HENRY GEORGE KEENE

ST. GEORGE'S CROSS; OR, ENGLAND ABOVE ALL

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Keene H.

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Содержание

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TO THE READER

The following little tale is neither pure fiction nor absolute historic truth; being, indeed, little more than an attempt to show a picture of Channel Island life as it was some two centuries ago. For the background we have been beholden to Dr. S.E. Hoskins, whose "*Charles the Second in the Channel Islands*" may be commended to all who may feel tempted to pursue the matter further.

August, 1887.

PROLOGUE

On a bright day in September of the year 1649 Mr. William Prynne, a suspended Member of Parliament, sat at the window of his lodging in the Strand, London, where the Thames at high water brimmed softly against the lawn, bearing barges, wherries, and other small craft, and gleaming very pleasantly in the slant brightness of an autumn noon.

The unprosperous politician looked upon the fair scene with quiet cheer. He was a man of austere aspect, and looked farther advanced in middle life than was actually the case. For he was bearing the unjust weight of a double enmity; and though his after conduct showed that the world's injustice by no means threw him off his moral balance, yet it is impossible for a man to get into a position where every one but himself seems wrong and not acquire a certain sense of solitude, which, with a grave nature, will make him graver still. By the Cavaliers he had been pilloried, mutilated, fined and imprisoned: expelled from the University where he was a Master-of-Arts, driven out of the Inn-of-Court in which he had been a Bencher. By the Roundheads, on the other hand, he had been visited with a later and more intolerable wrong, exclusion from that House of Commons which was the only surviving seat of sovereignty. Thus excommunicated on all sides, Prynne still preserved his free and buoyant nature. He had the voice and impulsive manner of a young man; while there was a consistent moderation in his opinions which—however it might weigh against his success as a party-man—yet sprang from conviction, and was a guard against misanthropy.

In his apparel he was plain but not slovenly. His eyes were eager; his lean face, branded with the first letters of the words "Seditious Libeller," was shaded by straight falls of lank hair, streaked here and there with grey, that was combed down on either side of his head to hide the loss of his ears.

Hearing a step without, Prynne laid down the book he had been reading—a pamphlet by John Milton—and advanced, with an air of polite reserve, to meet the entering visitor. This was a man more than ten years his junior, short of stature, with clear-cut features and thoughtful blue eyes contrasting with hair and moustache dark almost to blackness. His neatly brushed garments had a threadbare gloss, and his broad linen falling collar, though white and clean, was somewhat frayed. But his bearing was high-bred and distinguished, with an air of sober yet resolute earnestness. He wore no sword, and the hat which he carried in his hand was plain of shape and without adornment.

"M. de Maufant," said Prynne, with the shy courtesy of a student, "will admire that I should seek speech of him after sundry passages that have been between us."

"Alack! Mr. Prynne," answered the stranger, with a slight foreign accent, "since your captivity in Mont Orgueil many things have befallen. 'Tis not alone I, Michael Lempriere the exile, changed from the state of Seigneur de Maufant and Chief Magistrate of Jersey to that of an outcast deriving a precarious subsistence from teaching French in your Babylon here; but methinks you yourself have had a fall too, since the days you speak of: when you left Jersey for London you came here in a sort of triumph. But by this time, methinks, you must be cured of your high hopes: I say it not for offence, but rather out of sorrow."

"Why no," answered the ex-Member. "Though I be no longer one of yonder assembly, I am still a denizen of London; and, let me tell you, a citizen of no mean city. And I bear my share in advancing the great cause on which so many of us are now engaged. Have you not read what Mr. Milton hath said here as touching this?" And he took up the book which he had dropped in the window-seat "It is well said, as you will find."

Motioning Lempriere to a chair, he took another and read as follows:—

"'Behold now this vast city, a city of refuge, the mansion-house of liberty, encompassed and surrounded with its protection … pens and hands there, sitting by their studious lamps, musing, searching, revolving new notions and ideas, wherewith to present, as with their homage and their fealty, the approaching reformation.' As he saith a little further on, the fields of our harvest are white

already; and it is your privilege and mine that live among this wise and active people, to see it coming, perhaps to put in a sickle. The pamphlet is becoming a force stronger than the sword; and those Ironsides and Woodenheads who turn us out of the Chamber where our fellow citizens had seated us, may find an ill time before them when our work is over. But our work will be the work of freedom."

