY'S THE THING.

At first Janie was frankly incredulous about Pauline's production. 'You couldn't write a play,' she said. 'It wants ever so much doing. Only people like Shakespeare and—and Sheridan, and Barrie can write plays.'

'But they must have started sometime,' protested Pauline. 'You don't suppose *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was Shakespeare's first play, do you?'

'No; 'cos I jolly well know it wasn't. *Love's Labour Lost* was the first one he ever wrote.'

'Well, listen to mine now,' pleaded the dramatist. 'It is really exciting. I've called it *Loved and Lost*.'

'Who?' demanded Janie the captious.

'Who—what?'

'Who loved and lost?'

'That's what the play's about, of course. Oh, Janie, you might be nice about it! I've had such a horrid time lately; and I've been longing to show you this.'

Janie promptly repented of her criticisms; and, being Janie, showed it in wholesale fashion. 'Come on! Let's go and sit in the window,' she said; 'then we can see. Have you got a jersey or something to put on? Here, take my scarf.'

They curled up together on one of the low, broad window-seats, sitting well back in the corner. The heavy curtains of dull blue brocade completely screened them off from the room, and as Janie was careful to sit next to the window in case there was a draught—which, by the way, there was not, since the houses had been built and fitted in times when such work was well and truly done—they were quite cosy.

Literally trembling with excitement, Pauline began to read:

'"*Dramatis Personæ*: Lord Rhoderick de Bohun, the hero"—he's awfully nice. "Lady Genevieve Rotherham, the heroine"—she's sweet, too.'

'Is she the one who loves and loses?' queried Janie.

'If you wait, you'll see,' was the dignified response. 'Now, where was I? Oh yes! "Sir Maurice d'Arcy, the villain; Baroness Esmeralda di Stravati, the villainess; the Old Nurse; Lord Rhoderick's family steward; minions; retainers; villagers." That's all.'

'Oh, get on to the story,' said Janie impatiently.

'All right. I'm getting on as fast as I can. Ahem!'

'"*ACT I. Scene I. The castle grounds. Sunset. Enter the Baroness in an emerald green satin dress trimmed with pale yellow ribbons, and flashing eyes.*"'

'And *what!* What *do* you mean?' gasped Janie.

'Her eyes are flashing, of course.'

'Oh! Well, it sounds as though her frock were trimmed with them!'

'So it does! How funny!' And Pauline giggled as the Pauline of two months before would never have dreamed of doing. 'I'll alter that later. "*Enter the Baroness.*"'

'"*Baroness.* He shall be mine! Never shall that mere child have him! He shall be mine! I swear it!'

'"*(Enter Lord Rhoderick, wearing a suit.)*

'"*Lord Rhoderick* (coldly). Good-morning, Baroness. Have you seen Lady Genevieve?'

'"*Baroness* (gnashing her teeth). No, Lord Rhoderick. But I believe she has gone to the village.'

'"*Lord Rhoderick.* Then I will go and meet her. Good-morning. (*Exit towards the village.*)'

“*Baroness* (stamping her feet). Aha, Lord Rhoderick! Beware how you scorn me! Yonder minx shall rue the day on which she tried concussions with Esmeralda di Stravati—“

‘Tried concussions? What do you mean?’ asked Janie.

‘Tried to rival her,’ replied the playwright, with an air of weary patience.

‘Oh, I see! Do go on, Pauline! It’s splendid, so far!’

Thus adjured, Miss Ozanne went on with her play.

“—concussions with Esmeralda di Stravati; I am as fair as she, and I love Rhoderick well, so why should I not wed him?

“(Enter Sir Maurice d’Arcy with a scowl.)

“*Sir Maurice*. Ah, Baroness! What do you here?

“*Baroness*. It is you, my blight!”’—

‘Don’t you mean “blighter”?’ suggested Janie.

‘No; I don’t think so. You see, he has blighted her life, because he knows about her wicked past.’

“—my blight! Why do you haunt me thus?

“*Sir Maurice*. Because you may be useful to me.

“*Baroness*. And if I refuse to become your tool?

“*Sir Maurice*. Then I shall disclose all, and you will be exiled from England.

“*Baroness* (swooning). Oh no!

“(Sir Maurice looks at her with a sneer, and exit.)

“(Enter Lady Genevieve and Lord Rhoderick.)

“*Lord Rhoderick* (seeing the Baroness). Ha! What is here?

“*Lady Genevieve* (kneeling down beside her). ’Tis the Baroness di Stravati, my lord. Ah, she is recovering.

“*Baroness*. What is it? Where am I? (She sees she is in Genevieve’s arms.) You?

“*Lady Genevieve*. You are with friends. All is well.”’

At this point the reader paused and looked at her audience for criticism.

‘I think it’s splendid!’ said Janie enthusiastically. ‘How did you think of it all? And you make them talk just as people do on the stage.’

‘We once had a housemaid who read some books called the Violet Series,’ explained Pauline. ‘I found a lot of them after she had left, so I read them. There was *Lady Elfrida’s Vengeance*, and *Muriel of the Cottage*, and *Dorothy Trenholm: Mill Girl*, and a lot of others. Only, Paul found me reading one, and he took them all away and burnt them. But I’d read most of them then, so I didn’t really mind. It was last year, so I can remember how the people talked, and what they did, and it’s very useful now.’

‘Yes; isn’t it?’ agreed Janie. ‘Is there any more?’

‘Not much more of that scene,’ replied the proud authoress. ‘The baroness recovers, and Genevieve helps her with gentle hands to her carriage; so she is haunted by remorse all the rest of the play. Of course, she has to do wicked things; Sir Maurice d’Arcy, who wants to marry Genevieve, threatens to expose her if she doesn’t. I’m going to kill him in the end, and make her take the veil, and “renounce a life full of sin and suffering for one of penance and peace,” and she becomes an abbess,’ explained Miss Ozanne. ‘Don’t you think that’s rather a good ending?’

‘Yes, I do—for, of course, Rhoderick couldn’t marry her, and if you kill Sir Maurice, there’s no one left, is there?’

‘No. Shall I read you the next scene, where Rhoderick asks Genevieve to marry him?’

‘Oh yes! Please do! I do so want to know what happened to them.’

Pauline turned over the pages rapidly till she came to:

“ACT I. Scene 2. A room in the castle. There is a thunderstorm.”’

‘Coo! How do you do that?’ inquired Janie, really thrilled.

‘They do it with limelight, I think,’ replied Pauline. ‘Now!’

‘‘The curtain goes up, discovering Lord Rhoderick alone. He is gazing out of the windows with his hands in his pockets.

‘‘*Lord Rhoderick*. To be or not to be, that is the question. Shall I ask my beloved Genevieve to wed me, and bring the light of her presence to this old castle to brighten up its gloom; or shall I first challenge that villainous villain to mortal combat? We are such stuff as dreams are made of. Then we are hit by the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune, and we wake to find that all is not as we would have it. What shall I do?

‘‘(Enter the Family Steward with a letter.)

‘‘*The Family Steward*. A letter for you, my lord.

‘‘*Lord Rhoderick*. A thousand thanks, my faithful Giles.

‘‘*Giles*. Shall I wait and see if there is any reply, my lord?

‘‘*Lord Rhoderick*. No; if I require your attendance, I shall ring for you. You are very faithful, Giles.

‘‘*Giles*. Man and boy, I have been in your service these seventy years, and I will die in it willingly, my lord.

‘‘*Lord Rhoderick* (much moved). Thank you, Giles.

‘‘(Exit Giles. Lord Rhoderick opens the letter.)

‘‘*Lord Rhoderick* (reading aloud). ‘SIR, I wish to inform you that the Lady Genevieve has promised to be my wife. I have triumphed at last, and she is mine! Naught can avail her now. —MAURICE D’ARCY.’

‘‘‘Oh, heavens! My darling in that man’s hands! (He tears his hair and strides about in anguish.) What shall I do to show how much I love her?’

‘‘‘(There is a scream outside. Enter Genevieve by the window. She staggers across the stage to him, and he catches her in his arms. Her hair is all loose, and her white robe is all stained and torn.)

‘‘*Genevieve*. Rhoderick! Save me! Save me!

‘‘*Rhoderick*. My beloved! You are safe with me!

‘‘*Genevieve*. Oh, Rhoderick! Sir Maurice d’Arcy wishes me to wed with him!

‘‘*Rhoderick*. And do you not desire it?

‘‘*Genevieve*. Sooner would I renounce the world and enter a convent.

‘‘*Rhoderick*. Beloved! There is no need! Be mine and I will protect you! No one in all the world shall then be able to harm you.

‘‘*Genevieve*. (Clinging to him.) My noble protector! How can I thank you?

‘‘*Rhoderick*. Only say that you love me, and that you will consent to become my peerless bride.

‘‘*Genevieve*. How could I fail to love you? You are so good, so kind. But you ought to wed with a well-dowered maiden. I have naught but myself and my noble birth to offer you. As you know, my father mortgaged all his estates to Sir Maurice d’Arcy, and when he died, he laid claim to them, and now I am as poor as a beggar.

‘‘*Rhoderick*. Your own peerless beauty is the greatest dower any maiden could wish. (He sobs suddenly.)’’

‘‘Whatever for?’ demanded Janie, wide-eyed.

‘‘He is so overcome by her humility,’ explained the creator of ‘Rhoderick’ and ‘Genevieve.’ ‘It is a terrible thing to see a strong man weep!’

‘‘How do you know that?’ Janie was plainly incredulous. ‘Have you ever seen one?’

‘‘No, of course not. But that’s what the books say. I thought it would be a most dramatic incident’—this last very pompously.

‘I think it would be rather silly,’ said Janie critically. ‘Now you might make “Genevieve” weep, if you like.’

‘No, I mightn’t!’ snapped Miss Ozanne. ‘She has to weep later on. She can’t cry all through the play!’

‘No, she can’t,’ Janie quite saw the reasonableness of this. ‘But I don’t think a man would cry just because his betrothed was humble. Not in real life, anyway.’

‘This isn’t real life! It’s the stage!’ retorted Pauline, somewhat unanswerably where her critic was concerned.

‘Well, anyway, it’s a gorgeous play! Do go on!’ said Janie, giving up the point. ‘I want to know what happens next.’

Somewhat mollified, the talented authoress continued:

“*Genevieve*. My dearest! Do not weep. Ah, Rhoderick! How I adore you! You are the kingly hero of my heart!

“*Rhoderick*. Thou art my bride, my love, my life, the very eyes of me!

“(He raises his head, and their lips meet in a long kiss.)”

‘Then the curtain falls, and that’s the end of the second scene,’ concluded Pauline. ‘That’s all I’ve done so far.’

‘Well, I think it’s simply gorgeous!’ replied Janie. ‘I can’t think how you think of the things to say! I couldn’t!’

Miss Ozanne smirked at the praise, but modesty demanded that she should disclaim it, though she felt it to be only her just due. ‘It’s quite easy, really,’ she said. ‘You see, all these books of Kathleen’s were a tremendous help. Of course, I know it isn’t anything like Shakespeare or these other people, but it is practice, and, when I’m grown-up, perhaps I shall be able to write something really great, that will last throughout all the ages. I’ve quite made up my mind to be a writer, you know.’

‘Oh, rather!’ agreed Janie. ‘Won’t it be splendid? I shall be so proud of knowing you! Now, what’s going to happen next?’

‘Oh, in the next scene I am going to have the old nurse talking to Genevieve in her boudoir,’ replied Pauline. ‘She is Genevieve’s old nurse, but she is really on Sir Maurice’s side, and she is going to tell Genevieve that Sir Rhoderick is really secretly betrothed to Esmeralda di Stravati. Genevieve is heart-broken over it, but she loves him so well, that she says if it is for his happiness she will give him up. Then the old nurse says the best way of doing that is for her to be publicly betrothed to Sir Maurice. She isn’t to Lord Rhoderick yet, of course, because he hasn’t given her a ring yet. Genevieve doesn’t want to do it, but the nurse says she can break it off after Lord Rhoderick and the baroness are married, and then she can go into a convent and take the veil.’

‘Oh, I see. That’s a good idea,’ agreed Janie.

The fact that Genevieve could have entered the convent without any preliminary betrothal to a villain did not occur to either of them.

‘Well, go on! What happens next?’

‘Oh, the next scene shows Sir Maurice getting betrothed to Genevieve. Lord Rhoderick comes in in the middle of it, and he is furious. He says that Genevieve has destroyed his trust and faith in women; that he will never believe in one again; and he doesn’t care how soon he dies. Then Genevieve tells him sadly that he will have the baroness to comfort him, and that she is giving him up for his own happiness. He gnashes his teeth, and curses her, and she falls back swooning, and that’s the end of that scene. I haven’t planned any further properly; but, of course, they marry in the end, after Sir Maurice is dead, and the baroness takes the veil, and the old nurse poisons herself.’

‘Well, I think it’s simply thrilling,’ declared Janie. ‘Is any one else killed?’

‘Yes; I think I will kill old Giles. I must have one pathetic scene, and he could die in Lord Rhoderick’s arms. He can fling himself on Sir Maurice’s sword, with which he is about to impale Lord Rhoderick. Of course,’ went on Pauline thoughtfully, ‘I could let Genevieve and Lord Rhoderick never marry. He could be mortally wounded and die at her feet, and she could either kill herself or enter a convent.’

‘Oh no! Don’t do that!’ implored Janie. ‘It would make a tragedy of it then; and it would be so horrid. It’s much nicer to let them marry and be happy in the end. It wouldn’t matter nearly so much about old Giles dying.’

‘Very well, I’ll do that then,’ agreed the playwright. ‘I could give old Giles a very pathetic speech.’

‘Of course you could. I think it will be much better that way.’

At this moment a voice suddenly broke across their conversation—a voice which they both knew—Elizabeth’s.

‘No, Paul,’ she was saying. ‘You have paid me a great honour, but I cannot accept.’

‘Pauline! Cover your ears! We mustn’t listen!’ whispered Janie at this juncture, giving up her first idea of pulling back the curtains and proclaiming their presence in the room. Child as she was, she felt instinctively that that would be the wrong thing to do. So she and Pauline crouched close together, their fingers in their ears, while in the dusky room beyond a love-scene, infinitely simpler, but infinitely more poignant than the scene between Genevieve and Rhoderick, was played to its finish.

Chapter XIV.

PAUL SPEAKS.

In order to link up things, it is necessary to go back a little. To Paul Ozanne it seemed as if he had loved Elizabeth from the first moment when he had seen her sweet face with its dark eyes and aureole of fair hair. Something in the quiet graciousness of her movements reminded him of his own mother. She had died shortly before his tenth birthday, but her son had always remembered her tranquil dignity and grace of movement; and years ago he had vowed that, unless he could meet such another woman, he would die a bachelor. In Elizabeth Temple his ideals were fulfilled; and, almost on the spot, he had made up his mind that she, and none other, should be his wife. He realised, however, that Anne and Janie were very dependent on her, and that it was extremely probable that she would not wish to leave them until Janie was grown-up. Very well; she should not. There was room and to spare in the big old-fashioned house in Le Mesurier Square. As soon as he dared, he would speak to her, and when he brought his bride home, her sisters should be there too.

So far he had got in his thoughts, but he had had no idea of telling her yet. He was deeply grateful for her care of his little sister, and he feared lest a too hasty movement on his part should put an end to things. For, in his new humility, he felt that Elizabeth could scarcely be expected to care for him as he cared for her. So he bided his time, and rejoiced exceedingly in Pauline's adoration of the girl he hoped to make her sister.

Elizabeth, on the other hand, was not nearly so definite in her thoughts. She knew that Paul Ozanne had become a very dear friend, and that she found exceptional pleasure in teaching his little sister. But further than that she had not gone. Perhaps she had scarcely had the time or leisure to do so. Her book was nearing completion, and she was very busy with some short stories as well. Household matters depended largely on her; and there was still a certain amount of business to be got through with regard to her father's affairs. In the intervals she directed the reading of the two children, and saw to it that Janie practised. Pauline was utterly unmusical, so there was no need to trouble about her; but Janie had a light, delicate touch, and a gift of interpretation, and promised to be a remarkably good amateur pianist. With all these multifarious duties and interests, it was no wonder that Elizabeth had little time to spend on her own affairs. Therefore, the scene into which the two of them found themselves precipitated came in the nature of a shock to both.

After shopping in the town, Elizabeth went to the Guille-Allés Library, of which all three sisters were members, and changed the books. Then she went and lunched in one of the numerous shops in the Arcade. Her *vis-à-vis* at the table was a big, handsome schoolboy from the Elizabeth College. She knew him quite well by sight; his people had recently built a bungalow at Pleinmont, and were living there at the moment. This boy generally cycled into St Peter Port every day, and the girls saw him going past. One day he had nearly run down Janie, who happened to be out in the road. After that he had always raised his cap with a grave courtesy when he saw any of them. Now he greeted her with a slow smile, and then returned to his book. Elizabeth gave her order to the pretty waitress, and then, in her turn, became immersed in a book. Her attention was distracted from the story by hearing the boy suddenly say, 'Hullo, Paul! Haven't you gone home to lunch?'

Looking up, she saw Paul Ozanne. 'Hullo, Julian!' he replied. Then he turned to her. 'Good-afternoon, Miss Temple.—I was so late for lunch, I thought I'd drop in here, Julian. That's all.'

'It is late,' replied Julian. 'I've just finished—I must be shifting. Got a Pre.'s meeting on. So-long! Er—good-afternoon!' And with this he vanished downstairs.

Paul sat down in his vacant place, after a murmured 'May I?' to which Elizabeth gave grave consent. There was a short pause. Then he suddenly said, 'Miss Temple! I want your advice about something, if you will give it me. Will you?'

Imagining it to be something connected with Pauline, she replied, 'Yes, of course. If I can be of any help to you, I shall be very glad. What is it? A new frock for Pauline?'

To her surprise, he fidgeted nervously before he replied, 'No—er, no! It's nothing to do with Pauline.'

'No?' she said, in her soft voice. 'Then what is it?'

'Well, the fact is,' he replied, 'I am proposing to have the drawing-room done up. Would you give me your help?'

'Yes, certainly,' she said promptly. 'What are you going to have done? A fresh wall-paper?'

'Yes. And some of the furniture is rather awful—mid-Victorian stuff, you know. I'm going to clear it out, and get one or two really decent things instead. You know that curiosity shop at the top of Fountain Street? There's a rather nice set of Chippendale chairs there that I'm going for. And there's a ripping old spinning-wheel in that other place in Berthelot Street. Then I thought if I could get some really good china, I have a jolly old cabinet up in one of the attics. I'd have it french-polished and put into one of the rooms as well.'

'I see,' said Elizabeth. 'Well, if you are going to have furniture of that period, you must be very careful to see that the wall-paper is not too modern. You ought to have something with a silk brocade effect, in dim pinks and blues and mauves. What are your walls like? I don't think I've ever seen them.'

'White carving with panels let in,' he replied. 'There are no pictures to trouble about; but there's an old Florentine mirror over the mantelpiece; and one of those chandeliers with lustres in the middle of the room. Look here, Miss Temple, couldn't you come back with me and see it? And stay and have tea with Pauline? She'd be awfully glad to see you, I know. She's been having a pretty bad time of it, poor kiddie!'

'I should like to see Pauline,' returned Elizabeth. 'But I said that Janie might come in if the rain cleared off, and that will leave Anne alone for so long.'

'Miss Anne won't mind for once in a way. It will be all the better if Janie is there. Then you and she can go home together, unless you like to leave her with Pauline for the night. I know the kiddie would like to have her—she finds life rather lonely at times, I'm afraid.'

Elizabeth laughed. 'It's very good of you. I know Janie would love it. Perhaps—well, we'll see.'

Accordingly, after lunch, they set off for Le Mesurier Square, some forty minutes after Janie had passed that way. It was getting dusk, for a sea-mist was creeping up, and already it was difficult to see far ahead. When they reached the big house at the corner of the square, Paul took out his latch-key, and let them in. Up the stairs he led his guest, and into the big room across the landing from the library where Pauline was engaged in reading her first work of literature aloud to Janie. He switched on the electric light, and then turned to her. 'It's pretty bad in parts, isn't it?' he said.

Elizabeth glanced round the room. It was long, running from back to front of the house, and was furnished with a conglomeration of furniture of all periods. A beautiful Sheraton secretaire jostled a 'kidney table' of the worst type; a Jacobean chair stood cheek by jowl with a walnut chiffonier with marble top and ornate gilt-edged mirror; two Parian marble jugs, each with its glass shade, adorned the mantelpiece, in company with some exquisite bits of old

Chelsea and Lowestoft. The walls were hung with a satin paper of a bilious yellow colour, and the carpet was a priceless Aubusson.

With the eye of an expert, Elizabeth quickly grasped at the possibilities of the room and its weak points. It was of an excellent size, and very lofty. The fireplace was beautiful, with exquisitely carved over-mantel, above which hung the Florentine mirror, a perfect gem of its kind. At present there was too much furniture in the place, and a good deal—at least two-thirds—ought to be cleared out. But when that was done, and the Chippendale chairs and the spinning-wheel were substituted, when the satin brocade wall-paper was put into the panels—then, indeed, there would be a drawing-room to please the most exigent taste. A magnificent grand piano stood in one corner—a Bechstein, she felt sure. Paul's gaze followed hers. 'That was my father's last gift to me,' he said. 'My mother played and sang beautifully, and she passed on to me her love of music. I only wish Pauline could share in it!'

'Pauline seems to be tone-deaf,' replied Elizabeth. 'You are right, Mr Ozanne; the room is bad in parts, but it could be made lovely with just the right paper and those Chippendale chairs you spoke about. I should have brocade inner curtains too, I think; something to tone with the wall-paper. Oh, it could be an exquisite room!'

'Will you undertake it?' he asked slowly. 'A man cannot know how things should be unless he is an artist; and I am no artist, although I love beauty. Will you undertake it?'

'Yes, with pleasure,' replied Elizabeth. 'Anne is really the one you should have asked, of course, but I know she will help me.'

Then Paul Ozanne knew his hour had come. He had never meant to speak so soon; but a sudden vision of the transformed room, with Elizabeth in her soft, clinging gown moving about it, sprang before his eyes; and before he could check himself, it was out. 'Miss Temple—Elizabeth,' he said. 'Oh, it isn't Anne I want to arrange the room; but you—only you!'

Elizabeth flushed; then the colour drained away from her face, leaving her as white as a lily. She put out one hand with a groping movement. Paul caught it. For a moment, Elizabeth, with beating heart, left her hand in his. Then the memory of her sisters came to her. Anne! Janie! She could not desert them; they needed her so much. With a little movement she freed herself. 'Paul! Don't!' she cried. And in that exclamation, with its note of pain thrilling through her tones, Paul Ozanne read the true answer to his almost unspoken question.

'Do you dislike me so much then?' he asked wistfully.

Dislike him! Elizabeth lifted her dark eyes to his face. 'No; it is not that,' she said, with quivering lips. 'Oh, not that.'

'What is it, then? Not Pauline, I know. Is it your sisters? Ah, Elizabeth, as if I should part you from them. They shall come here, of course. There is plenty of room for us all.'

'Do you think Anne would consent?' asked Elizabeth seriously. 'Janie is only a child, and doesn't think. But Anne is very proud. I couldn't leave her alone at La Rochelle, Paul! I couldn't do that!'

He looked at her. 'Here, come into the library,' he said. 'There's a fire there, and it's cold here for you.'

Quietly she followed him out of the room and across the landing into the big book-lined room known as the library. Both had forgotten the two children, and they were so completely hidden by the thick, heavy curtains, that no one would have imagined any one to be in the room. Perhaps their low-pitched voices might have been heard, but at that moment a motor-lorry outside suddenly set up a series of deafening explosions, and the next remark made was Elizabeth's, which had first proclaimed their presence to Janie. Then, while the two small girls crouched together, fingers religiously in their ears, Paul Ozanne pleaded his cause with all the eloquence at his command.

In vain Elizabeth tried to check him. It was useless. Only one thing kept Elizabeth strong enough to resist his pleading—the memory of the white peace in her father’s face as she had last seen it. If he should know that she had left her sisters, would not that peace be disturbed, even in Paradise? For well Elizabeth knew that nothing on earth would make proud Anne agree to be dependent on any brother-in-law, however dear.

Paul let her go at last, seeing that nothing would make her change her mind. When her slender figure had vanished into the darkness, he went up to his room and locked himself in. Had they been there, Janie and Pauline might have learnt just how terrible a thing it is ‘to see a strong man weep.’

Chapter XV.

ANNE'S FIRST PICTURE.

March! A bright, breezy day, when the west wind flung the spray high upon the rocks, and ruffled the bents' grass with roughly-caressing fingers. A day when March, fading into tearful April, discloses her harbingers, the saffron primroses which, in Guernsey, star every bank and hedgerow with a glory unsurpassed even in Devonshire. Sark alone of the other islands can show such a prodigality of golden beauty; Jersey, rich in so much else, produces few primroses in comparison with the wealth with which Guernsey and Sark are adorned in the spring of the year.

The three Temples, who had never seen such a wilderness of wild-flowers before, simply revelled in them. Janie, in particular, nearly went crazy with delight. She and Pauline spent hours in gathering great bunches of them, and arranging them in bowls, which they placed all over La Rochelle. Anne made some exquisite little water-colour studies of them, two of which sold almost immediately. However, most of her time was devoted to the picture which she hoped would make her name—'La Héroguïaze.' On this particular day she had set up her easel on the shore, and was busy giving the finishing-touches to some rocks. Janie and Pauline had not seen the picture previously, for Anne was very shy about it. However, she did not send them away when they ran up to her, and stood looking at it.

'How—horrible!' commented Janie, with a little shudder at length. 'What is it, Anne?'

'Herodias dancing at harvest-time,' replied Anne briefly.

'Herodias? Mother of Salome?' queried Pauline. 'But why?'

'La Bandinel, that old lady who lives near Torteval, told me about it,' explained Anne, working away as she talked. 'If girls dance at harvest-time, then Herodias the wicked becomes jealous. She rises from hell to the shore of Rocquaine Bay, and there she, too, dances. As she swirls about, the winds of hell, which she has brought in her skirts, dash down the sheaves and the uncut corn, and, in the bay, woe betide the fishing-boat that is afloat on the waters that night; for every soul in her must bid farewell to life, and love, and laughter, and is drawn down, down, down into the gaping mouth of the pit.'

The two children shivered. Anne's voice was full of an unexpected eeriness which made Herodias the wicked seem very near. And the picture was a remarkable achievement for any girl of twenty-one.

Anne had painted the beginning of one of these storms, or 'Héroguïazes,' as the country-people call them. The sky and the sea were gray, with a curious livid lighting on the waves, which accentuated the grim outlines of the dark rocks. In the foreground was Herodias, stretching up on white, beautiful feet, while her slim hands beckoned to a crowd of shadowy, ghost-like things which seemed to be creeping nearer and nearer. Jan gants y tan was there; and La Biche, and Le Bôdu; the Little Green Man, and Le Houdinel; and a host of witches and wizards. Creeping up from the left-hand corner were misty shapes of cats and hares, and perched on a rock was a cahouette. But the magnificence of the picture lay in the Herodias. Elizabeth had posed for the figure, and the long dark hair, floating loose, framed the delicate oval of Elizabeth's face. There Anne had used her imagination, for those dark, evil eyes, the full-curved lips set in a dreadful smile, had nothing to do with Madonna-like Elizabeth. It was a wonderful face, haunting in its wicked beauty, and in the ghastly misery which the young artist had somehow managed to infuse in the smile. No wonder the two children got closer together and clutched hands!

'I—I don't think I like it, Anne,' said Pauline finally. 'Her eyes seem to follow you all over. It—it's a *hateful* picture!'

Anne turned in surprise at the child's vehemence. 'Why, Pauline! You silly child!' she said. 'It's only a picture!'

'I don't care! I hate it! Herodias has a dreadful face! Oh, I wish I'd never seen it! I shall always remember it!'

'Take her to Elizabeth, Janie,' said Anne; but a note of triumph was in her voice. If her picture could so affect some one who knew her as intimately as Pauline did, then there must be something in it, at any rate.

'Come on, Pauline,' said Janie. 'I—I don't like it myself!'

They made themselves scarce with all celerity, while Anne painted steadily on. If only she could sell it, it might mean all the difference to her. 'If I could only start,' she thought, 'I could soon get on. If we could get a little money, Janie could go to school again. She ought to; for she is so clever. We can't teach her a great deal more.'

In the meantime Janie and Pauline had gone racing over the sands, up one of the cement causeways that lead to the shore road, and along it to La Rochelle, where they literally fell into Elizabeth's arms as she came out of the door to call them all in to lunch. One glance at their faces told her that something had frightened them, and, without question, she caught them to her, holding them fast.

'Lunch is just ready,' she said. 'I was coming to call you. Where is Anne?'

'Over there—painting,' said Janie, who was beginning to feel rather ashamed of herself. 'Shall I call her?'

'Yes, if you will, dear. Be quick, won't you?'

Janie turned and retraced her steps, rather slowly, if the truth must be known, while Elizabeth drew Pauline indoors.

'What has frightened you, dear?' she asked gently.

'It was Anne's picture,' replied Pauline, who was still shaking a little as the result of that five minutes' panic. 'Oh, Elizabeth, I hate it! I hate it! It's so wicked!'

'But it's only a picture, *petite*. It can't hurt you,' replied Elizabeth soothingly. 'Don't think about it any more. We are going to take you and Janie to the cinema this evening to see Robin Hood. We will have tea in St Peter Port, and then go there; and then, after we've dropped you at Le Mesurier Square, we three will get a lift as far as Grâce à Dieu on the Lihou's motor-lorry. Mélie is going to join us. We are going to meet her at the church. Won't it be fun?'

'Ye—yes!'

'Why, Pauline! Don't you want to go?'

'Yes—but, oh, Elizabeth, please may I come back with you? Paul is in Jersey, and he won't be back till to-morrow; and, when he isn't there, it's so lonely at nights, and—and I'm frightened!'

'Yes, of course you may. I should have thought of it before,' replied Elizabeth, reproaching herself that she had not made arrangements for this sooner.

Pauline was an intensely nervous child, and dreaded the dark as even Janie did not. Since the departure of Mademoiselle, Paul Ozanne had found this out for himself, and had had a little camp-bed put up in his dressing-room for her. The door between the two rooms always stood open, and he had told Elizabeth that more than once he had had to go to the child during the night because she had wakened in a fit of terror.

Elizabeth said no more, for just then the other two came in, Janie with the light easel and camp-stool, while Anne bore her precious picture and the paint-box. During lunch the story of 'Robin Hood' formed the chief topic of conversation, and it was not till the end of the meal

that Elizabeth said casually, 'Oh, by the way, Anne, Pauline will come back with us for the night, as Mr Ozanne is away.'

'That means she wants to sleep with Janie? Or you?' asked Anne.

'Oh, I think she's better with Janie,' replied Elizabeth, who had her own reasons for wanting Anne that night. 'We'll double up as usual, if you don't mind, dear.'

'Of course not. Then come upstairs, you two, and I'll give you the sheets, and you can make the bed so that it's ready,' said Anne practically. 'You'll be ready to go when we get back, I know! It's a fairly long walk from Grâce à Dieu.'

'And then you must settle down to your work,' added Elizabeth. 'You must undo that last darn, Pauline, and do it again. It wasn't darned, it was cobbled. That won't do!'

'No,' said Pauline meekly. She followed Anne out of the room with Janie, but she took care to give the picture a wide berth as she passed it. When they had gone, Elizabeth picked it up and looked at it. She had not seen it for some weeks, and now she was amazed at the power in it. She was not surprised that Pauline had been frightened. She felt the uncanny fascination of the 'Herodias' herself. Anne, coming downstairs a minute later, found her with it, and broke into her delightful, infectious laugh.

'Did these two silly children tell you how terrified they were?' she asked gaily.

'Pauline did; Janie didn't,' replied Elizabeth. 'Honestly, Anne, I'm not surprised. It really is horrible. I had no idea you could paint like that!'

'You think it good, then?' Anne's breath came rather quickly, and she had more colour in her face than usual.

'Yes,' replied her sister judicially. 'I think it's wonderful. How do you do it, Anne?'

'I don't know. It just came. Elizabeth, you'll laugh at me, but sometimes I've felt creepy about it myself!'

Elizabeth joined her half-ashamed laughter before she said seriously, 'I don't wonder! It's a wonderful gift, Anne!'

'But, Elizabeth,' began Anne, then checked herself, for the children were coming downstairs. 'Give me the picture! Pauline mustn't see it again, if she's going to be so frightened.' She carefully put it away, and when the two entered the living-room all signs of it had vanished, much to their relief, for it had made a tremendous impression on them. Janie went to the piano, while Pauline sat down with a deep sigh to unpick yesterday's work darn. Mending, her soul abhorred, and while Janie sat breathless before the wonderful play of *Loved and Lost*, which was rapidly approaching completion, Pauline could only wonder at her friend's exquisite sewing, for Janie was a true Frenchwoman in this. Having seen them both well and truly begun on their tasks, the eldest Miss Temple left them to get on by themselves, while she and Anne washed up in the kitchen.

'How many times has that darn been unpicked?' asked Anne, in an undertone, her eyes dancing as she spoke.

'This is the third,' replied Elizabeth. 'Do you know, I'm beginning to think I shall never teach that child to sew.'

'Oh, cheer up! You've only had her three months,' replied Anne cheerfully.

'Pauline obviously thinks the pen is mightier than the needle,' laughed Elizabeth. 'She broke all her darning-needles yesterday. No, Anne. I don't think the first two were done on purpose! After that, well, I shouldn't like to say! But it is an extraordinary thing for five darning-needles all to break in half-an-hour! I supplied her with one of my own after that, and made her sit beside me so that I could see what she was doing. "Miss" Ozanne was well to the fore for the rest of the afternoon!'

'Well, could you expect anything else?' asked Anne, as she hung up her tea-towels.

'She's a funny child, isn't she?'

‘Hush! Don’t let her hear you! Yes; she is. But she’s very lovable, really.’

‘She has been wrongly treated, of course, and made far too grown-up; but I am very fond of her.’

‘Little Mélie Lihou is another nice kiddie,’ went on the younger girl thoughtfully. ‘They really have been very good to us.’

‘Yes,’ agreed Elizabeth. ‘I’m glad Janie has these two, because, after all, Héroïse de Garis is not a fit companion for her.’

‘Talking of the De Garis’s, Dr Chester was there to-day,’ said Anne.

‘Was he? I didn’t know. Who is ill, Anne? Did he tell you?’

‘He didn’t see me; it was when I was making the beds this morning,’ replied Anne. ‘Well, that’s finished! Let’s go and join the others, and see what they’re doing.’

They went into the living-room, and found Pauline sitting with a resigned face, poking her needle in and out a lattice-work of wool, while Janie, with her tongue out of the corner of her mouth, was working hard at a Bach Prelude. Elizabeth went over to the window to see how her pupil was getting on, and was greeted with a plaintive, ‘Can’t I leave this just for to-day? Please! It’s awfully hard to have to think of work when you’re just thrilling with excitement!’

Janie added her plea to Pauline’s.

‘Nonsense!’ said Elizabeth. ‘You must do your work. I’m sorry, but I’m not going to let either of you off!’

‘Well, I think you might,’ grumbled Janie, turning back to the piano.

But Elizabeth knew the value of keeping to her word; so the two had to work till three o’clock, when she sent them to get ready for their jaunt.

‘We’ll leave the bus at St Julian’s,’ she said, ‘and call in at Le Mesurier Square to let them know that you are not coming home to-night, Pauline, and to get your tooth-brush.’

‘Gorgeous!’ sighed Pauline ecstatically.

When they arrived at the house they found Mrs Lefebvre, the housekeeper, and explained to her what they wanted.

‘Well, now,’ she said, ‘I am very glad, Miss Temple, for I’ve had a letter from the master, which I’d like you to read.’

Elizabeth took it wonderingly—the younger girls had run off on some private business of their own (not unconnected with the play!)—and read it through.

‘DEAR MRS LEFEBVRE,’ it ran, ‘I find that I shall not be able to return on Thursday as I promised, as I find I must go over to France unexpectedly. While I am away, will you please look after Miss Pauline very carefully? The car is to take her to La Rochelle every day, and to fetch her. On no account is she to go on the bus. I am told that there is a good deal of scarlet fever in St Peter Port, so do not let her go near the town at all. If you are in any difficulty, go to Miss Temple for advice. It is of no use my giving you an address, as I shall be moving from place to place all the time. I hope to return about Wednesday of next week. Please give the enclosed note to Miss Pauline.—Yours faithfully, P. OZANNE.’

‘This is Miss Pauline’s note,’ went on the housekeeper. ‘Will you give it to her, ma’am?’

‘Thank you,’ said Elizabeth.

‘And I’ll tell Pergeuez to bring the car round to take you back,’ continued Mrs Lefebvre. ‘You won’t be wanting to go to the pictures now.’

‘No, of course not,’ replied Elizabeth.

‘Whyever not?’ demanded Anne, turning from the picture she had been studying. ‘What has gone wrong?’

For reply, her sister handed her the letter. She skimmed rapidly through it, her black brows knitting as she read.

‘No,’ she said, when she had finished it, ‘you’re quite right; we certainly can’t go. The kiddies will be disappointed, but it can’t be helped.’

‘You might stay here for tea,’ suggested Mrs Lefebvre, smoothing down her black satin apron. ‘It would maybe take the edge off their disappointment.’

But Elizabeth shook her head. ‘It’s very good of you, Mrs Lefebvre; but I think, on the whole, I would rather go back to La Rochelle.’

‘What about Mélie?’ asked Anne. ‘One of us had better go down to the church to meet her, and we can take her back with us.’

‘You could ring up the school, ma’am,’ put in the housekeeper. ‘She won’t have left yet.’

‘No. That’s a good idea.’ Anne went over to the telephone and presently got the school, the other two watching her.

‘May I speak to Mélie Lihou?’ she asked. ‘Absent?—What!—Are you sure?—Thank you. No; that’s all! Good-bye.’ She hung up the receiver and then turned to them.

‘Mélie Lihou is absent from school,’ she said slowly. ‘The doctor is afraid it is scarlet fever!’

Chapter XVI.

SCARLET FEVER.

After questioning the two children, Elizabeth found out that they had not been with Mélie since the previous Saturday, when they had had tea with her. With that piece of information she tried to reassure herself. Nevertheless she was very thankful to catch Dr Chester on his way to the De Garis's.

'A mercy you saw me now,' he said. 'Three of the De Garis children are down with it, and it's a bad kind. I shouldn't think there was any need to worry if they haven't seen Mélie since Saturday, but it's always as well to be on the safe side. Look out for anything in the nature of being poorly, and send for me if you suspect anything. They *look* healthy enough just now!'

'It's the feeling that if anything goes wrong with Pauline I can't get to Mr Ozanne,' said Elizabeth restlessly. 'His letter said that he would not be back till next week, and, apparently, he will be moving about all the time.'

'Well, he hasn't made *you* responsible for the kid,' said the doctor bluntly. 'That housekeeper of his ought to be looking after her—not you.'

'Yes; but Mrs Lefebvre doesn't understand children,' returned Elizabeth, in worried tones. 'Pauline is really far better with us.'

'Well, don't worry,' he said. 'You'll do no good by it. And forbid them both to speak to any of the shore children. So far, the De Garis's are the only cases I know of, but there's no telling how it will spread. Good-afternoon, Miss Anne.'

Anne replied to his greeting, a touch of colour in the pearly purity of her face. There was a little more conversation, and then the doctor got into his car and went on to the De Garis's.

'I wish Mr Ozanne were back,' sighed Elizabeth, watching him. 'I should feel so much happier about Pauline then. He is such a pillar of quiet strength, isn't he, Anne?'

'Well, he'll probably call every day now,' replied Anne dreamily. 'Just as well, too.'

Elizabeth turned and looked at her sister in amazement. 'Anne! What are you talking about? How can he call when he's in France?'

'When who's in France?' demanded Anne, waking up suddenly.

'Mr Ozanne, of course! We weren't talking of any one else.'

'I thought you meant the doctor,' replied Anne, as she turned to go indoors.

'The doctor!—Dr Chester! He's very charming, of course, but I couldn't imagine leaning on him as one can lean on Mr Ozanne,' replied Elizabeth. 'He seems so—'

'Well? So what?' demanded Anne as her sister paused.

'I can scarcely express it. He's very young, of course.'

'He's none the worse for that! And after all his goodness to us, I must say it seems to me very ungrateful to criticise him like that; and I'm rather surprised at you, Elizabeth,' and with this Anne marched into the house with her head in the air, while Elizabeth stood gazing after her, amazement in her eyes.

Amazement presently gave place to comprehension, mingled with a little tender anxiety, which made her follow her sister indoors, there to find Pauline and Janie alone in the sitting-room.

'Oh, Elizabeth! I'm so glad you've come!' exclaimed the former, jumping down from her perch on the table. 'I want to make my will, and Janie doesn't know how. How d'you begin, please?'

'It's in case she gets scarlet fever and dies,' explained Janie. 'I think it's awfully stupid of her, because she isn't twenty-one yet, so of course no one would take any notice of it!'

'Oh yes, they would!' retorted 'Miss' Ozanne. 'One is bound to respect the wishes of the dead. Otherwise they may not rest in their graves—'

'Oh, be quiet, both of you!' cried the exasperated Elizabeth. 'For goodness' sake get some ordinary game to play, and don't be so horrible.' Then she swung round on her heel and left the room.

'*Mon gy!*' remarked Janie, who had picked up this expression from an old fisherman.

'It's only because she's anxious,' said 'Miss' Ozanne, with a wag of her black head.

'You think you know everything!' retorted Janie unamiably.

However, Pauline was perfectly correct in her surmise. Elizabeth was anxious—*anxious* about the children—*anxious* about Anne. After all, what did they know about Dr Chester? Nothing, save that he was a very pleasant young man, who was doing *locum tenens* for another doctor of whom they knew nothing. And Anne, after having given herself away most generously, refused to say another word on the subject, so that the next few days were not too comfortable at La Rochelle. On the Sunday morning the two elder girls were wakened at the unearthly hour of five by Pauline shaking them. 'Oh, do come!' she pleaded. 'Janie has such a sore throat!'

'Janie!' With one bound Elizabeth was out of bed, and the next minute she was in the other room, bending over Janie, who was sitting up in her bed with flushed face and over-bright eyes, complaining that her throat hurt her so. Elizabeth knew nothing about scarlet fever beyond the general symptoms. The previous day Dr Chester had left a clinical thermometer on his way to the De Garis's. She now fetched it from her own room, where Anne was rapidly dressing, and took the child's temperature. With shaking hands she took it to the window, but in her agitation could make nothing of it.

'Let me,' said Anne's voice behind her, and Anne's steady hand took it from her.

'Oh, is Janie very ill?' asked Pauline at this juncture.

'Pauline!' exclaimed Elizabeth, realising all at once that the child wore only her night-dress and had nothing on her feet. 'Go and get into our bed at once, darling! No; there's nothing much wrong with Janie but a cold, I believe.' She glanced at Anne as she spoke, but that young lady's face told her nothing; so she took the shivering child across to their own room, and tucked her up warmly, promising to return soon. Outside the door Anne waited for her. 'Well?' she said sharply.

'A hundred and two point four,' replied Anne. 'I'm going to get them up at the post-office, and ring up Dr Chester. Oh, I know it is more likely to be a chill than anything else, but it's as well to be on the safe side.' With this she whisked off, leaving her sister to go to the family baby.

Janie welcomed her with a clasp of hot, dry fingers. 'Have I got scarlet fever?' she asked, with difficulty.

'I hope not, my darling,' replied Elizabeth. 'Lie down and let me cover you up now.'

'It's so hot,' croaked poor Janie, nevertheless lying down obediently. 'Can I have a drink, please?'

Elizabeth gave her the drink, but already it was painful to swallow, and she barely sipped it. Twenty minutes later Anne returned with the cheering news that the doctor was coming at once.

'I'll go and get the fire on,' she said; 'but you can go first and dress yourself. You can't entertain Dr Chester in your dressing-gown!'

Janie began to giggle weakly, but it hurt her, and she stopped. Elizabeth crossed to the bedroom where Pauline was lying, tossing restlessly, and began to dress.

'Can I get up?' asked the little girl piteously. 'Oh, please, Elizabeth, mayn't I get up and dress, too?'

Reflecting that it would probably be wiser to let her be with Anne than to leave her to fret herself into a fever, Elizabeth consented. 'Yes, if you like,' she said. 'You can help Anne; she is going to light the fire.'

Pauline slipped out of bed, and was quickly ready. Then she ran downstairs to the kitchen, where Anne already had the fire blazing finely, and was preparing coffee, ready for the doctor when he should come. 'The living-room fire is laid,' she said curtly, in answer to the little girl's request to be allowed to help. 'Go and light it. Then you can get dusters and dust the room.'

Pauline trotted off, and, when Anne presently peeped in at her, there was a crackling fire alight, and she was faithfully rubbing at the armoire. Upstairs, Elizabeth had lighted the fire, ready laid in the bedroom grate, and had straightened Janie's bed, and sponged her hands and face to try to relieve the fever. It was just as all this was accomplished that the doctor's car drew up at the little gate. Anne, who had heard it, was at the door, and a minute later he was in the room, and with him came such an atmosphere of calm strength that poor Elizabeth felt half her troubles slipping off her shoulders. It needed little examination to tell him that Janie had the fever; and though he made light of it in the bedroom, it was bad news that he had for her sisters downstairs. 'Yes; it's scarlet fever, right enough,' he said. 'She's pretty bad, but we shall pull her through all right. Keep her as quiet as you can; give her milk and beef-tea; and don't let her try to get up. The temperature is rising rapidly; don't be alarmed if she is delirious. These nervous, highly-strung children often are. Now, what are you going to do with the other child?'