What more would have been said, now that Prynne was setting forth on his dearly-loved hobby, of which the name was *Cedant arma*, is unknown; for the serving-man entered at this moment with a simple but plentiful repast carried on his head from the adjacent tavern; and even Prynne's eagerness was dashed with caution enough to keep him to ordinary topics of talk so long as the man was in the room. But Lempriere had seen and heard enough to put him in good humour with his host. The intimacy of the latter with the Carterets, and a suspicion of general lukewarmness in the popular cause, had begotten old enmities, of which Lempriere, in the long probation of failure, exile, and poverty, had already learned to be ashamed; and to see the man he had misjudged, looking him eagerly and earnestly in the face as he uttered the language of a genuine reformer, completed the Jerseyman's conversion. After the servant had brought pipes and glasses and left the gentlemen to their tobacco and their wine, their talk grew more familiar as they looked at the flowing river, and the deserted towers of Lambeth away on the other side.

"The truth is," said Prynne, "that I received from the cavaliers of your island kindnesses that I cannot forget; yet as touching the trial and execution of the late King, if I have gainsayed aught of the other side, yet I need not repeat that I have ever been a friend to Liberty, as witness these indentures," and with a starched smile he pointed to the marks upon his face. "I know that you have reason to be angry with Sir George Cartwright...."

"Let us not talk of him," answered the other, with a flush on his swarthy cheek. "I lose all patience when I think of the many mischiefs entailed upon my country by the cruelty and greed of that house. When his late uncle, your protector, made Sir George a substitute in the Government of the island, he was but 23 years old: but old enough to be a serpent more subtle than any that went before; and see what he hath made of our little Eden! He and his men the servants, not of the people, but of Jermyn; prelacy and malignancy spread abroad. In the twelve parishes seven Captains are Carterets: and the Knight himself, beside his Deputyship, Bailiff and Receiver of the revenues, which he holds at an easy farm."

"I conceive that your Eves and Adams should lose their virtue with such a tempter; yet, had you and Dumaresq been less bent on Sir Philip's ruin, and on grasping his powers and profits, if you can pardon my plain speaking, I will be bold to say Sir Philip was no friend to tyranny, and would, under God's pleasure, have been still alive to forward the cause of reasonable freedom."

"I will follow your good example and use equal plainness, Mr. Prynne. This wise man hath said that 'the simple believeth every word.' But if we should do likewise and believe every word that is told of you, we might say 'that Mr. Prynne was seduced by Sir Philip and Lady Carteret when he was their prisoner in Mont Orgueil.' And farther, it hath even been said that at that time you sent out a recantation to the King of that for which you suffered."

"It skills not," answered the host, with evident self-control, "it skills not to rake into that which is passed."

"Neither did I seek to do so," rejoined the Jerseyman, "I seek no offence, nor mean any. But, as touching the Knight's spirit, and whether he sought the welfare of our island with singleness of heart, let me have leave to be of mine own mind. Will you not let me take the affirmation from the doings of Sir George, his nephew, and present successor? Where is the place of profit that he hath not bestowed upon a kinsman or creature of his own?"

"Methinks," said Prynne, shrewdly, "there be others than he who would gladly share those barley loaves and few small fishes."

"That may be," said Lempriere. "The labourer is worthy of his hire, to give you Scripture for Scripture. But what will you say to the piracies by which the traffic of the seas is intercepted, and Mr.

Lieutenant daily enriched by plunder from English vessels? Surely, even the charitable protecting of Mr. Prynne will hardly serve to cover such a multitude of sins!"

The conference was once more growing warm, when fortunately, it was abridged by the sudden entrance of a man not unlike Lempriere in general appearance, though taller and many years his junior. He wore a steel cap, a gorget, and a buff coat; and received a hearty welcome from the Jerseyman, by whom he was presented to Prynne.

"Captain Le Gallais is newly arrived from our island," said Lempriere, "and I made bold to leave word that I was here, in case of his coming to my lodgings while I tarried with you. He brings me news of 'domus et placens uxor,'" added the speaker, taking with a sad smile the letter which Le Gallais handed him. The servant having brought a third long stalked glass and placed it on the table, left the room once more, as the visitor, unbuckling his long basket-hilted sword, threw himself into a high-backed chair, and stretched his limbs, as one who rests after long travel.

"I am come post," said he, "from Southampton. There is that to do in Jersey which it imports the rulers of this land to know."