'She must go back to Le Mesurier Square,' replied Anne firmly. 'We can't really isolate Janie properly, and we can't have Pauline running any risks. It's very hard on her, poor little soul, but it can't be helped.'

'I'll just see her first,' said the doctor. 'She and Janie have been together all this week; it is more than likely she will have it too.'

He examined Pauline, and then sent her into the living-room. 'I won't say certainly yet,' he said, but—'

'Do you think she will have it?' asked Elizabeth.

'Fraid so,' he said. 'The throat is very slightly inflamed, and the temperature a little above normal.'

Elizabeth's white face grew still whiter.

Anne slipped an arm round her. 'Go and sit beside Janie. I'll get general instructions,' she said gently.

Elizabeth nodded and went upstairs to the room where Janie was tossing restlessly.

When the door upstairs had closed, the younger girl turned to the man. 'Is it going to be—bad?' she asked.

'Anne, don't be silly,' he said. 'I'm afraid there's no doubt they've both got it, but I think the Ozanne kiddie will have it lightly.'

'And Janie?'

'Too soon to say definitely yet,' he replied. 'Now, look here, Anne. I'll send a cooling mixture along, and that's all I can do at present. I believe largely in letting Nature fight her own battles. Put that other child to bed presently. Let her think it's because you were all up so early. I'll come along later on.' He drank the coffee she gave him, and then, looking into her tell-tale eyes, with a happy smile, he said, 'Don't worry, Anne, girl! We'll pull them through all right—and then they can be our bridesmaids.'

With this he was gone, leaving Anne gasping, but with a warm gladness in her heart, which later struck her as positively wicked. However, she had not much time for reflection just then. She prepared a tray with rolls and coffee, and carried it upstairs to Elizabeth, who by

this time had recovered her self-control, and swallowed the food, knowing that, whatever happened, her own strength must be kept up. Then Anne gave Pauline some hot milk, and packed her off to bed once more, tucking her in, and bidding her sleep. That done, she went across to the other room, where Janie, with rapidly rising temperature, lay muttering in delirium. She found that Elizabeth had not been idle. All the pictures had been taken off the walls, the rugs on the floor were rolled up, and various oddments had been put away.

‘We must have a sheet hung over the door,’ murmured Elizabeth. ‘And, Anne, to-morrow I want you to get some lavender flowers in town. Javotte always used to burn them in a sick-room, I remember, to keep the atmosphere fresh and sweet. How is Pauline?’

‘In bed,’ replied Anne. ‘Dr Chester says she will have it very lightly, and there’s no need to worry. He is calling in again this morning, and he is sending out a cooling mixture before that. Thank goodness I got beefsteak for to-day’s dinner! I’m going now to make beef-tea with it. Knock on the floor if you want me.’

Elizabeth nodded as she bent to draw the bedclothes over Janie, who had flung them off in her restless tossing, and Anne left the room.

That was a strange Sunday. At nine o’clock the mixture came, and was followed at twelve by the doctor himself. He said little to Elizabeth, but downstairs he told Anne, gently but firmly, that they must have a nurse, for Janie was very ill.

‘If only Javotte was here,’ sighed Anne.

‘Javotte? Who is she?’ he asked.

‘Our old nurse. She is a splendid sick nurse, and we all love her so. But she is in St Malo.’

‘Whereabouts?’ demanded the doctor.

Anne told him, hope brightening her eyes.

‘All right,’ he said, in matter-of-fact tones.

At that moment the latch of the door lifted, and, as the two stood watching, into the house walked a little old woman with bright dark eyes.

‘Javotte!’ exclaimed Anne. ‘Oh, dear Javotte!’

‘So,’ said Javotte composedly, as she embraced the girl, ‘thou art well, my cabbage? Then who is it that needs Javotte?’

‘Janie has scarlet fever,’ replied Anne. ‘Oh, Javotte, how could you know that we wanted you?’

‘Mademoiselle Elizabeth came to me on Friday night,’ replied Javotte, who was hanging up her cloak—the long Breton cloak—behind the door. ‘I saw her at my bedside, weeping, so I knew that there was need of me at La Rochelle. My son came back from the fishing early this morning, and he brought me here. Now, Mademoiselle Anne, is this your doctor? Can he speak French?’

‘A little,’ replied Dr Chester.

‘Then, m’sieu, if you will have the goodness to tell me what is needed, I will go upstairs and take my place.’

Helped out by Anne, he told her exactly what was required, and she nodded her head.

‘*Ça suffit*,’ she said, and left them.

‘Dear Javotte,’ said Anne. ‘All will go well now.’

‘Yes, I think so,’ he replied. But a shade remained on his face, for he knew that Janie had the fever in its most malignant form, and he feared that a hard struggle lay before them.

Chapter XVII.
'I'D LIKE MY TEA.'

What a tower of strength to the poor girls Javotte was in the days that followed! As the doctor had said, Pauline had the disease very lightly. She was sufficiently poorly and uncomfortable to be very cross, and at times gave them a good deal of trouble. Anne was inclined, sometimes, to be sharp with her, which did her a great deal of good; but Elizabeth was always gentleness itself. During these first awful days, when Janie lay either babbling in delirium or sunk in heavy stupor, the one ray of sunlight to the elder girl was that Pauline, at least, was out of danger. She was the more thankful because a letter from Mrs Lefebvre arrived on Tuesday, enclosing one from Paul Ozanne, announcing that he had fallen down an open cellar-flap in the pavement and broken his leg. He was with friends, and was doing very well, but it would be some weeks before he returned home.

'What will I do about letting the master know about Miss Pauline?' Mrs Lefebvre asked in her own letter. 'Perhaps you would write to him, Miss Temple, and break the news gentle-like?'

Elizabeth sighed. Dr Chester, to whom she showed the two letters, undertook to answer both; so that Paul Ozanne, chafing with impatience at being a prisoner, was surprised to receive a long letter from the doctor—whom he had met—explaining matters fully. This letter made him more impatient than ever. His one wish now was to get back to Guernsey as quickly as possible, for Peter Chester had hinted that worse might follow.

That day things were very bad at La Rochelle. Sometimes Janie had fits of delirium, when her cries of 'Daddy! Daddy! Oh, Daddy, I want you!' nearly broke her sisters' hearts; sometimes she was wandering with Pauline in that gray No-Man's-Land which lies on the border-line between life and death; sometimes *Les gens du vendredi* haunted her, and she shrieked that La Biche and Jan gants y tan were chasing her, and she clung to those near her with trembling, clutching fingers.

'It's all right, darling,' Elizabeth would say, holding the little rigid figure close to her. 'It's running away. Look! It's afraid to touch you when I'm holding you!' And the child would relax until the devils of delirium once more laid hold on her.

But most of the day she lay insensible, breathing hoarsely in a heavy stupor. One or other of the girls was with her the whole day, while Javotte, with the noiseless efficiency of the born nurse, did what was necessary for them in the way of actual ministration. Early in the afternoon the tramp of many feet sounded on the road, and Anne, who had just changed places with Elizabeth for an hour or so, went to the window. Four men came first, carrying a little coffin laden with wreaths; then Peter de Garis walked with his mother; then several of the De Garis clan. Anne remembered dully that Dr Chester had told her two days before, in answer to a question of hers, that little Francis de Garis was sinking fast. He had had no chance at any time. Suppose that in a few days' time a similar procession should leave La Rochelle? A great sob rose in her throat, and she turned away from the window, to find herself in the doctor's presence. 'Oh, Peter,' she said, 'is it—is there—' she faltered.

'My dear, while there is life there is hope,' he replied. 'Janie is very ill, but, please God, we shall save her yet. To-night decides it. If she lives through the night, we shall pull her through.' Presently he put up one slender surgeon's hand, and stroked her black hair gently. 'Don't think I don't understand,' he said. 'It is barely six years since I lost my own little sister, but it was typhoid in her case, and she had no strength to battle with it. Janie has a tough little constitution, and, ill as she is, I believe she will turn the corner yet. Be brave, Anne.'

He left her after that, but somehow things did not seem quite so bad, and, when she went presently into the room, something of Peter Chester's quiet, purposeful calm irradiated from her. Elizabeth, kneeling by the bed, felt it, and looked up with weary, hopeless eyes. Javotte, by the window, telling her beads, felt it too, and paused for a moment. The only one not to feel it was Janie, who lay with fever-flushed cheeks and half-shut eyes.

'What is it, Anne?' asked Elizabeth, in low tones.

'Peter says that Janie's constitution is in her favour,' replied Anne softly. 'Sissie, darling, don't lose hope. She will be better soon. Now, I am going to Pauline.'

She left the room again, and crossed the landing to the other one, where Pauline was lying, gazing dreamily out of the window to the sea. She turned her head as the elder girl came in. 'Anne,' she said, 'is it wrong for people who are not Catholics to pray to Our Lady of Lihou?'

'I don't think good prayers are ever wrong,' replied Anne. 'Why?'

'Because all this afternoon I've been looking at Lihou Island, and praying to Notre Dame de Lihou to make Janie better, and I feel she will get better, Anne. Javotte prays to the blessed saints, and I don't think they'll mind because I'm a Protestant—do you?'

'No,' replied Anne, as she turned the pillows deftly and pulled the bedclothes straight. 'I don't think they will.'

'I wish Paul were here,' sighed the little girl. 'He might be able to help.'

'But as he can't come, you must not fret for him,' said Anne. 'Shall I read to you, Pauline?'

'Yes, please! Read to me about the Guernsey lily. I love it!'

So Anne read to her the story of the little peasant maid who met the Little Green Man on the shores of Vazon Bay—that great bay which was once a forest, and where, so tradition says, the fairy men landed when they left elfland; and, driving the mortals back, slew the men in the narrow lane, now known as the Rue Rouge, and then wedded the Guernsey maids, and became mortal themselves by slow degrees, so that their great-great-grandchildren were wholly mortal, and only the slight stature of the Guernésiaisais remains now to tell of the fairy blood that ran in the veins of their forefathers.

The story of the Guernsey lily is one of the prettiest in Guernsey folk-lore, and Janie and Pauline both loved it. It tells how the little peasant maid met the ruler of a fairy realm, and, tempted by his descriptions of the glories that awaited her there, consented to go with him and become his queen. Her old mother hunted for her high and low, but in vain, till the next night brought her a dream, and in the morning she went down to the shore, and there, swaying before her in the cool summer breeze, she found, in the place of her daughter, the Guernsey lily, a miracle of loveliness, but quite scentless.

Anne had a beautiful voice, and the story was one which held a great appeal for her, so that she read it remarkably well. When she had finished it Pauline turned away, and lay gazing over the blue waters of Rocquaine Bay to where Lihou Island lay, with the ruins of the chapel of Notre Dame des Rochers standing out clear-cut and dark against the sky. She lay so still that Anne, who had been glancing through the book of Guernsey folk-lore, thought she was asleep, and was just about to rise and steal away when the little girl turned back to her.

'Anne! When Janie is well again, won't you paint that picture—the little girl meeting the Little Green Man? She looks so fairyish; if you dressed her in green, she'd be a lovely Little Green Man! And Elizabeth could be the little maid. Oh, do! It would be ever so much nicer than that horrid Herodias!'

Anne broke into a low, sweet laugh. Two hours previously she had felt that she could never laugh again. Now, with the feeling of assurance that Janie was going to get better, she felt almost ready to dance.

Pauline looked at her in astonishment. Then she asked something she had not asked for two days. 'How is Janie?' she said.

'Going to get better,' replied Anne promptly. She understood, as old Javotte did not, why it was Pauline had never asked directly how her friend was, and she understood now with what shrinking the child had put the question. At once her promptness was rewarded.

Pauline smiled, and a look of utter contentment came into her face. 'I'm glad,' she said. Then she added, 'Javotte thinks I am unkind because I haven't asked how Janie was; but it wasn't that, Anne!'

'No; I know,' replied Anne comfortingly. 'Now, I am going to give you some beef-tea, and then I must leave you for a while.' She went over to the fire as she spoke, and took off it a pan in which was a sealed bottle. She broke the seal, and uncorked it, pouring from it a cupful of hot, strong beef-tea. This she gave to Pauline with some dry biscuits, and when it was finished she tucked the little girl up, and then went across to the other room, where Janie still lay in that terrifying stupor.

Elizabeth raised heavy eyes as her sister entered. 'When is the doctor coming back?' she asked.

'About seven o'clock,' returned Anne. 'Go and lie down, Sissie dear. You are so tired, and I can sit here for a while. Let me tuck you up on the other bed.'

Elizabeth shook her head. 'I can't,' she said. 'I—I *must* stay here, Anne, in case she wants me.'

Anne looked at her pitifully. 'Sissie, you must rest. See, I'll promise to call you if she wakes. I promise I will. Lie down for a while.'

Whether Elizabeth would have given way to Anne's pleading will never be known, for at that moment Javotte came to them.

'Mademoiselle Elizabeth will rest herself,' she said, in her low, even tones, 'and Mademoiselle Anne will watch now. It is not good to stay thus always. Come, *ma petite*.'

She spoke exactly as she had done years before, when Anne and Janie had still been of nursery age in her eyes; and Elizabeth, wearied out with watching, yielded to the quiet authority, and allowed them to cover her up on the other camp-bed; but when Javotte brought her a *tisane* she rebelled.

'But no, Javotte! I will rest a little while, but I will not take your *tisanes*! I am quite well—only tired.'

Javotte did not press the point. She put the despised cup aside, and returned to her beads; while Anne sat down at the bedside to watch by her little sister, and for the next hour the only sounds in the room were the murmuring of the old Breton woman's prayers, the whispering of the fire, and the hoarse breathing of the little sufferer. Elizabeth, utterly worn out by anxiety and watching, lay in a half-doze, from which she kept starting at intervals. Anne glanced across at her now and then, noting with trouble at her heart how thin and white her eldest sister had become. There were delicate hollows in her cheeks and at her temples, and the soft golden hair lay heavily on her brow.

As five o'clock chimed from the old grandfather clock in the living-room, Javotte rose noiselessly and left the room. Twenty minutes later she came back, bearing a tray on which stood two steaming bowls of soup, and a plate piled with delicate breadtwists. She gave Anne her share, and then went over to Elizabeth, who started up at once.

'Yes? What is it?' she asked. 'Has Janie—'

'*La petite* has not stirred,' replied Javotte. 'Eat this, mademoiselle. But yes; I insist!' as Elizabeth motioned it away. 'When the heart is heavy, the body must be strengthened. Come!' And she held a spoonful to the girl's lips.

Elizabeth gave way then, and presently the faithful old servant collected the empty bowls with an air of gratification.

‘Now, mademoiselle, go to visit *la pauvre petite* in the other room,’ she said, as she reached the door. ‘Thou hast not seen her all day, and she is alone.’

‘Poor little Pauline!’ said Elizabeth. ‘I will go, Javotte.’ She felt better already for the food, and as she paused a moment by Janie’s bed she smiled to Anne. ‘I think she looks a shade better,’ she murmured.

‘I am sure of it,’ replied Anne. ‘She is not so flushed, and her eyes look more natural.’

Elizabeth went across to where Pauline was again watching the bay with dreamy eyes. She turned her head as Elizabeth came in, and then sat up, holding out thin arms of welcome. ‘But you mustn’t kiss me,’ she said, as Elizabeth bent over her. ‘You look so tired. Can’t you come and rest for a while? Anne and Javotte will look after Janie.’

‘I have been resting,’ replied Elizabeth. ‘Have you had any tea, *ma mie*? Would you like some jelly?’

‘Javotte gave me some milk a while ago,’ said Pauline, ‘and I had some beef-tea before that. O-oh! Look at the sky!’

Elizabeth looked. There was a glorious sunset, all rose and gold, giving promise of a fine day on the morrow. On the road below two or three children were hastening home from their play; the motor-bus went past with one or two passengers in it; on the placid bay she could see a little boat which was being rowed to shore. Then she turned back, peace in her heart, and with a smile at Pauline she left the room and returned to her little sister’s bedside. As she bent over it, Janie stirred. Her long lashes quivered and swept up, and she looked at her sisters with recognition in her eyes for the first time in five long days.

‘Hullo!’ she whispered. ‘Can I have my tea?’

Anne held some milk to her lips, and she drank it—slowly, it is true, but still she *did* drink it.

‘An’ now,’ she said weakly, when it was finished, ‘I’d like my *tea*, if you don’t mind!’

Chapter XVIII.

ELIZABETH AS AN AUTHORESS.

‘It’s a nice old world, isn’t it?’ said Janie hilariously.

Pauline looked at her reproachfully, ‘Oh, Janie! How can you say that when you know I’m going home to-morrow? It will be dreadfully dull and lonely without you.’

‘Oh, I didn’t mean that!’ replied her friend hastily. ‘All I meant was it’s so jolly to be up again and in another room! I was sick of that old bedroom!’

Elizabeth laughed as she left her place on the settle to come over to the window where they were seated. It was the first day Janie had been allowed to come downstairs. Her severe illness had left her so weak that, long after infection was over, the doctor had been afraid to allow her to be brought down, although he had given permission for her to be taken to Elizabeth’s room while her own was disinfected. It was the beginning of March when she had been taken ill, and now it was the end of May, so there was some reason for her remark that she was sick of the bedroom. She got to her feet now, and stretched herself luxuriously.

‘Just imagine! The day after to-morrow’s the 1st of June,’ she remarked, ‘and I’m sixteen on the 10th. I’m glad I’ve grown a bit as I’m almost sixteen.’

‘I’m not,’ replied Elizabeth. ‘Every single garment you possess has had to be let down, and it’s been no joke doing it! Anne is so busy with that new picture of hers, I never can get her to do anything so long as there’s any daylight.’

‘Well, it *is* topping,’ responded Janie.

‘Heaps better than that awful Herodias thing!’ chimed in Pauline. ‘I don’t care if it was hung at the Academy. I thought it was horrid!’

‘Thought what was horrid?’ demanded Anne, who came in at that moment. ‘Letters, every one! I met the postman, and he gave them to me. One for you, Pauline, from your brother. Here you are, Elizabeth—three! Card for Janie from Julian, and a letter for me from Colinette.’

She opened it as she spoke, while Janie examined her card with interest. It was from Hong-Kong, where Julian Ozanne was stationed, and simply had ‘More to follow—Julian,’ scrawled across it. Pauline was busy with her brother’s note, which contained instructions about the morrow; and Anne was buried fathoms deep in Colinette Ozanne’s interesting accounts of her babies, so no one noticed Elizabeth’s eyes brightening, and the colour deepening in her cheeks, as she read and reread a typewritten communication. Presently Anne looked up to read something aloud.

‘Listen,’ she began; then, ‘Elizabeth! Sissie! What is it?’

The other two at once turned and fixed their eyes on Elizabeth, who, with deepening roses in her cheeks, said slowly—‘Oh, girls! I sent a little book of the old Guernsey legends to a publisher in London, and he has written to accept them.’

A startled silence greeted her announcement. Then Anne got up, walked solemnly across the room, and plucked the paper from her sister’s fingers.

‘Well—I—never!’ she said, when she had finished reading it. ‘How simply splendid! I’m awfully glad!’

‘It’s just tophole!’ chimed in Janie, rushing across the room to hug her sister. ‘I’m awfully proud!’

‘A real live authoress in the family!’ laughed Anne.

‘And a real live artist!’ added Elizabeth.

It was left to ‘Miss’ Ozanne to give the finishing touch.

‘We really are a most talented circle,’ she said, with a sigh of complacency. ‘It’s not many friends who can show an authoress, an artist, a dramatist, and a—what will you be, Janie? A musician?’

‘Well, of all the conceit!’ gasped Anne. ‘Why, you haven’t even finished that wonderful play of yours yet!—What is it called?—*Loved and Lost*?’

‘Yes, I have finished it! So there, Anne Temple!’ retorted its gifted composer. ‘I finished it last night while you and Elizabeth were talking to Paul.’

‘Oh, sorry!’ laughed Anne. ‘Still—it hasn’t been produced yet!’

‘Perhaps not, but it soon will be!’ was the composed reply.

‘Soon will be? What do you mean?’ demanded Elizabeth.

‘I sent it away this morning.’

‘Sent it away? But where?’

‘To Mr Henry Ainley,’ was the sufficiently startling reply.

‘What! But how could you? You didn’t know his address.’

‘I sent it to the theatre where he’s acting,’ explained ‘Miss’ Ozanne, who evidently thought she had done something rather clever. ‘I feel sure that when he sees it he will realise its in—in-trin-sic worth, and act in it at once.’

A sudden memory of the play, of which she had once been privileged to read a whole act, upset Elizabeth completely, and she shrieked with laughter, in which Anne joined, while Janie and the playwright gazed at them in wide-eyed astonishment.

‘Oh, Pauline Ozanne!’ gasped Elizabeth at length, ‘it’s a mercy you’re going home to-morrow! You’ll be the death of me yet! Ho! Ho! Ho!’

‘I see nothing to laugh at,’ said ‘Miss’ Ozanne, very much on her high horse. ‘It’s a most dramatic play!’

‘It is,’ agreed Anne, with a twinkle. ‘Elizabeth! Stop laughing! You’ll have hysterics if you go on like that!’

‘I’m—I’m thinking of Henry Ainley’s face when he opens the parcel!’ choked Elizabeth. ‘Henry Ainley!’

‘Yes; whatever made you pitch on him?’ demanded Anne.

‘He appears to me to act in a *variosity* of plays,’ replied ‘Miss’ Ozanne, with dignity. ‘I thought he would be nice as the hero.’

‘And if he refuses it, what are you going to do next?’ asked Elizabeth curiously, as she sat up and mopped her eyes.

‘Then I shall give Sir Frank Benson a chance,’ replied ‘Miss’ Ozanne.

The thought of England’s great Shakespearean actor gravely considering *Loved and Lost* set the two elder girls off again. They were only checked by Janie’s impatient exclamation of ‘Don’t tell them any more, Pauline! They’re only making fun of you! And, anyway, I want to hear what Elizabeth’s book is about.’

‘She’s told you—Guernsey legends. And, anyway, I don’t expect it’s worth reading,’ replied ‘Miss’ Ozanne, whose feelings were sorely ruffled.

‘Yes; but which legends?’ persisted Janie. ‘There are dozens and dozens of them, you know!’

‘One was that one you two love so, about the Little Green Man and the Peasant Maid,’ replied Elizabeth.

‘Oh, Anne!’ ‘Miss’ Ozanne had forgotten her annoyance. ‘Can’t you do the pictures for the book?’

Anne shook her head, laughing. ‘No! Black and white has no attraction for me, Pussy! Besides, I’m busy with my own picture, and that’s enough. But go on, Sissie. What were the other legends about you used?’

‘Oh, there were *Le Spectre des Orent maisons*,’ said Elizabeth, ‘and the one about *La Ville au Roi*.’

‘I don’t know that one,’ remarked Janie, from her perch on the table. ‘Tell us it now! Yes, do!’

‘Yes; tell it,’ chimed in Anne, ‘and I’ll get tea ready. Go on, Elizabeth!’

‘Well,’ began Elizabeth. ‘Once there was a bailiff in this island, who greatly coveted the field of a neighbour named Massi. The more so because, attached to this field was the right of Massi to draw water from the bailiff’s own well. In vain had the latter endeavoured to buy off Massi and retain the well for his own private use; the poor man invariably refused the most munificent offer, saying that the land had descended to him through many generations, and he would not be the one to sell it away from his descendants.’

‘I say! That’s just like Ahab and old what-d’you-call-him?’ exclaimed Janie, wide-eyed.

‘Janie! Don’t interrupt!’ protested Pauline. ‘Do go on, Elizabeth! It’s ever so interesting!’

Elizabeth laughed. Then she went on—‘At length the bailiff became so angry at Massi’s continued refusals, that he vowed that as he could not get the field by fair means, he would resort to foul. In those days, as in England, so in Guernsey, the punishment for theft was death. Gautier de la Salle, for that was his name, conceived the horrible idea of fixing such an accusation on his poor neighbour. Then, once Massi was out of the way, it would be an easy matter to take the field, for by the law of Guernsey all the possessions of a man who had been condemned to capital punishment were forfeit to the king; and De la Salle hoped to obtain a grant of the land from Edward I., king at that time.

‘He owned two silver cups, and these he hid in a stack of corn. Then he cleverly contrived that it should appear that Massi had stolen them, and although the unfortunate man cried aloud that he was innocent as the youngest babe of such a crime, and appealed to heaven to prove his innocence, there was enough circumstantial evidence to prove the theft, and he was condemned to die.’

‘I hope the wicked bailiff was punished for it!’ interrupted Pauline at this point. ‘I think he should have been boiled alive.’

Elizabeth was sweet-tempered, but this was the second interruption of her tale, and more than she could endure. ‘If you don’t want to listen,’ she remarked, with asperity, ‘I’ll stop. But if you do, then please don’t interrupt!’

‘Sorry. Please go on!’ cried the delinquent.

‘Very well! But if you do it again, I won’t! Now, where was I?’

‘Just where they were going to hang Massi for stealing when he hadn’t,’ said Janie.

‘Oh yes. Well, on the morning of the execution, the wicked bailiff, before going to the court-house to witness the death of his innocent victim, ordered some of his labourers to take down a certain corn stack, and carry it to the barn. Then he went to the court-house and took his place. But hardly had he done so before a messenger came rushing, breathless, into the court, crying, “We have found the cups! Massi is innocent! They were in the corn stack!”

‘The furious bailiff sprang to his feet. “Fool!” he thundered. “Did I not forbid thee to touch that stack! I knew—” Then he paused and turned ashen, for he realised that he had already aroused the suspicions of the court. At once the Jurats gave order that the execution was to be delayed, and poor Massi was taken back to the prison. Very searching and close inquiries were made, and eventually the wicked design of Gautier de la Salle was fully exposed. Once more he entered the court-house; but this time as prisoner, and a prisoner already condemned; for, of the many crowded there, not one but was horrified at such appalling wickedness and covetousness. The trial proceeded; and the ex-bailiff was sentenced to suffer the full penalty, while his estates and possessions were declared to be confiscate to the king. In due course the sentence was carried out, and he was hanged and gibbeted,

probably near St Andrews. There was a dark lane there, many years ago, which was called La Rue de l'Ombre de la Mort, and even now, from the spot where it once was, many have seen at midnight a huge headless black hound rush from there and sweep past them. Any who have been bold enough to dare to strike at it will tell you that the stick has gone through it. It is no dog at all; it is the spirit of the wicked Gautier de la Salle, doomed to wander round the field he coveted until the Day of Judgment, when, and only when, it may be that his terrible sin is expiated.'

There was a moment's silence when Elizabeth had finished her story, which she had told most dramatically. Janie broke it. 'The—the dog-thing isn't still there, is it, Elizabeth?'

'Janie! It's only a story!' cried Elizabeth sharply. 'Don't be so silly, dear! I wouldn't have told you if I thought it would frighten you!'

'Tell them something else while I finish laying tea,' advised Anne, bustling about.

So Elizabeth told them the charming story of poor Pel-de-Cat, who comes knocking at the door seeking shelter, and how, if you say, '*Entre, pauvre Pel-de-Cat, mange, et bés et séque te!*' a beautiful maiden will appear, she will bless you, and disappear, when good luck will follow you all the rest of your life. But if you drive her away, then nothing but mischance occurs.

Tea was ready when the story was ended, so they heard no more of the Guernsey legends for that day, since Anne and Elizabeth turned to the question of *Loved and Lost*, and what Mr Henry Ainley would say when he saw it.

Chapter XIX.
ANNE'S NOTICE.

It was two days after the great news about the book that Anne Temple set off to walk into St Peter Port. The Temples were all good walkers, Anne especially, and 'a shilling saved was a shilling earned,' for them. True, Elizabeth's book would bring in a little money, and two of her water-colour sketches had been sold; but, even so, living was a heavy item for them still. Janie's pension ceased as soon as she was sixteen, and, frugally as they lived, they found it difficult to make both ends come anywhere within meeting distance. Therefore Anne set out at nine o'clock in the morning, since, even by hurrying, it would be after eleven before she arrived in St Peter Port. She looked very fresh and trim in her dark blue gingham frock with its white collar and cuffs, and her big white panama hat which Julian Ozanne had brought her three years before from South America. A gentleman who passed her in a car looked at her with a smile. He had daughters of his own, and Anne reminded him of one of them. He had come to arrange about taking a bungalow for the whole of August and September, and he wondered if his family would meet this lovely girl with her unmistakable air of breeding.

Anne scarcely noticed him. She was much too busy, calculating how much she dare spend on material for frocks for Janie, that young lady having so outgrown her last summer's during her illness, that it was impossible to do anything with them. 'And we always thought Janie would be the small one of us,' she thought to herself. 'If she goes on growing at her present rate, she'll beat even Elizabeth.—Oh, I beg your pardon!' This last aloud, as she recoiled from the very arms of young Julian Lucy, the big schoolboy who always treated them with such grave courtesy, and who, during Janie's illness, had got into the way of stopping the doctor to inquire how she and Pauline were. This was the first time any of them had met him since then, and Anne felt she must thank him.

'I hope I didn't hurt you,' she said, in her low, musical voice. 'I was thinking very deeply, and, I'm afraid, not looking where I was going!'

'It is quite all right,' he replied, removing his cap, and standing before her bareheaded. 'I'm afraid it was my fault, Miss Temple.'

'Not at all,' Anne reassured him cheerfully. 'I'm very glad to have this opportunity of speaking to you. I want to thank you for your kind inquiries for my little sister and for Pauline Ozanne.'

'I was so sorry,' he replied simply. 'They must have had a rotten time, poor kids!'

'Well, they're both all right now,' said Anne. 'I believe Janie is on the shore with Pauline now.'

'I know the Ozanne kid,' he said. 'Her brother and my father were at the same school when my father was in his last year. Ozanne was his fag. My mother has been going to come to see you, but she isn't strong, and then we heard about your little sister's illness.'

'We shall be delighted to see Mrs Lucy,' replied Anne. 'It is most kind of her.' After that she said good-bye to him, and hurried on, for time was precious; while he strode off down the Pleinmont Road, whistling gaily.

At Grâce à Dieu she met the Lihou rolley coming out of the gates, with Mr Lihou himself driving. He stopped when he saw her. 'Good-morning, Miss Anne,' he said. 'Like a lift into town?'

Anne accepted, for the day was going to be very hot, and already the roads were becoming unpleasantly warm. 'How is Mélie?' she said, when they were off once more.

'She's all right,' he said. 'Her mother's going to take her over to Devonshire for a few weeks. Once she gets a start, she'll do very well. Your little sister doing well?'

'Yes, thank you,' replied Anne. 'Dr Chester thinks that when she regains her normal strength she will be better than she has ever been before; and Pauline, of course, had it very lightly indeed.'

'Why not let 'em go with Mélie and her mother?' said the grower. 'Devonshire's a fine place to set up sick folk. Mélie would be glad to have her chums, and there's room enough in her grannie's house—that's where she's going.'

Anne shook her head.

'It's very kind of you, Mr Lihou, but we'd rather keep together just now, thank you. Besides, we couldn't think of letting Mrs Lihou have the responsibility. Janie will need great care for months to come.'

He nodded, as he deftly turned a ticklish corner, which brought them into a long narrow lane, with tall hedges on either side. 'The offer's open, anyhow,' he said. 'If you like to accept it later on, let us know. My wife can't stay with the kiddie, you know; and, as I said, Mélie would be glad of her chums.'

He relapsed into silence after that, having said more in one conversation than Anne had ever heard him say before; and presently they reached the outskirts of the town, where he put his passenger down, since he was turning off just there. Anne thanked him for the lift, and then made her way rapidly to the High Street, where most of her shopping business lay.

There is something very old-world and picturesque about the High Street in St Peter Port, despite the fact that many of the shops have modern fronts with large plate-glass windows. It is a very narrow street, with a cobbled road, and every here and there are openings which lead by steep flights of stone steps on to the quay. Through these openings you get glimpses of cool green water, white-sailed yachts, fishing-boats with their spread of warm brown canvas, and, lying on the water like a giant whale, Herm, with its lesser sister, Jethou. Most of the shops sell things likely to attract the tourist, so that glimpses of long strings of amber and amethyst sarkstone, and gleaming copper models of the Guernsey milk-cans, can be caught on either side; while half-way down is the sweet-shop, where the famous Guernsey sweets may be had, even in these days, for fourpence a quarter. The street widens at one end so that it reaches the quay by five or six shallow steps. At the other lies the old church, which has watched the harbour for seven hundred years, and seen the rocky shore road give place to the fine paved walk with piers and quays; the primitive fishermen's boats and long, raking pirate galleys yield to the castled ships of Elizabethan times; to the graceful barques and brigantines of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries; and they, in turn, to the less beautiful but faster and more reliable steamers which cross the Channel every day.

Early as it was—only half-past ten—the street was already full of bustle and noise from the gay chatter of English tourists, the rattle of cart wheels, the warning hooting of a motor-horn, and the ringing of bicycle bells. Just beside the church Anne encountered an old Guernsey woman of the type now fast dying out, carrying on an animated conversation in rapid Norman-French with a Guernsey man. In answer to her almost unintelligible flood of language he was good-humouredly nodding his head, interjecting an occasional '*Guyabble!*' which is not a polite expression, but is one much used in Guernsey by the peasantry. They were still at it when Anne came out of the bootmaker's shop, whither she had been to take some shoes to be repaired. The old lady had now set down her long, narrow Guernsey basket, and was emphasising her argument by striking the palm of one hand with the fingers of the other. Anne threw back her head, regardless of the passers-by, and broke into low, sweet laughter, as she hurried on to the market, where she intended to buy some fish and the week's butter. It was cool and dark inside the building, and the stalls with their burdens of flowers,

fruit, vegetables, fish, butter, eggs, and many other things attracted her, so that it was almost an hour later when she came out and hurried across the road to the Guille-Allés Library to change their books, and glance at the magazines in the reading-room.

It was without any idea of what was coming that she picked up a new magazine she had never seen before—*Modern Art*. A very good article on impressionism in landscape work attracted her, and she skimmed through it with enjoyment. Another on the year's Academy proved less interesting, till she came almost to the end of it. Then a little gasp broke from her, for her own name literally blazed up at her from the page.

'The "Hérogüazes" of Miss Anne Temple, a quite unknown beginner, gives promise of better things in the future.'

That was all she could see; the print danced before her eyes, and the blood sang in her ears as she put the magazine down. This was the first printed criticism she had ever seen of her work, and the praise was very dear to her heart.

Presently she recovered sufficiently to note the name of the magazine, and then she left the building. She could not read anything else just now—not after that. She made her way through the Central Arcade to a pastry-cook's, where, her mind still busy with what she had just read, she startled the waitress, who knew them by this time, by ordering 'Potatoes, and peas, and an ice, and some lemon squash, please.' Then a voice behind her said, 'Anne!' and she turned round to find the doctor standing looking down at her with a smile, which recalled her to herself.

'Will you lunch with me?' he asked, as he sat down. Then, to the waitress, 'May I have the menu, please?' He ordered something which was considerably more sensible for a midday meal than Anne's choice, and then, while the waitress hurried off to see to it, he chatted easily about nothing in particular for a few moments. Suddenly he leaned forward and looked at the girl. 'Anne, what has happened? Some one left you a fortune? You look as though you were bubbling over about something. What is it?'

Anne was still too thrilled at her 'notice' to pay any heed to his teasing. So she replied, 'I've just read a criticism of the most delightful of my picture in *Modern Art*. It is the very first I have ever seen!'

'So that was it,' he said. 'I wondered if you had seen it. I saw it yesterday, and ordered the magazine for you. It ought to be here some time next week.'

'How good you are!' replied Anne. 'You oughtn't to do such things, you know! I was going to order it myself later on. Elizabeth and Janie will be so pleased!'

At this point the waitress arrived with the plates of cold chicken he had ordered, so their conversation had to cease for a moment. When she had gone, the young man glanced across at the girl opposite him. 'I should like to give you everything you want, Anne,' he said deliberately. 'You know that, don't you?'

A look of panic came into the delicate face he was watching so eagerly and intently, but she said nothing.

'Are you afraid of me, Anne?' he asked, in the low-pitched tones that even she could just hear.

She shook her head, but still said nothing. He glanced round the crowded room. 'Eat your lunch,' he said, in a different voice, and then turned the conversation on to something else. But in spite of that Anne made a poor lunch.

When the meal was over, and they were once more in the sunny street, the girl turned to him with outstretched hand, which he coolly ignored. 'Finished your shopping?' he said. 'Yes? Then we'll get the St Martin's bus and go to Moulin Huet.'

Anne glanced at him, and then shut her lips tightly. She knew what was coming, and she knew what she meant to say when it came. As well get it over. She walked meekly by his side

down Smith Street and across High Street, by the old Church of St Peter, and so on to the quay, where one of the long red charabancs was just ready to start for St Martin's. It was a full bus, for many of the busy housewives who had come into St Peter Port that morning to go to the market and do the family shopping were now returning. There were several tourists, too, who talked gaily amongst themselves, laughing as an occasional lurch of the bus sent them into each other's arms, or against the sides of the seats. Anne sat in a dreamy silence, watching the white road as it wound along before them. The doctor stood by her side, glancing occasionally at the half-averted face below him. No word passed between the two till the short run came to an end, and he had helped her off the bus. Then he said, 'Come along! This way! I discovered it for myself a few nights ago. If we go down the road to that gate, and then turn down, we can get into a little sort of cove which is generally free from trippers. It's cool there, as well as quiet. You'll like it!'

Anne doubted whether she would like any place this afternoon, so she said, 'Shall I? But I mustn't stay long, you know. I ought to be going home soon.' She pulled her shady hat a little farther over her face, and strolled along by his side in as careless a manner as possible. Some cows tethered in a field gave her a topic for conversation. 'It always reminds me of Brittany to see the cows here,' she said. 'They tether them in just the same way there. I remember, when we first went, Janie used to insist that it was cruel.'

'Yes; I should think that she would,' he agreed. 'I've never been in Brittany myself, but I've seen cows driven along the road in Belgium, to pick up what fodder they could from the roadside, and that always struck me as a beastly way of feeding them.'

'Oh, they do that, too, in Brittany,' laughed Anne, who felt that cows were a very safe topic of conversation. 'Do we go down here?'

'Yes. Be careful! The turf is slippery. You had better give me your hand till we get to the rock path.' And he calmly took it before Anne could say 'yes' or 'no.' As a matter of fact she was very glad of it, for the turf was slippery, and more than once she slid. At length they reached the rock, and there he went first, giving her an occasional hand over some particularly stiff part. Anne felt boiling hot when finally they reached the tiny inlet, for the hot June sun was beating fiercely down on them, and she was glad to sit down on a large rock in the shade and rest. The doctor flung himself at her feet, and producing his handkerchief, mopped his face with it.

'Whew! It's hot! I'd no idea it was such a pull! Of course, I've only been down in the cool of the evening! How cool you look, Anne!'

'I wish I were!' said Anne feelingly, as she took off her hat and ran her fingers through her hair. 'What an exquisite place this is!'

'Yes; isn't it? And it has the additional beauty of being shut off from trippers. Moulin Huet's just over there. I'll bet it's crowded to-day.'

'Mrs Lefebvre says it's much worse in July and August,' said Anne. 'I loved it in the winter and the spring; but I don't think I should like it just now! I haven't been there since the middle of May.'

'I don't advise you to go,' he said. Then a silence fell on them for a little while.

He was the first to break it. Raising himself on one arm, he said, 'Anne!'

She looked at him, then put out one faintly tanned hand. 'Oh—please, no!'

'Yes, Anne. I must!' he said, getting up and sitting down beside her. 'I love you, and I know you love me, so let me give you our troth-ring to-day. I have it. See!'

And he drew a little case out of his pocket, and, opening it, showed her a slender gold circlet with a single diamond poised on it as lightly as though it were a dewdrop.

'Anne, give me your hand.'

But she sat up straight, putting both hands behind her.

‘No, Peter! I do love you, but I can’t leave Elizabeth and Janie! It wouldn’t be fair!’

‘Who asked you to leave them?’ he said. ‘I didn’t! Listen, Anne! I have the chance of a practice in the country—in Hampshire. It isn’t anything very great, but there’ll be enough for us all! There’s an old house there we can have, and Elizabeth and Janie could have their own part of it, and you would still be together! Oh, Anne! say “yes”!’

But she shook her head. ‘Peter, I can’t! It wouldn’t be fair to saddle you with the whole family, even if Elizabeth would agree to it, which I’m certain she wouldn’t. Don’t tempt me, for I’m very weak, and it’s hard to say “no” and stick to it! But I’m not going to let you tie yourself down like that!’ And from that position she refused to budge, although he tried every argument he could think of.

‘I won’t worry you, then,’ he said at last; ‘but will you have an understanding—until Elizabeth becomes engaged to Ozanne?’

‘How did you know?’ gasped Anne, sitting upright in her amazement.

‘My dear girl, Ozanne’s condition is obvious to any one. And he’s one of the best fellows I ever met! And now, that’s understood!’

‘But we’re not engaged properly,’ said Anne a little later. ‘And no one is to know anything about it. And now I must be getting home.’

He reluctantly acquiesced, and they set off up the steep cliff. When they had reached the top, Anne turned to her lover.

‘I’ll get the bus back, and will you walk—or get the next one? I don’t want people to see us together in case they say anything.’

‘Right ho!’ he said cheerfully. ‘And we’ll make a double wedding of it when it does come!’

Chapter XX.

PAULINE SQUASHES THE DOCTOR.

Anne arrived home in a condition of happiness which, she feared, must be seen by every one. However, they had something else to talk about, so her expression passed unnoticed.

‘What d’you think, Anne?’ cried Janie, literally flinging herself on her sister, as that young lady entered the cool living-room, where tea and strawberries awaited them. ‘Oh, what d’you think? We’ve made some friends—but they aren’t here yet! Only they’re coming in August!’

‘Good gracious, Janie! Where’s the thermometer, some one?’

‘Oh, don’t be so silly!’ begged Janie. ‘I know it sounds a bit muddled, but it isn’t, really!’

Anne took off her hat and cast it down on the settle.

‘Explain yourself, my child!’ she said, turning to her small sister.

‘Well,’ began Janie, ‘you see, Pollie and I were coming along the shore road. We’d been to the Point-Pleinmont, you know, and we were singing ‘Raggle-Taggle-Gipsies’—at least I was.’

‘So was I!’ interrupted Pauline. ‘I was singing just as much as you were, Janie!’

‘Well—if you like to call it singing,’ conceded Janie. ‘All right, then! We were both singing. I sang properly, and Pollie yelled away on one note for all she was worth. All right! Don’t worry till I’ve finished the story; we’ll talk about your singing later! Where was I? Well, there we were, and we’d just reached the breakwater, when a gentleman came down one of these little sandy tracks on to the road beside us. We weren’t expecting to see any one, so we both yelled.’

‘Yes; and Janie nearly jumped out of her skin!’ put in Pauline, as a slight revenge for the insult to her singing.

‘Be quiet! I’m telling the story! Well, when he saw how he had startled us, he apologised, of course, and then we said it didn’t matter. Then he told us that he had been looking at that bungalow near the Lucys’, as he wanted to take it for all of August and September—he and his wife, and five girls and one boy, who is the youngest of them all. Then he asked us to go to the hotel and have some lemonade; so we went. He told us all about his daughters. There’s one a little older than me, called Con, and one about Pollie’s age, called Allegra, and some others. They go to a big High School, and the eldest one—Rose he called her—is head girl. They are coming on the twenty-seventh of July, but they’re going to stay in St Peter Port for a day or two first. Then he brought us home in his taxi, and Elizabeth saw him, and he asked her a little about Pleinmont. He wouldn’t have lunch with us, although she asked him. He said he had ordered it at L’Erée as he came along. But he hoped she would let us be friendly with his family, as he was sure his girls would like to have some Guernsey friends. And then he went away. And that’s all.’

‘It sounds delightful,’ said Anne. ‘If they are really nice people it will be splendid all round. What was he like, Elizabeth?’

‘Oh, tall and very handsome,’ replied Elizabeth. ‘I’ll tell you what he reminded me of. You know that statue, ‘The Young Alcinoös?’

Anne nodded.

‘Well, he was like the young Alcinoös grown older. His hair was gray, and he looked as though he had been through some bad times—the war, I suppose. He was a university man, I should say; and here’s his card.’

Anne took the little slip of pasteboard, but ‘Harold J. V. Atherton’ did not convey much to her.

‘They live in Surrey,’ she said, as she passed it back across the table to her sister. ‘May I have some more tea, please? I am dreadfully thirsty!’

‘It’s the heat,’ replied Elizabeth, as she refilled the cup. ‘Did you have a good time in town, dear? I didn’t expect you to stay so long.’

‘Oh, I took the bus to St Martin’s.’ Anne was stirring her tea with elaborate care. ‘Yes; I got most of the things, as you would see. I suppose they came all right? I sent them out on the two o’clock bus.’

‘Yes; they came all right. What pretty gingham you chose for the frocks! We must get them made as quickly as possible, for really I feel ashamed of Janie in that pink thing! Mr Ozanne was here this afternoon, and he wants us to get some material for frocks for Pauline.’ She smiled across at the little girl as she spoke, and Pauline grinned back. During her illness the doctor insisted on having her hair bobbed like Janie’s, and the result had been marvellous. The heavy weight of hair had undoubtedly been getting too much for the child’s strength, and, now it had gone, she looked better already. The sallow skin was clearing, and any amount of fresh air and sea-bathing, as well as daintily cooked food, was bringing a tinge of pink to the once pale cheeks. The fretful curves had gone from the little mouth, and, as Anne had remarked more than once lately, there seemed no reason why Pauline should not be remarkably good-looking when she grew up. Like Janie, she wore a short brown serge gym tunic with a tussore slip. Her cotton frocks of the year before had all been presented to a jumble sale; which was one reason for Paul Ozanne’s visit that afternoon.

Anne tactfully took up Elizabeth’s speech at once.

‘There’s any amount of that yellow gingham. It was a remnant piece, but it was going cheaply, so I took it. I thought we could always use it up for aprons and dusting caps. We have that pattern upstairs, and it would be quite easy to make it a little smaller: we shall have to cut Janie’s frock larger, anyway. If we started after tea, we could cut them out, and get a good deal done to-night. It’s just a plain top with a skirt slightly gathered on to the waistline. If the four of us work, we ought to get them practically made, and then we can finish them off on Monday.’

‘That’s good idea,’ said Elizabeth enthusiastically. ‘Those tunics really are too warm for this weather; but I couldn’t have Janie going about in a frock well above her knees. She looked impossible! Every one finished?’

‘Yes; but Anne’s had scarcely anything,’ replied Janie, as she got up and began to clear away. ‘Aren’t you well, Anne?’

‘Yes, perfectly. But it’s too hot to eat,’ replied Anne, as she hastily picked up the teapot and carried it into the kitchen to hide her scarlet cheeks. How could she eat when her heart was just singing with happiness? But she wished Janie wasn’t quite so observant. Elizabeth followed her into the kitchen, but she could always be trusted to be tactful. Besides, Elizabeth had begun to realise that this little sister of hers was growing up very rapidly. She was not quite sure yet what the doctor meant, but it seemed to her that possibly her own problem was going to be solved. However, it was not done yet, so she put the thought away from her.

‘Anne, do you remember that roll of white silk ribbon I have?’ she said, as she dried the china while Anne washed. ‘I thought it would be rather nice to pipe the frocks with it, and it wouldn’t take long.’

‘Very pretty,’ said Anne. ‘By the way, Elizabeth, what are you going to give Pauline to do? You know she can’t sew decently at all, even yet!’

‘I know,’ replied Elizabeth, with a sigh. ‘I don’t believe I shall ever get her to be a good needle-woman.’

‘Of course,’ went on the other girl consolingly, ‘if she’s going to be a female Shakespeare, as she evidently fancies she is, it won’t matter so much! Henry Ainley—and Sir Frank

Benson! Oh, my goodness!’ And she broke into soft, infectious laughter, in which Elizabeth joined.

‘All the same,’ said the latter thoughtfully as she put the last plate away, ‘that thing was really a marvellous production for a child of twelve.’

‘The language certainly was,’ agreed Anne. ‘D’you know where she got it from?’

‘Janie said something about some maid’s novelettes,’ replied Elizabeth. ‘I imagine she got it from there.’

‘I think it’s a blessing she ran away that day and came here,’ said Anne thoughtfully. ‘Of course, no man, least of all a bachelor, can look after a small girl properly. Paul Ozanne probably did his best, but he’s away from home most of the day, and Miss Pauline needs very careful training. It’s done Janie good, too. She is much happier now she has a friend of her own age! You know, Elizabeth,’ she went on seriously, ‘coming to Guernsey as we did seemed an awfully big step for us to take, but I do think it was the very wisest thing we could have done!’

‘So do I,’ said Elizabeth; ‘although, when Janie was so ill, I didn’t! I used to think that if we had stayed in England it probably wouldn’t have happened.’

‘What is written is written,’ replied her sister oracularly. ‘And now we had better begin on those frocks, or they’ll never get done. We’ll cut them out, and pin them, and fit them, and then we can take our sewing on to the rocks. Come along!’

They followed this wise advice, and by supper-time the frocks were well on the way to being finished, and Monday afternoon saw Janie and Pauline wandering along the sea road to Cobo, attired in yellow gingham, while their big white hats had a twist of yellow silk round the crowns. Elizabeth, armed with a delightful cheque, was going to take them into St Peter Port next morning to shop for Pauline, and then they were to pay a visit to Herm, which neither of them had ever seen. It was of this they were talking so earnestly, that they never saw any one until they both ran plump into the doctor’s arms, nearly knocking him down.

‘Hullo,’ he said, when he had recovered his balance, ‘where are you two off to?’

‘We’re just going for a short walk,’ explained Janie. ‘Were you going home, Dr Chester? Because every one is out.’

‘No,’ he said; ‘I had a case round here to visit, and then I’m going on to Torteval to see that White Witch of yours.’

‘Whatever for?’ demanded Janie.

‘She’s ill, poor old body,’ he replied. ‘Yes, Janie! I know you detest her, but she’s only an old woman after all, and probably a little weak in the head.’

‘Urrr!’ shuddered Janie. ‘She’s a *gens du vendredi*, and how you can bear to go and see her, I can’t think!’

‘Oh, come,’ he said. ‘You don’t really believe all that rot about witches and magic!’

‘Guernsey isn’t like England,’ replied Janie. ‘Things happen!’

‘So they do anywhere!’

‘But not like Guernsey. Why, do you know that Anne was chased by Jan gants y tan?’

‘I thought he was a Breton fairy, or whatever you call it!’

‘Well, they call him *Le Faieu Bélangier* here,’ admitted Janie, ‘but it’s the same thing.’

‘And Paul says that strange things do happen,’ put in Miss Ozanne. ‘And he lived in Guernsey for years! You’ve only just come!—All right! I’m not being rude! I’m only telling him!’ For Janie was tugging at her sleeve.

The doctor’s eyes twinkled. Pauline, with her swift changes from babyish little girl to pedantic ‘Miss’ Ozanne, was a joy to him; and he was very fond of slim, brown Janie.

‘You’ve walked far enough,’ he said. ‘Come back with me to L’Erée and let us sample the lemonade there!’

‘Thank you very much,’ replied Janie. ‘This weather does make you thirsty, doesn’t it?’

The doctor nodded. ‘It does,’ he said, with a glance at the blue cloudless sky and the calm, deeper blue of the sea.

‘Paul says he shouldn’t be a bit surprised if there weren’t some of the cliffs on fire if this goes on,’ said Pauline, as she slipped a friendly arm through his. ‘There hasn’t been any rain for ten days now.’

‘No; the whole place is getting like tinder,’ agreed the doctor. ‘If any one were careless enough to drop a smoking cigarette end or a lighted match on the grass, there’d be a fine blaze! How you’ve grown, Janie,’ he added, with a glance at her. ‘That’s what comes of lying in bed during the growing months. You’re going to be as tall as your sisters after all.’

‘I’m glad of that!’ returned Janie promptly. ‘I should hate to be the only little one in the family!’

‘Don’t worry. You won’t be. Well, here we are! Come along in and let’s have the oldest cask broached in our honour!’

It was while they were drinking their lemonade that they told him of their plans for the morrow.

‘We shall only be able to go to the Shell Beach, though,’ lamented Janie. ‘The horrid man who owns the island won’t let people go any farther.’

‘Hush, Janie, my child! He’s a famous author!’ said the doctor. ‘A famous author has a right to his privacy if he wants it, you know!’

‘When I’m a famous dramatist,’ said Pauline dreamily, ‘I shall buy an island. It shall be one of the Azores, and no one shall come there at all unless I like them. I’ll live there and write my plays, and be very famous.’

‘How’s *Loved and Lost* getting on?’ he asked. He had found her busy with it a fortnight ago. ‘Finished yet?’

‘Ages ago!’ Janie assured him. ‘She’s busy with another, about a beautiful girl whose horrid guardian wanted to make her a nun so that he could have all her money.’

‘By George! How thrilling! And does she do it?’

‘You are merely making fun of me!’ ‘Miss’ Ozanne had suddenly made her appearance. ‘I shall not give you any information whatsoever! Janie, it is already growing late, and your sisters will be wondering what has detained us. Thank you, Dr Chester, for your hospitality.’

And she stalked out of the room with her chin in the air.

Dr Peter Chester waited until Janie had made her adieux in a much less formal manner, and joined her friend outside, before he broke into a low laugh of amusement.

Then he paid his reckoning, and set off for Torteval and the White Witch, vowing to himself that he would pay Anne a visit sometime during the morrow.

Chapter XXI.

A DREADFUL EVENING.

Tuesday afternoon found Anne Temple sitting on the beach, working at a delightful little water-colour of Lihou Island. Elizabeth and Janie had gone off by the first bus that morning. They were to meet Pauline by the old church, and do their shopping straight away. Then they would have cakes and lemonade, and after that catch the little motor-boat to Herm. They would be back before eight o'clock in the evening.

Anne had seen them off from the cottage door, and then had turned her attention to the housework. La Rochelle was very easy to keep in good order; and before Javotte had gone back to St Malo, three weeks ago, she had spring-cleaned from roof to garden with an energy which belied her seventy odd years. Anne made the beds, dusted all the rooms, rearranged the flowers, and turned out her own drawers. Then she made a couple of jellies and a cream; removed the great stock-pot, which was almost always in use, to the hob; and looked at the clock, to find the morning gone. She went out into the little patch of ground behind La Rochelle and cut a lettuce, and made her lunch off that, some bread and butter, cheese, a glass of milk, and a plateful of strawberries. Then she cleared everything away, collected her materials, and strolled out on to the beach, resolved to put in a good afternoon's work, and finish her sketch.

Busy as she was, she never saw the doctor's little fawn runabout come up the road; she didn't even hear the hooting of his horn. But he had recognised her, and presently he came to her, and stood beside her bareheaded. Anne looked up when his shadow fell across her work, and a smile crept into her gray eyes and touched the comers of her mouth to a rare tenderness.

'You?' she said.

'Me,' he replied ungrammatically. 'What are you painting, Anne girl? Is it for our drawing-room?'

'Oh, Peter! You are silly,' she replied, while the slow colour burned in her face. 'I hope to sell this.'

'Lihou Island,' he said, studying it gravely. 'What are the ruins?'

'The chapel of Notre Dame des Rochers,' she answered. 'She guards the fisher-folk, you know.'

'No; does she?' But he was studying the beautiful face upraised to his, and not the picture.

'Yes; the *gens du vendredi* hate her for it! When they hold their witches' revels they mock her, you know. They call "Hou-hou! Marie Lihou! Marie Lihou!" But it makes no difference. They cannot break her power, try as they may! I always like to think of her, there in the chapel, sweet and serene, and untouched by their mockery—above them and it!'

But he was tired of the subject. He wanted to talk of themselves and of their future, not of the Madonna.

'Anne girl,' he said.

Once more Anne lifted her eyes to his. 'I'm so afraid some day you may forget and call me that in front of the children or Elizabeth.'

'And then the cat would be out of the bag with a vengeance! I wish Ozanne would hurry up! He'll be a lucky fellow when he marries Elizabeth! Next to you and my mother, I respect her more than any other woman in the world.'

'She is Elizabeth,' said Anne. Then, with a sudden change of tone, 'Tell me about your people, Peter. I know scarcely anything about you, and you know all about me.'

‘Not much to tell,’ he said, as he sat down on a convenient rock. ‘My dad’s a doctor—like myself. There were five of us—three boys and two girls. Jim’s farming in Canada; Andrew is a solicitor; Linda is at a training college for domestic economy; and Mary died when she was a kiddie, six years ago. She was the youngest of us all; Andrew is the oldest; I’m the second.’

‘And your mother?’ said Anne. ‘You know, I think you are so fortunate to have your mother still. I cannot even remember mine.’

‘Mother?’ he said. ‘She is—well, she’s Mother. I can’t tell you anything else, Anne girl. You must wait till you see her yourself. By George! How she’ll love you! And how you’ll love her!’

There was a little silence between them, which Peter himself broke by getting up and stretching himself.

‘I must go, Anne o’ mine! A doctor’s is a hard life! He can never be his own master. Probably, at this very minute, some wretched being is howling for me to go and attend to the baby, who is in convulsions, or tie up Tommy’s cut head—the result of climbing where he shouldn’t.’

‘It’s a very splendid life,’ said Anne.

‘When shall I see you again?’ he asked.

‘Come to tea on Thursday,’ she said. ‘You haven’t any surgery that night, have you?’

‘Thursday’s a long way off,’ he replied disconsolately.

‘It’s only the day after to-morrow. We’re going to take the children to Saints Bay to-morrow for a picnic. If you like to come and join us, you can!’

‘Oh, good! Very well, then! I’ll see you to-morrow afternoon!’

‘By the way, Janie said yesterday that you were going to see La Sorcière Blanche. What is wrong with her?’

‘Sciatica!’ he replied. ‘There’s a good deal of temper too. She didn’t send for me, you see. A grand-daughter did. She cursed us both up and down, but in the end I got her to let me look at her. She’s a very old woman, of course. The grand-daughter told me she was ninety years of age, but it wouldn’t surprise me to hear she was considerably more.’

‘She’s a horrid old thing!’ said Anne, with a barely-repressed shudder.

‘She’s uncanny, certainly. Well, good-bye, Anne girl, till to-morrow!’

But he was to see her again before then. However, they didn’t know that. Anne waved her hand, and then, for the sake of any inquisitive people who might be watching, turned back to her picture, while he scrambled over the sea-wall, and climbed into his car, and set off to St Peter Port once more.

Anne painted steadily on till the light began to change, and certain pangs within her warned her that it was a long time since luncheon. She rose, and stood looking at her work. Her artist’s instinct told her that it was finished, and that it was one of the best pieces of work she had ever done. But she felt, somehow, that she couldn’t sell it now. She would keep it and give it to Peter on his birthday. She gathered her things together, and turned towards La Rochelle. Then an exclamation of dismay broke from her. A white veil of mist was driving across from the land; already white rags of it were drifting round La Rochelle. She glanced down at her wrist-watch. Six o’clock—then the boat must have started from Herm.

She hurried over the sands to the sea-wall, and reached the cottage just as a white swirl of mist closed it in. She gave a little shiver as she closed the door. Then she laughed at herself. It was simply ridiculous to shiver like that on a hot June night. She set to work to get tea ready, but a feeling of restlessness pervaded her, and she could settle to nothing. Finally she took herself firmly in hand, telling herself that she was a perfect fool to behave like this; and, sitting down at the piano, began to practise scales with a vigour which would have surprised her old governess, who had always complained that Mademoiselle Anne was idle where scales

were concerned. She followed them up with a very stiff Bach Prelude and Fugue, and was surprised to hear the grandfather chime eight.

'*Mon dieu!*' she exclaimed. 'But I must make haste with the supper, or it will not be ready!'

She lighted the lamp, and rapidly laid the table. When all was finished, and there was only the coffee to make, she glanced at the clock again. Twenty past eight! They ought to have been home by this, even if the boat had been delayed. Well, it was of no use worrying. Probably the car had broken down, and they were either sitting by the roadside while Latour, the chauffeur, put her right, or else were walking home. 'Oh! how wet they will be!' thought Anne anxiously. 'I had better fill the copper so that they can have baths. Janie must go to bed at once when she comes in.'

She filled the great copper and lit the fire under it. Then she routed out the hot-water bottles from the cupboard, where they had been put six weeks ago, and filled them, and put one in each of her sisters' beds. By this time it was nearly nine o'clock, and she was beginning to feel frantic. Every now and then she went to the door and tried to peer out into the wet white blanket, which had evidently come to stay. Dreadful thoughts began to fill her mind, and her artist's vision became a horror to her. She saw Elizabeth and Janie floating down through green water, locked in each other's arms, while long ribands of seaweed tangled round them. She saw the little white motor-boat crash on some hidden rock, and heard the cries of the drowning. At this point she could endure uncertainty no more. Snatching down her Breton cloak from where it hung on a nail behind the door, she flung it on, and hurried out of the cottage to go to the little Torteval post-office farther along the road to ring up Peter. But just as she reached the gate, Peter himself loomed up through the mist.

'Hullo!' he said. 'Why, what's the matter?' For the girl was as white as a sheet, and trembling from head to foot.

'Elizabeth and Janie! They haven't come!' she gasped.

'Haven't come!' He stared at her. Then he pulled her into the house. 'Here! Sit down! Where's—oh, coffee! Good! Here! drink this, and don't talk!'

He held up a cup of strong, hot coffee to her lips, and made her drink it. When the cup was empty he set it down. 'Now then, what do you mean—they haven't come? The Herm boat was in before I came out here. The Lucys sent for me; Mrs Lucy has had a bad heart attack. My car's out of commission—tires ripped to pieces on some broken glass this afternoon, so I got a lift out, and was going to walk back. But I don't understand why the others have not returned. Have you rung them up at Le Mesurier Square?'

'No,' faltered Anne. 'I didn't think of it.'

'Then I'll go and do it! It's a hundred to one they stayed there as the fog was so thick! You mix yourself another cup of coffee, and while you're drinking it I'll go to the post-office and ring them up. Don't worry, Anne girl! It'll be all right.'

He vanished, and Anne, already much comforted, followed his advice and drank another cup of coffee. Then she set the pot on the hob to keep warm for him, and cut some delicate sandwiches for him to have with it. By that time he was back, beaming cheerfully, a weeping Héloïse de Garis with him.

'All right!' he called. 'It was so wet when they got to Le Mesurier Square, that Elizabeth was afraid to let Janie come any farther. Ozanne was away—in Jersey; so she accepted the housekeeper's invitation to them to stay; but she rang them up here, and asked them to send word down to you. Mrs What's-her-name couldn't send any one; but she told Héloïse, who was there, to come and let you know. Héloïse met some friends on the way, and forgot all about it until now. I met her at the gate coming to tell you; so I brought her in with me.'

'I am so sorry,' sobbed Héloïse.

‘It’s all right, Héloïse,’ said Anne gently. ‘Don’t cry! I know you didn’t mean it!’

In her relief she felt she could have forgiven Héloïse almost anything.

‘Now you go home,’ said the doctor, giving her a push. ‘Miss Anne, I advise you to get some supper, and then go to bed. No, I can’t stay for coffee, thanks. Good-night’—and he was off, leaving Anne to shut and bolt the door before she put out the lamp and retired to bed, where she speedily fell asleep, and slept till late next morning.

Chapter XXII.
THE ATHERTONS ARRIVE.

‘Janie, I want to talk to you!’

‘Talk away, then! I’m listening as hard as I can!’

‘I’m not going to shout to you,’ replied ‘Miss’ Ozanne, with dignity. ‘You’re too far away; come nearer!’

‘Come nearer yourself!’ Janie was comfortable in a little nest she had scooped out for herself in the sand, and had no mind to move.

They were sitting on the sands near the breakwater at Pleinmont. Anne was seated up at the top of the cliff, making a water-colour sketch of the view from the Point, while Elizabeth was beside her, sewing at a dainty white frock intended for Janie’s wear at a *fête* that would be taking place a fortnight later in aid of the Cottage Hospital. The two children had refused to climb up the Point with their elders, Pauline’s excuse being that she wanted to get on with her new play; while Janie alleged that she intended to spend the first day of her holidays doing nothing. ‘I’ve swallowed oceans of history and geography lately,’ she said, in answer to Anne’s laughing inquiry as to what else she ever did. ‘Yes, I have, Anne! I’m not going to fag right up there on a boiling day! Elizabeth and Pauline may, if they like. I’m going to curl up on the beach and watch the sea.’

‘I’ll come with you,’ said Pauline. ‘It is too hot to climb right up to the Point. We’ll take the baskets, and then you two can come down when you want tea.’

‘Very well,’ said Elizabeth. ‘We’ll arrange it that way.’

Accordingly they had parted company by the breakwater, and while the two elder girls climbed to the Point, their juniors settled themselves down comfortably on the sands. Janie was content to dream the hours away, but Pauline had had too much of sitting still in previous summers, so now she wriggled closer to her friend and prepared for a long conversation.

‘Janie, you’ve got to wake up and listen, because I’ve got very important things to talk about!’

‘What sort of things?’ asked Janie lazily.

‘It’s about Elizabeth—and Paul,’ returned Pauline.

‘Pollie! What do you mean?’ Janie was awake now.

‘Do you remember that day we were in the window-seat in the library when they came in?’

‘Yes; but I don’t think we ought to talk about it,’ replied Janie. ‘We weren’t supposed to be there; and, anyway, it hasn’t anything to do with us.’

‘Well, I don’t want to talk about it,’ said Pauline, ‘except only just to say that I believe he was asking her to marry him.’

‘Any idiot would have guessed that,’ was the response.

‘I know. But, Janie, if he asked her, why isn’t she wearing any ring?’

‘I suppose because she didn’t say “yes,”’ replied Janie reluctantly. ‘Anyway, Pollie, I don’t want to talk about it.’

‘No; but, oh, Janie, just tell me this! Do you think she won’t marry him because of me?’

‘Don’t be an idiot! Of course not! Whatever difference should that make?’ demanded Janie.

‘Well, I should be one extra, you know! Two’s company, and three’s a crowd,’ replied Pauline.

'Elizabeth wouldn't think so. She's been accustomed to three most of her life—ever since I was born, anyhow. And we aren't a crowd.'

'You're sisters! That's different,' said 'Miss' Ozanne sapiently. 'But if you notice in books, most people are by themselves for a little after they're married.'

'Well, books aren't real life,' returned Janie. Then, in a different tone of voice—'I say, Pollie! There's some visitors coming! Look at the trunks on that taxi!'

'So it is!' Pauline forgot her worries about Paul and Elizabeth, and sat up to stare at the laden taxi which was coming slowly along the sandy road.

'It's Jack le Pelley,' said Janie, recognising in the chauffeur a neighbour of theirs. 'I wonder where they are going! It must be one of the bungalows!'

'Some visitor for the Lucys perhaps,' suggested Pauline.

'And Mrs Lucy still in bed after that last attack! It's a probability, isn't it!' was the scornful reply.

'Oh, I'd forgotten that,' said Pauline, slightly crestfallen.

'P'r'aps it's those people we saw the father of six weeks ago,' said Janie—'the one who gave us ices.'

'It's seven weeks ago,' replied 'Miss' Ozanne somewhat dogmatically. 'There's lots of them, anyway.'

Here the taxi stopped, and there tumbled out of it—first, a girl of about Janie's age, whose principal feature appeared to be a mass of long, black curls, tied neatly back; then a small boy of seven or eight, and a little girl a year or two older; a graceful, long-legged girl, who looked about the same age as the first one; and their friend of the early June.

'It's them,' breathed Janie, heedless of the rules of grammar. 'Oh, Pauline! they've come!'

'I wonder which is which!' said Pauline practically. 'The Allegra one doesn't seem to be there.'

'I expect she's with Mrs Atherton,' said Janie wisely, 'cos she isn't there either. Let's go and tell the others.'

'What about the baskets?' Pauline wanted to know.

'Oh, bother the baskets! I'd forgotten about them!'

'Tell you what! Let's take them with us and have tea up there! Come on, Janie! Be quick!'

And Pauline caught up her load, and set off up the rocks as fast as she could go. Mr Atherton and the two elder girls were already nearly at the bungalow, but the two little ones were some way behind, and they were gazing at the sea, so that they soon caught sight of Pauline crossing the rocks in flying leaps. Janie was not far behind her, her long legs rapidly making up for the start the younger girl had got. They reached the road almost together, and darted along it to another track, some distance along. Up this they sped, their pink frocks making patches of bright colour against the rusty-looking grass.

'I say! These two can run!' observed the youngest Miss Atherton to her brother. 'There's Con shouting. Come on, Noel.' And they set off up the sandy road as fast as their sturdy legs could carry them.

Meanwhile Janie and Pauline had reached the summit of the Point, and flung themselves down beside Elizabeth and Anne, and were breathlessly panting out their story.

'You shouldn't have raced like that in this weather,' said Elizabeth reprovingly. 'It's far too hot. Come and sit down till you are cool again.'

'As a matter of fact,' put in Anne, 'we saw them coming. We were just going to pack up and come down to tell you.'

'But we'll have tea, now you're here. Give me the baskets.' And Elizabeth began to unpack them, while Anne proceeded to give the finishing touches to her sketch.

'They haven't all come,' observed Pauline, as she fanned herself vigorously with her big hat.

'Mr Atherton said they were going to stay in St Peter Port for a day or two,' replied Elizabeth. 'I expect he and those others have come on to put the bungalow straight, and they will all come out to-morrow or Saturday.'

'I wonder how soon it will be before we get to know them!' sighed Janie. 'Anne, how lovely that is! What are you going to do next?'

'Finish my picture of the fairy man and Michelle de Garis,' replied Anne. 'Elizabeth, we must have a picnic to Vazon as soon as we can. I want to get that done while this weather lasts.'

'We'll go on Saturday,' said Elizabeth. 'Then I can come to you from the town when I have done the shopping. Are you nearly finished, *chérie*? Because tea is ready when you are.'

'Just,' replied Anne, as she laid down her brush. 'Like it, you people?'

'Oh yes! It's lovely!' said Pauline. 'I wish I could paint like that!'

'You write plays,' Elizabeth reminded her. 'You can't expect to do everything, you know!'

'Yes! What about *Loved and Lost*? Ever heard anything from Henry Ainley?' queried Anne.

'No! An' I think he's horrid!' burst out Pauline.

'Oh, well, he's a busy man. You can't expect him to read it at once,' said Elizabeth the experienced. 'I had to wait ages before I heard from my publisher.'

'How is the new one getting on?' asked Anne, as she helped herself to a sandwich. 'Done anything more?'

'Not a great deal,' replied Pauline. 'Janie and I were talking most of the time.'

'You were, you mean,' said Janie, giving her friend a warning look. 'Then we saw the Athertons coming, and came dashing up to tell you. Anne, are you going to do another legend when you've finished with the Little Green Man, do you think?'

'I wish you'd paint Pel-de-Cat knocking at the door,' said Pauline. 'Elizabeth could be Pel-de-Cat, and Janie and me might be letting her in.'

'Janie and I,' corrected Elizabeth. 'But it would make a charming picture, Anne; though I don't see why I should be the central figure of most of your pictures. Can't you use your own face occasionally?'

'Of course not! Besides, most fairies have golden hair,' replied Anne. 'It's an idea though, Pussy! But I sha'n't do it yet awhile. I've fixed what I want to do next; only, it will be difficult.'

'Why?' demanded the other three, with one voice.

'Because I shall have to go to Lihou Island for the setting, and you know the causeway is safe only when the tide is falling.'

'You could go by boat, I expect,' said Janie. 'I hate the causeway. The sea looks so cruel when it covers it.'

'Indeed, Anne, I hope you won't use it!' exclaimed Elizabeth. 'I should never know a moment's peace while you were there if I thought you did!'

'Don't worry; I sha'n't,' replied Anne equably. 'I shall hire a boat and row out to it. But, anyhow, you'd be with me, *ma chérie*.'

'What are you going to do?' demanded Elizabeth.

'I'll tell you later. I must finish the Little Green Man first. Are we going to bathe after tea?'

'Oh yes, the tide will be just right then,' cried Janie. 'All the towels and things are here.'

'It will be gorgeously warm,' sighed Pauline. 'I love the sea when it is like this!'

There was a general laugh as she said this, for Pauline's first attempt at swimming had been remarkably funny. They had decided to begin on a sunny day, but there had been a chilly

wind, and the water was certainly not warm. They had walked to Pleinmont, undressed among the rocks, and then run along the causeway, which was partly uncovered. Elizabeth and Anne went in first, and they were followed by Janie.

‘Come on, Pollie,’ Janie shouted, as she came up dripping wet. ‘You’ll catch cold if you sit about.’

‘It looks so wet!’ complained ‘Miss’ Ozanne as she stood on the edge cuddling herself. ‘I—ow!’

This last was a wild shriek, for a couple of schoolboys, racing along the narrow rock path, had accidentally bumped into her, and she overbalanced, falling almost on top of Janie, who was up to her shoulders, and just dived in time. She was up in a second, and gripping the rocky edge, set up a series of shrieks which spoke volumes for the strength of her lungs. Anne and Elizabeth at once came to the rescue, though they were laughing so much that they both complained afterwards that they had swallowed gallons of water. By the time they had got her in waist-deep water, ‘Miss’ Ozanne was gasping and breathless, and Janie, who was swimming round and round them like a regular young mermaid, began to laugh, and disappeared in a surface dive, which made Pauline imagine something had happened to her.

It had taken all Elizabeth’s tact and control over her to get her to agree to try to learn the strokes. Once she had begun, however, she progressed amazingly, and nowadays could swim quite well.

‘Certainly we shall bathe,’ said Elizabeth, ‘but not immediately after tea. Besides, the breakwater is still half-covered. We’ll finish tea, and then stroll slowly down, and leave our things at the hotel. Then we’ll come back, and by that time I should think it would be just right.’

This plan was agreed on, and presently they all set off down the rocky path which leads directly from the Point to the shore, bearing their various possessions. As they turned a corner, they came on the two big girls who had come in the taxi, and Anne heard Pauline gasp as she strolled along by her side. The two girls stood back to let them pass, and when they had gone on, looked after them.

‘I wonder if these are the girls Dad told us about!’ said the elder of the girls, she of the long black ringlets. ‘How lovely the two elder ones are!’

‘Especially the fair one,’ agreed her sister. ‘I suppose she’d be the one Dad met—he said she was fair, anyway. I rather liked the looks of the brown one, too, didn’t you?’

‘I liked them all! Do you know, Con,’ she went on seriously, ‘the dark one reminded me a little of Maeve O’Farrell. She is lovely, of course, and Maeve is only pretty; but I wonder if they are Irish.’

‘Most likely,’ said Con. ‘Well, I do hope it’s them.’

‘Oh, so do I! Shall we be going back now? José and Noel want to paddle, and I promised them I’d go with them. Dad said they weren’t to go into the water alone.’

‘I should think not! They’d be out of their depth in half a sec., if I know those imps!’ laughed Con. ‘All right; we’ll turn. Going to paddle yourself, old thing?’

‘Well, how else do you suppose I can keep a firm eye on them? Of course I am! You’d better come, too, if Dad doesn’t want you.’

‘Right-o! Let’s buck up and ask him!’

And then they broke into a run.

It did not take the Temples long to dispose of their possessions, and presently they were all hidden in nooks and crannies of the rocks, undressing as quickly as possible. Janie was ready first, and she was followed by Pauline. They scampered down the breakwater, once they were free of the rocks, and then they plunged into the sparkling water, where two or three other people were already swimming and diving. Anne followed them, looking like a water-nixey in

her green costume, her hair dangling in two long plaits on either side of her face. She dived gracefully off the end, and then swam out with long, steady strokes, which Pauline envied tremendously. Last came Elizabeth, her head tied up in a blue silk scarf; and after a few words of warning to her juniors not to go too far or to be too venturesome, she set off in pursuit of Anne, who was swimming gaily among the yachts and fishermen's boats anchored off the breakwater.

Left to themselves, Janie and Pauline played about in the bay, chasing each other, having splashing matches, and now and then swimming properly. Presently Pauline suggested that they should go and sit on the breakwater in the sunlight, and Janie acquiesced. A good many people were there already, including the two girls they had seen that afternoon, and the two small children. By this time the tide had turned, and was already flowing in with the steady, resistless flow which, on that flat shore, shows such a sudden and almost terrifying rise.

'But then,' as Peter Chester had once remarked, 'what else can you expect when it goes out forty feet or more?'

The very end of the breakwater was already wet with the returning tide, and Janie and Pauline, with the other children, were paddling gaily, shrieking for joy as the water crept up. Among them were the two children whom they had already heard addressed as 'José' and 'Noel.'

'I say,' remarked Janie suddenly, 'if these two don't look out, they'll be over the edge in a minute!'

The words had scarcely left her mouth, when José took a sudden step to the right, and with a scream slipped and fell. There was no real danger, for there were several swimmers about, but Janie promptly plunged in to her rescue, and was hauling her along the sands before her sisters had been able fully to realise what had occurred. When they did, Rosamund grabbed Noel, who was still too scared to say anything, and pulled him along the breakwater to where a badly frightened Con was pulling her little sister up on the rocks.

'She is all right,' said Janie, clambering up beside them. 'Only scared, I think. There was of danger none at all; is it not so, Pauline?' as that young lady joined them.

'Yes,' said Pauline gravely.

'I want mother!' sobbed José, clinging to Rosamund, who, quite regardless of the fact that she was getting drenched through, was hugging her little sister to her.

'Oh, stop howling, José! You aren't killed!' said Con disgustedly. 'Rosamund, you'd better take her up to the bungalow and get her changed. And change yourself! If mother sees the pair of you like that, she'll think something awful has happened, and she's due in half-an-hour.'

'Perhaps it would be best,' replied Rosamund, suddenly waking up to the fact that her pretty blue frock was as wet as José's by this time. She turned to Janie, who was looking more Puck-like than ever in her scarlet swimming suit, with her brown hair all wet and standing on end. 'I am awfully grateful to you,' she said. 'You must come and see us when you are dressed, and let mother thank you.'

Then she turned, and, taking José's hands, hurried up the hill to the bungalow.

Chapter XXIII.

‘BLESS YOU, MA MIE!’

When Rosamund had left them, Con turned to the others. ‘Aren’t you the Temples?’ she asked eagerly.

‘Yes,’ said Janie. ‘At least I am. This is Pauline Ozanne, who does lessons with me. She’s spending the first part of the holidays with us, too. Those are my sisters out there. And you are —’

‘Constance Amy Edwina Atherton, at your service!’ laughed Con. ‘This is our only boy, Noel. The two people climbing the hill to the bungalow are Rosamund and José. Mother is coming out from St Peter Port in half-an-hour with Francesca and Allegra. We came up early, to see that everything was all right for her. Dad is there now. And that’s all about us!’ She looked at Janie with gay violet eyes, which asked the very natural question, ‘What about you?’

But before that young lady could speak, Master Noel had chimed in. ‘I’m Noel Harold Bernard Atherton,’ he said, lifting serious green eyes to her face. ‘You do swim well, don’t you? What’s your full name?’

‘Jane Agatha Temple,’ replied Janie. ‘These are my sisters, Elizabeth and Anne,’ she went on to Con. ‘We live over there, at Rocquaine, in a cottage called La Rochelle. When your father came here in June we saw him, Pollie and I, and he said you were coming.’

‘I knew you were the Temples when I saw you,’ said Con. ‘Dad told us such lots about you when he came back.’

‘He told us lots about you!’ said Pauline eagerly. ‘We’ve been longing for you to come!’

‘How nice of you!’ laughed Con. ‘Are you going in again? Rosamund and I can swim fairly well, and Allegra isn’t bad; but José knows nothing about it, and Cesca hates it, and won’t learn.’

‘How funny!’ Janie’s eyes opened widely. ‘We all love it. P’r’aps she’ll learn here.’

‘And p’r’aps she won’t!’ retorted Con. ‘We used to have a house at Hunthorpe, in Lincolnshire, and it’s by the sea. We went down every summer for fourteen years, but Cesca never learned to swim.’

‘Oh, she must here,’ said Janie, swinging herself off the edge. ‘Elizabeth and Anne are coming in now. I’ll swim out to meet them. You wait here, and I’ll bring them to you. Coming, Pollie?’

‘No; I’ll wait and talk to Constance,’ replied Pauline, squatting down in the sunlight.

‘How funny!’ laughed Con, as she watched Janie’s creamy arms flash in the sunlight. ‘No one ever calls me that unless they’re ragging me. Do say “Con,” please!’

‘Of course, if you like it better. Do your sisters get their full names, or are they shortened, too?’

‘Well, Rosamund is sometimes Rose, and Allegra is Lal. We don’t generally give Cesca her full name—life’s too short!’

‘Janie calls me “Pollie,”’ volunteered ‘Miss’ Ozanne, ‘and Elizabeth and Anne say “Pussy” sometimes.’

‘That’s like one of my aunts,’ said Con. ‘Her real name is Muriel, but she’s always called Pussy. It fits her, too. Noel, don’t go over there! Stay here with me!’

‘Here are Elizabeth and Anne,’ said Pauline. ‘Hullo! You did go a long way out, you two! This is Con Atherton—her real name is Constance.’

'Rather a weird place for an introduction!' said Elizabeth, as she swung herself up on to the breakwater. 'Ouf! My scarf came off, and my hair came down—just look at it!' And she shook back the heavy 'mermaid's pride of hair,' which, quite literally, reached to her knees.

'It's a gorgeous length,' said Con, 'but I should think it would take some drying.'

'Oh no! It dries very quickly,' replied Elizabeth. 'I don't mind that. What I do mind is the combing.'

'Yes; that must be horrid! I'm the only one in the family who hasn't curly hair, and when it comes to bedtime I'm always so glad mine only waves!'

'Yes; it's a mixed blessing,' agreed Elizabeth. 'Well, we'd better go and dress now. Come along, you people!'

'We'll wait on the wall for you,' said Con. 'You'll come up to the bungalow and see mummie, won't you? She's been longing to know you ever since Dad told her about you.'

'It's very kind of you,' Elizabeth hesitated; 'but will your mother want visitors so soon?'

Con laughed. 'Of course she will!' she said. 'We always have heaps of visitors! If it isn't uncles and aunts and cousins—and we've dozens of those!—then it's friends! Oh, do come!'

'Well, if you are sure, we shall be delighted.'

'Right-o! Then that's that! We'll wait on the wall, as I said, and take you up. See you presently! Come along, Noel!' And Con started for the sea-wall with the long, graceful stride born of gymnastics and games, while the two sisters clambered over the rocks to their 'make-do' dressing-rooms. They were ready presently; and Janie and Pauline, who had been sitting patiently waiting for them, announced that a taxi had come and gone, leaving a very tall lady and two more girls, as well as some parcels, and that Noel had joined them and gone up to the bungalow with them, but Con was still sitting on the wall.

She jumped down when she saw them coming, and came to meet them—a bonny English schoolgirl, with thick bobbed hair standing out round a face as fresh as a pink-tipped daisy, fearless eyes, and a laughing mouth. 'Mum's come!' she called. 'Lal and Cesca are with her; so you'll see all the family at one blow! Come along!'

She escorted them up the hillside and into the living-room of the bungalow, where the rest of the Atherton family were all standing talking at once, including Rosamund and José, whose black curls were still damp. Then Elizabeth realised that one of the loveliest women she had ever seen was welcoming her, and heard Anne's gasp of wonder.

'You are Miss Temple,' said Mrs Atherton. 'I'm so glad to know you at last! And this is your sister—yes?'

'This is Anne,' replied Elizabeth, 'and these are our baby sister, Janie, and her friend, Pauline Ozanne.'

'Janie? Ah, yes; you pulled José out of the sea! My family are dreadful for getting into scrapes, as you'll know for yourselves before very long! And, Anne—you are the artist one! Didn't you have a picture in this year's Academy?'

'Yes,' replied Anne. "'Herodias dancing at Harvest Time.'"

'It was wonderful! I simply couldn't tear myself away from it! Who were all the horrible creatures watching her?'

'They were *les gens du vendredi*,' explained Anne. 'Witches, and wizards, and evil spirits.'

'I thought so! And where was she dancing? Here?'

'Yes; over on Rocquaine shore, not far from La Rochelle.'

'I hope you'll tell me the legend some time. These are the rest of my family—Cesca, our eldest girl; and Allegra.'

Cesca proved to be a slight girl of eighteen, with a piquant face and ready smile. Allegra was obviously the family beauty, and a veritable fairy princess, with a fleece of golden curls, deep-blue eyes with long black lashes, and a face as exquisitely tinted as a wild rose. Then and

there Anne decided that Allegra must sit for her some time. Elizabeth noted that they were all jolly girls, with delightfully easy manners; and it was quite evident that their mother reigned supreme in their hearts. Pauline and Allegra quickly made friends, and Janie seemed fully occupied with Con, who was only a couple of months older than herself. The two little ones trotted off with their father to get the water, which had to be carried from a pump, and Francesca, Rosamund, and Mrs Atherton talked gaily to herself and Anne about the journey, and St Peter Port and Guernsey.

‘Tell me,’ said their hostess presently, ‘do the Guernsey people really believe in witches and witchcraft?’

‘I should think they did!’ replied Anne. ‘Tell them about the De Garis baby and the White Witch, Elizabeth!’

Elizabeth laughed; but an imploring ‘Oh, do!’ from the girls brought the story of Janie’s adventures. They listened with breathless interest, and when it was finished Rosamund said, ‘I’m thankful it wasn’t me!’

‘But what a ghastly affair!’ said Mrs Atherton. ‘And you say the baby died? How dreadful!’

‘But fancy believing in such things in the twentieth century!’ exclaimed Francesca.

‘You wouldn’t say that if you lived here long,’ replied Anne. ‘Strange things happen in Guernsey even yet! And the White Witch has a grudge against us, I know, because she has cursed us more than once when she has met us!’

‘Don’t!’ said Mrs Atherton, with a shiver. ‘You make me feel quite creepy. Now, must you go back? Or can you stay and have supper with us?’

‘Oh, stay, of course!’ cried Rosamund. ‘Please do, Miss Temple! And perhaps, after supper, you’ll tell us some more about Guernsey. Do you know any more legends?’

‘Yes,’ said Anne, answering for her sister. ‘Why, she’s having a little book of them published!’

‘Not really? When is it coming out?’ demanded Mrs Atherton, pausing with her hands full of china. ‘We must buy it!’

‘And Miss Anne paints!’ sighed Cesca.

‘Please don’t call me “Miss” Anne!’ exclaimed the owner of the name. ‘It’s as bad as “Miss” Ozanne!’

‘What was that?’ asked Rosamund curiously. So they told the story of the coming of ‘Miss’ Ozanne.

‘She seems a dear little girl,’ said Mrs Atherton. ‘Miss Temple, I’m going to throw myself on your mercy. Can you make coffee? For I can’t. You can? Then will you? That is really friendly of you! She has a most unusual face, hasn’t she? I should think she was clever.’

‘She is! Very!’ replied Elizabeth. ‘And most original!’

‘And your own little sister? What does she do?’

‘Janie is fond of reading,’ said Anne, ‘and she plays the piano very well; but so far, beyond a gift for mischief, she hasn’t shown any special tendency.’

‘Like most of my babies!’ laughed Mrs Atherton. ‘Rosamund is going to Somerville in October, and Con is very keen on going in for black and white drawing; but, really, the others don’t seem to have any particular bent.’

‘I’m taking Froebel,’ said Cesca. ‘I took Part I. this summer. Of course, the results haven’t come yet.—Is the coffee ready, Miss Temple? Then let’s call the others.’

She ran to the door and cooeed, and presently they came in. Supper was a jolly, informal meal, and the Temples, who were little accustomed to such a family party, enjoyed it thoroughly. After supper José and Noel were packed off to bed, Rosamund going with them to

superintend washing and hair-brushing, and the others gathered on the rugs Mr Atherton spread on the short dry grass outside.

‘Tell us one of the legends,’ coaxed Cesca. ‘Just one, Miss Temple!’

‘But not a very scary one,’ stipulated her mother.

‘Tell the story of the wicked prior of Lihou,’ suggested Janie from her corner, where she was lying beside Con, gazing dreamily over to Lihou Island. ‘That’s Lihou, Con; that island there. There’s a causeway to it, but you can only use it when the tide’s going down. When it turns, the sea comes faster than a horse can gallop. One minute the causeway’s quite clear; the next, there’s nothing but sea! Tell about the prior, Elizabeth. I like that one.’

Elizabeth smiled at her little sister from the wicker chair in which she was seated, and, with the light from the setting sun turning her fair hair into an aureole round her face, began her story.

‘Once there was a prior of Lihou Priory, who, despite the sacredness of his office, was a necromancer of the blackest kind. Priest as he was, he spent far more time with the Grand-Mêle, or Book of Magic, than he did with either Bible or Breviary; and so little did the fear of God dwell in him that, in spite of the thunders of the Church and the awful fear of what lay after death, he continued devoted to the subject of magic.

‘One day it so chanced that he took advantage of an exceptional spring tide to visit the priest of the chapel of St Apolline, who was as skilled in the black arts as himself. With him he took his servant, to whom he gave the Grand-Mêle to carry, after warning him most solemnly on no account to open the book or attempt to read one word contained therein. This prohibition naturally excited the servant’s curiosity, and when, the visit over, the prior made his way back to the convent, he loitered behind, playing with the idea of just glancing at one page. When finally he reached the shore, he found his master already half-way across the rocky causeway, and proceeding in a most leisurely fashion. Now or never was his chance, for well he knew that once he had reached the convent the book would be taken from him, and he might never see it again. The temptation proved too strong for him. Seating himself on a heap of seaweed, conveniently near at hand, he opened the terrible volume, and began to read aloud slowly. Meanwhile the prior was thunder-struck to see the waves slowly advancing, when, by all reckonings of Nature, they should be still at low water, and that for another hour or more. At once he realised what had happened, and turned to the shore. There was his servant, reading aloud, and he caught enough of the reading to know that the man was pronouncing the words of a spell which causes the tides to rise out of their due course; and also that he was reading slowly and haltingly. Terrified, he cried out, “Read on quickly to the end!” He knew that once the spell was finished, the waters would return to their accustomed place. But the man was too enthralled by what he was reading to heed his master’s voice; and now the sea had reached the wizard’s waist. Again he cried, “If thou canst not read forwards, read backwards!”

‘In vain! His voice was drowned by the roaring of the waves, and long ere the incantation was finished and the sea returned to its proper place, the evil priest was overwhelmed, and the devil, called up by the spell, had borne off his prey in triumph.’

‘Thank you,’ said Mrs Atherton. ‘That is a most interesting story. And that is Lihou Priory over there?’

‘Yes,’ said Anne. ‘It was dedicated to Notre Dame des Rochers, Ste Marie Lihou; and to this day the French sailors salute it as they pass, and the fisher-folk still cry to Ste Marie Lihou to save them from peril.’

‘Strange how these old superstitions still cling,’ said Mr Atherton musingly.

‘They are handed down from generation to generation,’ replied Elizabeth. ‘I think that is one reason for it. Of course, the coming generation are much more sceptical than their parents

were. But among the elder people you still get a firm belief in witchcraft.'

They discussed the subject a little longer; then the Temples had to go, for it was growing late, and from Pleinmont to Rocquaine is a good twenty minutes' walk. They parted with 'good-byes' and promises to meet the Athertons on Monday at the Point, and spend a long day with them there.

'I'm glad they've come,' said Anne, as she and Elizabeth were brushing their hair that night. 'Did you ever see any one lovelier than Mrs Atherton in your life? I'm going to ask her to sit for me, if she will!'

'She is very beautiful,' replied Elizabeth, 'and, like you, I am glad they have come. It—it's nice to talk to people of our own world once more, Anne!'

Anne looked at her from between the parted black wings of her hair. Then she suddenly bent forward and kissed her sister.

'Bless you, *ma mie*!' she said.

'Why, Anne?' Elizabeth turned to her in surprise.

Anne coloured. 'I don't mean to be sentimental, Elizabeth, but you are such a blessing to us, and sometimes I think, perhaps, we don't seem to realise it enough. If Daddy sees you, Sissie, I am sure he is glad and satisfied with you. We couldn't do without you!'

Little more passed between them, but when the vivid July moonlight gleamed in through the open window later on, it shone on Anne, happily asleep in the shadow of her hair; while Elizabeth lay, wide awake, keeping tender tryst with the parents who had gone on before them.

Chapter XXIV.

THE ROCQUAINE REGATTA.

In the sunny days that followed, the Temples and the Athertons became firm friends. The Ozannes and Dr Chester were also included in the band, and many were the frolics and junketings that took place. The Athertons were thoroughly unaffected and unspoilt, and their fresh interest in all they saw and heard was most stimulating. Elizabeth racked her memory for legends, many of which she had heard from old Javotte, and Paul Ozanne was able to tell them of many quaint and interesting customs from memories of his boyhood.

His love for Elizabeth only grew with the days; but he respected her wishes too much ever to show it by word or act. Only he was very quiet, and remained in the background of things as much as possible. Pauline declared that he was getting very dull, and Peter Chester began to wonder whether he had made a mistake with regard to the other man's feelings. As for Janie and Pauline, they made hay while the sun shone, and ran wild with the Atherton girls, who lived, for the most part, in holland frocks and bare heads and legs. Their language showed the signs of the times, and Janie was even beginning to lose her slight French accent, which had clung to her up to the present.

Anne, her picture of the Little Green Man finished, had turned her attention to portraiture, and several pages of her sketch-book showed delightful studies of the Atherton children. She was also busy on a head of Mrs Atherton, which was far in advance of anything she had ever yet done.

'But I have an idea,' she said once. 'We'll wait till the Rocquaine regatta is over, and then —'

She had several private conversations with Mrs Atherton, and, apparently, they were well satisfied with their plans.

'What does one do at this regatta?' queried Rosamund one day, when they were all sitting drying their hair in the sunlight.

'Well, there are races, of course,' replied Paul Ozanne, who was stretched out on the beach close to Elizabeth. 'The fisher-folk go in for those. Then there is climbing the greasy pole for a leg of mutton. That's the boys' races, and a nice mess they are in! But, of course, the real fun of the fair is in the side-shows. There are coconut shies, and swings, and merry-go-rounds, and palmists. It gets very rough in the evening, and, I believe, most of the men are pretty well helpless by the time they reach home. You people must be back in your houses by eight o'clock, I think. L'Erée isn't a particularly quiet spot.'

'It doesn't sound awfully pleasant,' remarked Cesca. 'Where are the races held?'

'Off the breakwater. And the fair part of the business will be over there in that field near the hotel. It's all right in the afternoon, Miss Atherton, and it isn't bad in the early evening. It's only later on that the fun begins.'

'You had all better come up here to tea,' said Mrs Atherton. 'Then those of us who want to patronise the merry-go-rounds and the coconut-shies can do so, and Mr Ozanne and Dr Chester can escort you people to La Rochelle before it gets rowdy.'

And so it was arranged.

Needless to state, the younger girls and Noel were terribly excited about it, and many were the conferences that took place as to what they should patronise, and how they should spend their money.

'I'll give you a shilling each,' said Mrs Atherton, 'and not a penny more.'

'But, mummie! The palmist costs a shilling!' protested Allegra.

'Then if you want to spend your money that way, you will have to do without the other things,' replied her mother coolly. 'You children get far too much to spend as it is!'

Elizabeth gave Janie a shilling, too, and that young lady opened her eyes.

'Can you afford it?' she asked.

'Yes,' said her sister. 'I can't give you any more, but you can have that. You deserve it, Janie. You've been very good about not asking for money!'

Paul Ozanne, following the general example, presented his small sister with the same sum, when he called at La Rochelle on the afternoon of the regatta. He looked approvingly at them when they greeted him. All four wore simple gingham dresses, and their big panama hats; and, in deference to the day, Janie and Pauline wore shoes and stockings. There was nothing expensive or elaborate about their attire, such as he had seen in the parties which had passed him on the road, but they all looked very fresh and dainty—Anne in mauve, Elizabeth in gray, and Janie and Pauline in yellow and pale pink. Dr Chester, arriving five minutes later, had eyes only for Anne. He could have described her minutely, but he had no idea of what the others wore. 'Well, we'd better get along,' he said briskly. 'Ozanne, if you and Miss Temple will lead the way, we'll follow.'

Paul Ozanne turned to Elizabeth, and she smiled and assented; so they set off, followed by Janie and Pauline, who were trying to decide whether it would be better to make their money spin out, or spend it all at one blow. A very long way behind came Anne and Peter, with attention for no one but each other.

The road was crowded with buses, and charabancs, and cars. Pretty girls in their gayest attire tripped along the white road, accompanied by bashful swains, who were uneasily conscious of stiff, clean collars and well-oiled hair. Mothers of families trailed along in their best gowns, accompanied by swarms of small children, all adorned in the most splendid attire they owned. Now and then a car flashed past, showing a glimpse of silk or ninon-clad daintiness; but, in the eyes of Paul Ozanne, not one of these could rival his plainly-attired Elizabeth, with her little unconscious air of dignity, and her delicate beauty.

'They look like peonies or hollyhocks beside a white lily,' he thought, as they passed a group of girls wearing thin, tawdry dresses of cheapest *crêpe-de-chine*. He noted the imitation silk stockings and ill-cut canvas shoes, and then his eyes went to Elizabeth's well-shod feet. He had once heard her say she would wear a dress that had been turned and turned again before she would descend to badly-made shoes. By this time they had reached the field where the fair was held, and Mr Atherton was standing beside a small tent, waving vigorously to them. Con and Rosamund were with him. When the pair reached him, he explained that he had been weak enough to say he would treat all three to the palmist. 'So here I am,' he concluded, 'stuck outside this wretched tent, while Cesca gets told that she will marry a dark man from over water, and she is to beware of the jealous machinations of a fair woman with red hair!'

'Oh, Dad! It isn't like that a bit!' exclaimed Rosamund. 'She really is awfully clever,' she went on, turning to Elizabeth. 'She told me that I had just won a great honour—that's my scholarship to Somerville, of course!—and that I should do brilliantly in whatever I took up, so long as I didn't try to do too much.'

'Are you going to be done?' queried Con. 'Oh, do!'

Elizabeth shook her head and smilingly refused.

'Then you, Mr Ozanne! Just for fun!' pleaded Con. 'O-oh! there's Janie and Pauline! Co-oo-ee!'

'Con—Con!' expostulated her father. 'You'll have us all turned out of the place if you make a row like that!'

‘Hullo!’ said Janie, coming up to them at this moment. ‘Here you are, then. Have you had your hands read?’

‘Rose has, and Cesca is being done; I was first,’ replied Con. ‘Are you going?’

‘Yes,’ said her father. ‘All the boiling of you! Oh, yes, Miss Temple. You must let me. I like to hear just what rot that woman tells them. Con’s to become a famous dancer!’

‘Well, of course, that is rot,’ agreed Con. ‘Now, if she’d said that to Lal, there might have been some sense in it!’

At this point Francesca came out, looking very flushed, and Con pushed Janie into the tent, with the reminder that she wanted to know every word that was said.

‘What did she tell you, Cesca?’ inquired Mr Atherton.

‘I’m not going to tell you,’ replied Cesca. ‘I’m going to tell no one. Do you want to go in, Elizabeth, or will you come home with me? Mother is somewhere over there with the babies, and some one ought to be at the bungalow.’

‘I’m not going,’ replied Elizabeth. ‘I know my fortune already, I think; so I’ll come with you.’

‘You come too, Mr Ozanne,’ suggested Cesca.

‘Thank you; I will,’ he replied.

So the three of them set off, while the others remained to enjoy the merry-go-rounds and coconut-shies. They reached the bungalow in peace, and then Cesca settled her guests in wicker chairs, and herself, curled up on a rug at their feet, laying her fair head, with its encircling plaits, on Elizabeth’s knee. From where they sat they could see the races splendidly, and Elizabeth watched, with deep pleasure, the picturesque fishing-boats with their spreads of ruddy brown canvas as they came, tacking from side to side, till, finally, one got away from the rest, and won the race handsomely.

‘Oh, good!’ cried Cesca, clapping her hands. ‘Oh, aren’t they pretty?’

‘Swimming race next,’ announced Paul. ‘See! There they are, lining up! It’s the boys’ race, this one. We’ve missed the men’s.’

‘I’ll go and get the glasses,’ cried Cesca, jumping up. ‘Sha’n’t be a minute!’

‘They’re off!’ said Paul, as the crack of the pistol came to them. ‘There they go! Look at that little chap!’

‘Thrilling, isn’t it?’ said a voice behind them, and they looked up to see Mrs Atherton and Noel. ‘I’ve left the others,’ she went on, sinking into a wicker chair, ‘and Noel and I came back. He was afraid of missing the greasy pole. What has been happening?’

‘A smack race,’ replied Elizabeth. ‘This is the boys’ swimming.’

‘Good! Then we haven’t missed the greasy pole after all. Why—who is this funny old woman coming?’ And she looked with undisguised amazement at the apparition, in whom Elizabeth recognised the De Garis’s White Witch.

‘It’s the White Witch,’ she said, with a little shrinking feeling, as the old woman came toiling up the slope towards them. ‘I wonder what she wants!’

Noel got close to his mother as the ancient creature neared them; and, when she broke into her high cackling laugh, he clutched at the slim hand which was held out to him.

La Sorcière looked the party over with little gleaming eyes which saw everything. ‘Ha, ha, ha!’ she cackled. ‘Here we all are—the pretty maid of La Rochelle, and the noble prince who shall woo her, maybe; and her friends! Pretty mademoiselle, you scorned my powers; but there is more in Guernsey than most people think, and a fate overtakes those who scorn the greater powers. Sometimes it is easier to hit at friends, my fine mademoiselle. That hurts more! Ha, ha, ha!’

‘Look here! Clear out!’ said Paul imperiously, as he confronted the old crone.

She turned her black eyes on him with a scornful air, which said quite plainly that she would move only at her own convenience. For perhaps three minutes she stood there looking at them. Then, with another eldritch peal of laughter, she turned and went on.

‘What a horrible old thing!’ said Cesca, with a sigh of relief. ‘Does she hate you all so much?’

‘Goodness knows why, but she does!’ replied Elizabeth. ‘Pauline and Janie are terrified of her.’

‘I’m not surprised,’ returned Mrs Atherton. ‘What did she mean by a fate overtaking you?’

Elizabeth shook her head. ‘I couldn’t say.’

‘Oh, it’s just a cryptic threat,’ said Paul easily. ‘She hopes to make you uneasy—that’s all! Here are the others!’

They came laughing and talking up the bank, and fell down on the grass when they reached the top.

‘Pouf! It’s a hot day!’ panted Con, collapsing on the ground. ‘How are the races going?’

‘Very well,’ replied Cesca. ‘But I should think they’d better hurry up a bit; it looks thundery over there.’

As she spoke she pointed to the west, where a curious grayish tinge seemed to be mingling with the blue of the sky.

‘That’s only heat haze; it will blow over,’ said her father, looking in the direction in which she was pointing. ‘Hullo! They’re going to begin the greasy pole!’

‘Where? Where? Oh, let me see,’ clamoured Noel, who had kept very quiet until then. ‘Show me, daddy.’

His father pointed out a broad-beamed boat, from the stern of which a long pole had been thrust. To the end of the pole was attached the traditional leg of mutton, and some twenty or thirty youngsters were crowding on the judge’s boat, ready to dive off at the word of command and swim to the other vessel. Even as the Atherton party looked, the starter’s pistol rang out, and the competitors made one leap for the water. Hand-over-fist they swam; then one, a more powerful swimmer than the rest, reached the boat, scrambled up the side, and, running to the pole, began to worm himself along it, clinging with hands and knees to it. He soon reached the mutton, and then began the work of unknottng its bonds. But by this time number two had arrived, and he, clinging perilously with both feet and one hand, proceeded to tickle number one’s soles. This was more than human nature could stand, and, with a wild yell, the leader let go, and landed with a mighty splash back in the sea. Number two was not more successful, and soon the boat was covered with figures climbing up for another ‘go,’ while the sea was dotted with others swimming up to take their turn again.

‘Isn’t it splendacious?’ sighed José from her perch on her father’s knee.

‘I’m hungry,’ said Noel suddenly. And then every one else discovered a similar feeling, so tea was got ready, and by the time it was over and cleared away, all the races were over, and most people had gone down to the prize-giving.

‘It’s getting late,’ said Peter Chester, with a glance at his watch. ‘I really think you people had better be making tracks if L’Erée is all Ozanne declares it to be on a gala night.’

‘It’s all that, and more,’ replied Paul. ‘Come on, Pauline. Collect yourself, my child!’

‘How tiresome!’ grumbled Pauline under her breath.

‘It is a bore,’ agreed Allegra, who had overheard her. ‘It’s only just half-past six now.’

‘It will be seven before you people get a move on,’ said Peter Chester, as, with a dexterous jerk, he hauled the pair of them on to their feet. ‘Aren’t you going back with your brother to-night?’

‘Yes; unfortunately I am!’

‘Ungrateful little beggar! Well, it’ll be all of eight o’clock before you get home,’ declared the young doctor.

‘Pollie!’ called Janie at this juncture. And as the others were busy picking up work and books, Pauline was fain to follow them.

‘Ouf! Isn’t it hot?’ sighed Anne, as she yielded her sketching-block and paint-box to her lover.

‘Yes; it is really terrible,’ said Mrs Atherton.

‘I wish there might be a good soaker,’ observed her husband. ‘If this goes on, we shall have the whole cliff on fire! Have you ever heard of them having cliff-fires here, Ozanne?’

‘Rather,’ returned Paul. ‘All the gorse and dry grass burn like tinder when they do start, and I have heard that they blaze for days sometimes.’

‘Well, don’t talk about it!’ shuddered Mrs Atherton. ‘If I thought there would be a fire, I should insist on going back to St Peter Port to-night.’

The two men laughed indulgently.

‘Nonsense, Nita!’ said her husband. ‘It will be quite all right. And, anyway, Rosamund and Cesca are quite old hands where fires are concerned.’ He looked with a smile at his two pretty daughters as he spoke, recalling a fire of that spring which had caused them all much alarm.

The two smiled back.

‘No silly old essays to worry about this time!’ said Rosamund lightly. ‘Must you really go, Elizabeth?’ For by this time they had got to Christian-name terms. ‘Then we’ll walk along to the hotel with you, shall we?’

They set off, laughing and talking gaily as they went. Mrs Atherton turned indoors with the two little ones and her husband, to clear away the débris from their feast.

From behind a clump of gorse a weirdly terrible apparition arose, and gave vent to a low, cackling laugh.

‘So, *mes belles*! Beware of arousing the anger of La Sorcière Blanche! You have made it harder for me with your fine friend of a doctor, and it will go hard but I shall repay you! Friends hurt, sometimes means a more bitter pain than hurt to oneself. Le Faieu Bélanger shall have a servant this night!’

Saying this, she turned and plunged down the slope with a speed astonishing in one so old, and was soon lost to sight in the crowds that still swarmed along the shore-road.

Chapter XXV.
THE CLIFF-FIRE.

‘Anne!’

‘Uh-huh!’

‘Anne! Wake up! Oh, Anne, you might wake up! I’m frightened!’

Anne rolled over, opening sleepy gray eyes to stare in startled fashion at her youngest sister, who was standing beside her, a comical figure in pyjamas, with her short brown hair wildly on end.

‘Janie! Why are you out of bed at this time of night?’

‘Anne, there’s a horrid light! Do you think it’s Jan gants y tan?’

Anne sat bolt upright, and looked out of the window to which Janie was pointing. Then she gave a sudden exclamation and scrambled out of bed.

‘Anne! Is it Jan—’ began the younger girl.

‘No,’ replied Anne briefly. ‘It’s much worse than that. The cliff’s on fire!’

‘*Mon dieu!*’ Janie forgot her superstitious fears, and dashed to the window.

A lurid glow lit up the skies and the dark, tranquil water of the bay, but she was unable to see much of the cliff.

‘Anne,’ said Elizabeth’s voice at the door, ‘are you getting up?’

‘Yes. Come in! Is it bad?’

‘It looks dreadful from my window; the whole Point seems to be in a blaze. I’m going up to see if the Athertons will come to us!’

‘It’s a wooden bungalow. It will burn like tinder.’

The two elder girls looked at each other with horror as Janie’s words rang through the dusky room. No one had thought of lighting a candle. Then Elizabeth turned and whirled round to the stairs.

‘Come with me, Anne!’ she cried. ‘I’m going to see what I can do. Janie, stay here! Make the beds afresh. Come, Anne!’

‘I’m coming with you,’ retorted Janie, who was hurrying into her clothes. ‘Yes, I am, Elizabeth! I shall be of lots of use, and I’m not going to stay here.’

‘Come along then,’ said Elizabeth briefly. ‘Put on your big coat.’

Three minutes later they were hurrying down the shore-road to where the whole cliff at Pleinmont Point seemed to be ablaze. The road was alive with people hastening in the same direction. Men with boughs of trees dragged down hurriedly were rushing up the slope, while others were hastily cutting down the dried-up gorse and the grass, hoping thus to make a broad enough band to prevent the fire spreading. Already the sky was turning gray with the coming dawn, and the stars were paling. At the hotel the visitors were outside in all kinds of sketchy attire. Had it not been so near tragedy, Elizabeth felt she must have laughed outright to see some of them. For Anne, there was no question of laughter. Her more emotional nature was facing disaster. If they were too late! A sudden memory stung her to fresh speed. The Lucys’ bungalow was near that raging inferno, and Mrs Lucy was there, very frail and pathetically unable to help herself. Mr Lucy had been summoned to France only two days previously, and there was no one there but young Julian and the old Guernsey woman who did the housekeeping.

‘Anne! What is it?’ panted Elizabeth, seeing the fresh tragedy in her sister’s mobile face.

‘The Lucys!’ jerked out Anne.

By this time they had reached the semi-garden enclosure where had stood the big marquee on the previous day when the prizes had been given away. Here the road was blocked by men who had drawn a cart, standing handily near, across it.

‘Can’t go past, ma’m’selle,’ said one of them as the Temples reached the barrier. ‘There’s enough women there already. A whole party of children, too, they say.’

‘Mrs Lucy,’ gasped Anne. ‘Bungalow at the Point—invalid lady!’

‘*Mon Gy!*’ He stared at her in horror. Then, shouting to his comrade to stay where he was, he set off down the sandy path at full speed.

Standing there by the carts, the three girls gazed upward. The whole cliff-side was not ablaze, as they had thought at first—they could see now that the fire was in patches; but it was rapidly spreading, and that despite the well-nigh frantic efforts of the men who were beating out the flames with tree boughs, coats, bits of iron, anything that came to hand; while others, taking advantage of the tide, had formed themselves into a long chain, and were passing up loads of water as rapidly as they could.

Apparently ringed round by flames, they could see the Athertons’ bungalow, with one or two figures beside it. The Lucys’ place was hidden from sight. Suddenly there was a rousing cheer, and then a man, carrying little Noel Atherton, appeared. Elizabeth sprang forward. ‘Give him to me!’ she said imperiously. Then she saw that the smoke-grimed saviour was Peter de Garis. ‘Oh, well done, Peter!’ she said, as she took the terrified Noel into her arms.

He smiled at her and was gone. A minute later Rosamund Atherton came, leading Allegra. Both wore scorched clothing, and were smeared with smuts and smoke, but both were safe! They were followed by their father, carefully carrying his wife, while Con came after with Cesca. Mrs Atherton was deathly white, and one beautiful hand was badly scorched, but she met Elizabeth’s eyes with a smile as she held out her arms for her boy.

‘And where is José?’ she asked.

José? No one had seen her. Mr Atherton had thought Peter de Garis had had her with him. He had been so anxious about his wife that it had never dawned on him to wonder about the youngest girl.

Suddenly Elizabeth gave a cry, and dived up the slope before any one could stop her. She had seen a little figure stand at the window of the bungalow, and the cool morning breeze had brought to her quick ears a child’s screams. Almost at the same moment the gray sky seemed to be split in half by a streak of lightning, and there was a crash of thunder. The attention of the crowd was diverted for a few seconds, then a second cheer rang out simultaneously with another peal of thunder, as Peter de Garis and Julian Lucy came, carrying between them the still, frail form of Mrs Lucy.

They laid her beside Mrs Atherton, who had fainted on realising that José was still in the bungalow, and Julian knelt down by his mother. Cesca, who was sponging her mother’s face with some water, looked up pitifully at him, as he dipped a handkerchief in the tinful near, and began to imitate her actions. Rosamund was comforting Noel, who was howling lustily with fright and discomfort, and Mr Atherton was soaking his coat in water, preparatory to dashing through the ring of flame.

Meanwhile Elizabeth had skirted round, and selecting a part where the fire-band seemed narrowest, she drew a deep breath, lifted her skirts well above her knees, and made a bolt for it. She got through, and then José came flying across the narrow space to her, her little face white and her eyes distended with terror. Elizabeth picked up the child in her arms and looked round. She was well-nigh deafened with the roar of the fire. The cruel flames were near, almost on them, and she was tired. Suddenly Paul’s face appeared in the glow, and she heard his voice, ‘Elizabeth!’

That vision nerved her up for what she had to do. Gathering up all her strength, she made a blind dash for the part where she had entered the flames. Then an awful thing happened. Skinny claw-like hands attached themselves to her shoulder, and a wild, crazy voice rang in her ears: 'Na-na, pretty mademoiselle! Stay here and meet death!'

Half-swinging round, she saw La Sorcière Blanche, her long white hair streaming over her shoulders, the light of insanity blazing in her eyes. As she met the startled gaze of the girl, she released her, tossing her arms wildly into the air, and uttering peal after peal of eldritch laughter. Prisoned by the fire, confronted with a maniac, a semi-unconscious child dependent on her and her alone for safety, Elizabeth scarcely knew which way to turn. As she stood, the mad creature shrieked something utterly unintelligible, and then hurled herself into the flames. With a final grasp at her own reason, Elizabeth made a dash, felt an unbearable heat searing her, and then fell, José clutched tightly to her, into the arms of Mr Atherton, who dragged them both well beyond the clutch of the cruel, licking flames. At the same moment the sky was rent asunder by a scorching flash of lightning, while, almost simultaneously, the thunder roared overhead—and then the rain came.

Men said afterwards that such a storm had not been experienced in Guernsey during the last forty years. In ten minutes' time the fire had been almost completely extinguished. In twenty minutes the rock-like ground of the day before was reduced to thick, sticky mud, while such of the spectators as remained were drenched to the skin.

Mrs Atherton, white to the lips, but with eyes like stars, clasped a sobbing José to her, while her husband, with a supporting arm round Elizabeth, commandeered a car standing near-by, and put as many of them into it as possible. Some of the men had carried Mrs Lucy to the hotel, and Julian had gone with her, his heart full of a haunting dread, since she had neither moved nor spoken as yet. With him went Cesca Atherton, though there was little she could do. But the Athertons felt that they could not leave the silent lad to entire strangers, and the Lucys had few acquaintances at Pleinmont.

Meanwhile Mr Atherton, having sent his wife, Elizabeth, Anne, José, and Noel to La Rochelle in the car, with the son of a local garage proprietor as driver, turned his attention to the others.

'Best go to the bungalow, I think,' he said. 'It's quite safe now; come along.'

They followed him up the muddy hillside to where the bungalow was practically unharmed, save that the doors were slightly warped by the great heat to which they had been exposed. Lying a little way from what was known as the front door was a dark heap. With an imperious gesture Mr Atherton sent the girls into the house, while he went to investigate. It proved to be two bodies. The uppermost one had once been a woman—a few locks of long white hair still straggled over her shoulders. The other was Peter de Garis.

They learned, some days later, that he had seen Elizabeth's daring venture, and had exclaimed, 'Ma'm'selle Elizabeth! *Non! Non!*' before dashing after her. What had occurred then they could only know by conjecture. Paul Ozanne thought that he must have met the old mad-woman, who had grappled him, and with the unnatural strength of the maniac flung him down, and he had been suffocated by the fumes, for there was scarcely a mark on him, though the old woman was terribly scorched.

At the moment, however, they knew nothing of all this. Mr Atherton fetched a blanket from the bungalow, and laid it reverently over the poor remains, before he turned his attention to the girls.

'I can't manage hot baths for you all,' he said, 'but I think a good jorum of tea is indicated. —Rosebud, the kettle, please.—All of you get some dry clothes on; rub your hair. Hurry up!'

His matter-of-fact voice and manner did much to help the girls to pull themselves together, and presently they were all sitting in the living-room, clad in various odd garments, drinking

tea, and feeling comparatively normal, while outside the storm continued with unabated vigour.

‘I seem to be having nothing but adventures this year,’ said Janie presently, as she held out her cup for a third supply of tea. ‘When can I go home and see Elizabeth, Mr Atherton?’

‘Just as soon as ever it stops raining,’ he said. ‘You needn’t worry, Janie. Your sister will be all right. Mrs Lucy is the person I’m worrying about.’

‘Poor Julian!’ said Rosamund involuntarily. ‘Dad, the rain seems to be rather less violent than it was.’

‘Yes, you are quite right; it is,’ he replied. ‘The storm will soon be over now.’

‘I wonder what caused the fire,’ said Con idly.

But this they could never know definitely, although it seemed fairly correct to assume that La Sorcière Blanche had kindled it. She had developed a hatred of the Temples; her wild remarks to Elizabeth about hurting through friends, and the awful moment when she had clutched the girl inside the fire-ring, all seemed to bear out the idea.

‘She was quite mad, of course,’ said Peter Chester later on, when they were discussing it. ‘She should have been confined long since.’

For the present, however, they were content to give wild guesses, until the storm cleared off, and Mr Atherton and Janie walked round the shore-road to La Rochelle, where they found the others all recovering from the effects of the awful shock. On the way they met Julian, coming to say that his mother had opened her eyes and smiled at him before going to sleep, and that the doctor hoped she would be little the worse for her awful experience.

‘And that’s that!’ said Janie gaily, as they left him. ‘I hope Anne has breakfast ready; I am so hungry!’

Chapter XXVI.

THE LOVE POTION.

Pauline was troubled.

What was more, her usual confidante, Janie, had failed her; for the cause of her trouble was Elizabeth and her feelings for Paul, and this Janie simply refused to discuss.

‘Tisn’t our business,’ she said, when the younger girl had tried to bring up the subject. ‘You know it isn’t, Pollie; and I’m not going to talk about it. So if you’ve nothing else to say, scoot along and play with Allegra; she’s been yelling for you for ages!’

‘Miss’ Ozanne tossed her black, bobbed head, and marched off in a state of high indignation. ‘Play’ with Allegra, indeed! If Janie Temple was sixteen, she, Pauline, was twelve, and one didn’t ‘play’ at twelve. She made no effort to join Allegra Atherton, who had given up ‘yelling’ in disgust, and was now speeding to the rocks to get into her bathing-suit. Instead, Pauline went in the direction of Lihou Island, where Anne and Mrs Atherton were established. For Anne’s new picture was well under way—a picture of Ste Marie Lihou, standing by the ruins of the old priory, her arms outspread in a gesture of blessing. Mrs Atherton, in a robe of Madonna-blue, with her wonderful fair hair falling, mantle-like, about her, made an exquisite ‘Marie.’ Anne was working as she had never worked before, and this picture bade fair to be the finest thing she had yet done.

‘Heaps nicer than that old Herodias thing!’ Pauline had declared the last time she had seen it.

However, she had no intention of joining them to-day. Instead, she made straight for a little cubby-hole of her own in the rocks which lie between Pleinmont harbour and the grand sweep of Rocquaine Bay. Arrived there, she curled herself up, and proceeded to do some hard thinking. Of her brother’s ideas on the subject the young lady had no doubt whatever. She had been present when he had heard of Elizabeth’s heroism on the night of the cliff-fire. She had seen his olive-tinted face whiten to the lips as he listened to Mr Atherton’s story; and she had caught the low exclamation in the Guernsey patois which had escaped from his lips—‘My little saint!’

Consequently, she felt sure that he loved the fair, serious girl who had made such a difference to her own small existence during the past few months. But it was difficult, even for ‘Miss’ Ozanne, the precocious, to know what Elizabeth’s sentiments were. It was apparently useless to appeal to Janie; and Anne was entirely out of the question. Pauline knew the second Miss Temple as a person who could be very jolly, and also very crushing. Of Anne, the sweet sympathiser, who was so much her elder sister’s stay and comfort, she knew nothing whatever.

‘And I haven’t any one else to ask,’ she thought dejectedly. ‘Oh, I do want them to marry, but it doesn’t seem as if it would happen. What on earth shall I do?’ Chance sent her Mélie Lihou at that moment. Mélie had just returned from Devonshire, where she had been ever since the scarlet fever, and Pauline had only seen her once lately, and that was in Mansel Street, when she had been with Paul, so that there had been little chance to talk of anything. She therefore hailed her friend with great joy. Mélie came, nothing loth, and plumped herself down with a sigh of relief, for it was very hot.

‘I was just hoping I should see you,’ she began. ‘I’ve heaps to tell you and Janie. Where is Janie, by the way?’

‘Gone fishing with the Athertons,’ replied Pauline, pointing at a small boat which was bobbing gaily about on the water.

'Oh, well, I'll tell you, and you can tell her,' replied Mélie easily. 'What d'you think, Pauline? I'm to be a bridesmaid!'

'When?' demanded Pauline.

'In September,' returned Mélie. 'My eldest cousin, Lucy, got engaged while I was at grannie's, and they are going to be married on the twentieth, and I'm to go there; and—Pauline, I don't believe you've paid the least attention to what I've been saying!'

'Oh yes, I have!' said Pauline hurriedly, for Mélie was apt to take offence quickly, and here, surely, was the one person to advise her. 'I think it is most delightful. Shall you be the only bridesmaid, or will there be others?'

'My other two cousins, of course,' replied Mélie, mollified by the question. 'And her fiancé has a sister about as old as Carrie, my second cousin. It was very exciting, Pauline; and we were all fearfully thrilled when they came in and told us they were engaged. George has a motor business—'

But Pauline heard no more. She was already making plans. Mélie should help her! Surely any one who had been in the very thick of an engagement like this would be able to give her some idea. Not that she meant to explain to the other girl why she wanted to know. Child as she was, Pauline had an instinctive feeling that to do so would be unfair, and that if Janie ever heard it she would condemn it as 'most unstraight.' But she could always use her plays as an excuse. So she hesitated no longer, but plunged headlong into her subject.

'Mélie! I want you to tell me all about it—right from the very beginning!'

'But I have,' ejaculated Mélie, in injured tones.

'No; I didn't mean that! I mean—well—Well, I want to know how you would help any one to become engaged.'

'Who do you want to help become engaged?' queried Mélie, with more interest than good grammar.

'It's for my plays,' explained Pauline. 'You see, I want them to be true to life, and I've never had much to do with really engaged people—only book characters.'

'Oh, I see!' Mélie ruminated for a minute. 'Well, of course, I wasn't there from the very beginning, but I'll tell you what I can; and Carrie told me some, too. You see, Uncle Jim got to know George through buying a car from him, and he liked him, so he asked him to go and see them. That was how they got to know each other. Carrie says it didn't take long after that to guess what was going to happen. He was always coming to the farm with some excuse or other; and then he used to get Lucy to show him the cows, or explain how the separator worked, or something like that.'

'They wanted to be by themselves, I suppose,' said Pauline thoughtfully.

'I suppose so,' agreed Mélie. 'Of course, when I went, this had been going on for months. Carrie said that Lucy wouldn't let George—ask her, you know.'

'Why not?' asked Pauline, with deep interest.

But before Mélie could reply, another voice sounded behind them.

'Pollie! Aren't you coming to bathe?' and, turning round, they saw Rosamund Atherton with what her sisters would have described as 'the head girl' look on her face.

'Oh, Rosamund, this is Mélie,' faltered Pauline, with a sudden feeling of shame creeping over her—though why she should feel ashamed was more than she could fathom.

'Are you Mélie?' said Rosamund. 'I've heard Janie and Pauline talk of you. You all had scarlet fever at the same time, hadn't you?'

'Yes,' replied Mélie shyly.

'Won't you come and bathe with us?' asked the English girl politely.

'I'm sorry, I can't. I must be going home now,' replied Mélie, as she scrambled to her feet. 'We have dinner at one o'clock, and it's half-past twelve now, so I must go. Good-bye,

Pauline! Good-bye!

She turned and set off over the rocks in the direction of L'Erée. The other two watched her go, then Pauline turned to Rosamund.

'I don't think I'll bathe, thank you,' she said. 'It's so late now, you see.'

'Then come and help me get lunch ready for the others,' responded Rosamund.

She slipped a hand through the younger girl's arm as they slowly wended their way back to Pleinmont. 'Pollie, dear, I couldn't help hearing what you and Mélie were talking about as I came up to you. Don't you think it's rather a pity to discuss things like that?'

'But I must know for my plays,' objected Pauline.

'Can't you read in books?' asked Rosamund.

There was a moment's silence. Then the elder girl clinched her remarks.

'It's so vulgar—talk of that particular kind,' she said.

That went home, as Rosamund intended it should.

'All right,' said Pauline shortly.

Nothing further was said on the subject, but for all that the little girl thought the more. She had determined that Elizabeth and Paul must marry, and she sat silently throughout lunch, revolving various plans in her mind. So still she was, that Janie, thinking she was offended at her own remarks earlier in the day, was particularly nice to her. Pauline took no notice, and as soon as the meal was over she vanished once more.

'What on earth's the matter with her?' demanded Con, gazing after the little retreating figure with bewilderment. 'What's she stuffy about?'

'Let her alone,' advised Elizabeth. 'I expect it's a new play.'

Pauline remained in retreat for the whole afternoon. At tea-time the party was reinforced by Julian Lucy, now an accepted chum, Dr Peter Chester, and Paul Ozanne himself.

'Where's Pollie?' demanded Allegra, as she subsided beside her mother.

'She went off by herself—you saw her,' returned Janie. 'Haven't seen her since.'

'I hope she hasn't gone for another motor-bus trip round the island,' said Paul lazily. 'She's not likely to find another La Rochelle.'

The words were scarcely out of his mouth before the truant herself appeared. But what an apparition! Her pink gingham frock, fresh that morning, was all muddied and torn; her hat had gone; she was scratched badly, and on one leg an enormous bruise was already showing. In one hand was a little phial, and in the other the remnants of what looked like a bunch of herbs. She was crying pitifully, too.

Elizabeth sprang up and caught the child in her arms, while the others crowded round in amazed curiosity.

'Pollie, darling! What has happened? Where have you been?'

'I've been to La Coutière,' sobbed Pauline.

'La Coutière! What on earth sent you there?' gasped her brother.

'Th-there's a White Witch there!'

'What!'

'I w-wanted to get a love potion for Elizabeth, to make her love you, b-because I d-do want you to marry her so much,' wailed Pauline, letting any number of cats out of bags in her agitation. 'I g-got it; but there were horrid children th-there, and they shouted names after me, and th-threw stones at me! B-but if only she'll marry you, Paul, I d-don't mind!'

There was a stunned silence, broken only by Pauline's sobs. Then Anne took matters into her hands. 'Listen, all of you!' she said. 'Peter, I want you. I think we must tell Elizabeth our secret.'

Peter Chester came over to her, and put a possessive arm round her waist, while the others gazed dumbly at them.

‘Peter and I are betrothed,’ said Anne, blushing faintly. ‘Now, Paul!’

‘I think Elizabeth and I have been that for many weeks,’ he said quietly. ‘Elizabeth!’

Elizabeth bravely raised her burning face. ‘Yes,’ she said. ‘It—it’s really true.’

‘Come away, all of you,’ said Mrs Atherton suddenly. With decisive action she swept them all off, taking Pauline herself, and the four were left gazing at each other.

Anne spoke first. ‘Sissie, darling!’ she said.

The next moment they were in each other’s arms, while the two men were shaking hands vigorously.

‘And when will you be married?’ asked the *deus ex machina*, a little later on as they all sat enjoying their tea.

‘Before *we* go, I hope,’ observed Mrs Atherton. ‘There isn’t any real reason for waiting, is there?’

‘I don’t know about you two,’ replied Paul, with a look at Anne and Peter, ‘but Elizabeth and I mean to be married on September the tenth.’

‘Same here,’ responded Peter.

‘And that’s that!’ observed Con through a mouthful of cake.

Chapter XXVII.

‘GOOD-BYE, LITTLE LA ROCHELLE.’

‘Only two days more!’ sighed Con Atherton as she stood at the gate of La Rochelle in the early dawning of September the tenth, talking to Janie and Pauline, who were up early as befitting the chief bridesmaids of the sister brides. It was still only half-past six, but Con, Rosamund, and Cesca had already had what Rosamund described as a ‘scratch’ meal, and made the twenty minutes’ walk from Pleinmont. Con was inclined to be melancholy, for they were leaving Guernsey on the twelfth, and the seventeenth would see her back to school; while three weeks or so later Rosamund would be going to Somerville, and they would not see each other till the Christmas vacation. She said something of this perched on the low stone wall which separates La Rochelle from the road.

‘It wouldn’t matter so much,’ she grumbled, ‘but I know Oxford will alter Rose abominably. She’ll come back with a superior manner, and patronise the whole shoot of us!’

‘Con! You little pig!’ exclaimed her sister. ‘As if I should.’

‘Well, you never know,’ returned Con, wagging her head portentously.

‘London hasn’t altered Jill Trevennor that way,’ said Cesca consolingly, ‘so I don’t suppose Oxford will make all that much difference to Rose.’

‘Girls!’ said Anne’s voice above their heads, ‘have you had anything to eat? Make some coffee, Janie. We’ll be down in a few minutes.’

Janie nodded, and vanished into the cottage, while Rosamund called up, ‘You ought to stay in bed to breakfast, both of you!’

‘*Chut*, my Rosamund. You talk foolishness!’ retorted Anne, with a sudden falling back on her slight French accent, which few had heard that summer. She vanished from the window, and Pauline suggested that they might all just as well go in and help Janie; so they joined forces in the living-room, where Cesca put a match to the fire laid ready, since the morning was cold, while the others prepared the table for coffee and rolls.

It was soon ready, and the brides-elect joined them just in time.

After it was over the Athertons had to hurry back, and the four left behind made haste to clear away and perform the necessary household tasks.

The double wedding would be at ten o’clock; and then, after a meal in the big old living-room, the Chesters were going over to Brittany in the fishing-smack of Javotte’s son, while the Ozannes were to go off for a cruise round the French coast in a yacht lent by a friend of Paul’s. The Julian Ozannes, who had come over on the previous day, bringing with them Javotte, were staying at the Old Government House in St Peter Port. They had agreed to seeing after the packing-up of everything, and final dismantling of the house; and, when they returned to Brittany, Janie and Pauline would go with them, and stay there till Christmas.

‘Those who are but newly-wedded are best alone for a period,’ explained pretty Mrs Ozanne, when she insisted on this arrangement. ‘Ah, yes; I know that Jeanne and Pauline are the dearly-loved little sisters, but it is better as I say—I know it, I!’

And so it had been arranged.

Mrs Atherton, coming along at ten o’clock in all the glory of a white gown and black hat, laughed when she found Anne still hard at work with her packing.

‘My dear girl! That should have been done last night!’ she exclaimed. ‘Hurry up and dress now, dear. I’ll finish that for you.’

She hustled the girl off, and Janie followed to play lady’s-maid. At half-past ten the Atherton party, with the exception of Mr Atherton, who had offered to give away Anne, since

Julian Ozanne was performing that ceremony for Elizabeth, departed for the old gray church in the hollow behind St Pierre du Bois. They were followed by Janie and Pauline; the former wildly excited, the latter somewhat pensive. Quiet though the news had been kept, the church was packed. The entire Chester family was there, having crossed two days previously, when Mrs Chester, a dear, elderly lady, had taken Anne to her heart. Colinette Ozanne and her two little girls were there, with old Javotte beaming beside her. The Athertons made a brave pewful, and behind them sat Mason, Captain Temple's old sailor servant, who had come over, too, to see his beloved young mistresses 'spliced' safe and tight. Julian Lucy had brought his mother, still very frail-looking, but obviously recovering from the shock of the cliff-fire; and, of course, the De Garis's were there in full force, as well as people from all the places round about.

To Peter Chester, fidgeting nervously with his collar, it seemed as though all the world were there; but Paul Ozanne had thoughts only for his bride, and gazed down the aisle with longing eyes which saw nothing, save the cool darkness by the font. Then suddenly the organ broke into the notes of the well-known wedding hymn, 'The Voice that breathed o'er Eden,' and Julian Ozanne appeared with Elizabeth on his arm. He was followed by Mr Atherton and Anne, and the supreme moment had arrived. Never, surely, had the old gray walls of St Pierre du Bois seen two lovelier brides than these two, as they stood there in their simple white gowns, their long veils falling back from faces radiant with happiness. Anne and Peter were low-voiced in their responses, but Elizabeth's 'I will' rang through the building in tones of such tender trust, that several of the more susceptible felt lumps come into their throats, and tears pricking at the backs of their eyes. Then the last hymn was sung; the final blessing pronounced; and in the vestry Elizabeth and Anne signed their maiden names for the last time.

Out into the clear September sunshine they came, and a murmur of admiration arose from the crowds outside at the beauty of the brides—Elizabeth fair and serene, Anne a little flushed, the wistful haunting atmosphere of her loveliness more marked than ever. A rain of autumn flowers greeted them as they hurried to their taxis, and then they were off.

In the old living-room at La Rochelle Javotte and Mason were awaiting them, and they all sat down to a merry meal, unhindered by the usual worry about times of trains which beset so many weddings. Half-way through the meal Peter Chester glanced across at Pauline, who had been, for her, preternaturally silent.

'What are you thinking about, Pollie?' he demanded.

'I was wondering,' replied Pauline, with dignity, 'if it would be possible to have a wedding like this in my new play. There seems to me to be a—an atmosphere about it!'

A shout of laughter interrupted her, but she waited until it had subsided, and then went on, 'I am so glad to see a wedding such as this. I have hitherto lacked experience!'

'You shall write the play while you are with us,' Julian Ozanne promised her, a twinkle in his eye belying the solemnity of his tones. 'I'll give you any amount of assistance; I've been married myself, and know all about it!'

There was not time for much more, as by that time every one had had enough to eat. Presently Elizabeth and Anne went upstairs to change, and when they came down again Javotte's son had sent up word that his smack was ready and waiting for Dr and Mrs Chester; and Paul knew that the yacht was awaiting them in the harbour of Port du St Pierre before she put to sea.

'Good-bye, Elizabeth,' said Janie, clinging to the sister who had been mother to her for so long. 'Oh, be happy, *ma bien-aimée*.'

'Good-bye, *ma mignonne*,' replied Elizabeth tenderly.

Then came Anne's turn; and when Elizabeth and Paul had gone, they all went down to the beach to wave 'farewell' to the picturesque smack as it slowly set sail with its burden of

happiness.

‘Poor La Rochelle!’ said Janie, as at length they turned back to the cottage. ‘It looks so lonely!’

‘It is the richer for the happiness you gave it,’ replied Mrs Atherton, ‘and I think this last day will often come back to its memory, even though it has said “good-bye” to you all!’

‘I like to think that.’ Janie’s face was even more pixy-like than usual as she turned it up to her friend. ‘I shall always love little La Rochelle, even though I say “adieu” to it.’

A week later they came out of the old heavy door for the last time. The Athertons had gone back to England some days previously; the Lucys had returned to Jersey the day before. As Pauline said, every one seemed to be going. Julian Ozanne locked the door; they came out of the gate, and Janie stood for a moment looking at the low gray stone cottage which had been their home for nearly twelve happy months—happy, in spite of trouble and grief.

‘Good-bye, little La Rochelle; good-bye!’ she said earnestly.

Then she turned, and La Rochelle was left to its old memories by the shores of Rocquaine Bay.

THE END.

[End of *The Maids of La Rochelle*, by Elinor Mary Brent-Dyer]