"That may well be," observed Lempriere, who shared his countryman's idea of the importance of their little island. "But how fares my Rose? A wanderer may love his Ithaca, but he loves his wife most. Have I your leave, Mr. Prynne, to examine this missive?"

Prynne bowed, and Lempriere cut open his letter.

"Penelope maketh such cheer as she may," he added, after glancing at the contents: "but I see nothing of your mighty news, Alain."

"The letter was written before I learned the same. The return of Ulysses did not then seem so far as it does now."

"Leave riddling, Alain, and let us know the worst."

"The worst is, Charles Stuart is in S. Helier, with a large power, warmly received by Sir George, and holding the island as a tool of Jermyn and the Queen, if not a pensioner of France. I saw his barge row into the harbour at high tide, followed by others laden with silken courtiers and musicians; horse-boats and cook-boats swelled the train; the great guns of the Castle fired salvoes, and the militia stood to their arms upon the quay, with drums beating, fifes squeaking, and our own company from Saint Saviour's ranked among the rest, green leaves in their hats and round the poles of their colours."

Lempriere leant his head on his hand with a discomfited and despondent gesture. Prynne addressed him kindly:—

"Have a little patience, H. de Maufant," said he. "The sun shines in heaven though earth's clouds hide his face."

"Lukewarm Reuben!" cried the other, impatiently. "What comfort can I have from such as thou? While we talk my country is indeed undone: my wife perhaps a wanderer, and my lands and house given over to the enemy."

"Nay, but it need not be so," said Prynne. "The Rump that ruleth here, even were it a complete Parliament, cannot be an idol to you and yours. I have read your island laws. Those that say that the Parliament hath jurisdiction there must, sure, be strangely ignorant. And so witnesseth Lord Coke, no slave of the prerogative. Your islands are the ancient patrimony of the Crown: what hinders you from casting in your lot with Charles? For my part, I would willingly compound with him. Let him rule as he pleases there, provided he make not slaves of us."

"There spoke the self-loving Englishman," cried Le Gallais, whom respect for his seniors had hitherto kept silent. "If you speak of hindering, what is to hinder Sir George, now that he hath the King for backer, from confiscating all our remaining lands and applying the produce to fitting out a fleet which will ruin the trade of all England? It is a question for you also, you perceive."

"*Proximus Ucalegon*," said Lempriere, whom nothing could long restrain from airing his classical knowledge. "But leave me to speak to Mr. Prynne in terms that will not offend, and that he cannot fail to understand. Harkye, Mr. Prynne," he said, turning to his host and resuming use of

the English language in lieu of the patois in which he had addressed his countryman. "You love the Commonwealth, I know; your many sufferings in that behalf show you a true friend to the cause of English liberty. But to me it appears that this cause cannot be fitly separated from that of your small satellite yonder."

"I do not seek to deny it," answered Prynne. "Now this good fellow," pursued Lempriere, laying his hand on his young friend's shoulder, "(and let his zeal make amends for his blunt manner) hath brought tidings, from which it appears that our affairs are in such a state as calls for your interposition. And I learn moreover from this letter that Henry Dumaresq is stirring, and the greed and grasping of the Carterets have made them many ill-wishers. Nevertheless, Pierre Benoist hath been taken, and under torture may readily betray our plans. On the other hand, he that is called King there, the young Charles Stuart, is under the regimen of his mother, who is the tool of France. Between them all Jersey may be lost to the Commonwealth before a blow be stricken."

"Nay," cried Prynne, interrupting, "I would not have you say so. We English are neither braggarts nor cowards. Whitelocke knoweth the mind of Mazarin; and I pray you note that Cromwell, though as a man of State I do not uphold him, is a soldier whose zeal never sleeps, and who cares more for the welfare of England and such as depend upon her than any Stuart will ever do, or undo. I sent for you, indeed, on this very behalf; not minded to show you all the springs of politics, yet to give you a word of comfort and to ask of you a word of friendliness in return, yea, word for word, an you will."

The politician's keen eye softened as he looked at the forlorn exile. The latter turned abruptly, as if to reveal no corresponding emotion: then, looking straight before him, said in low tones:—

"For comfort, God knows whether or no it be needed. My place and power are lost—such as they were—a price is set upon my head by those who slew Maximilian Messervy. My wife—who is to me like the apple of mine eye—is alone, battling with hostile authority, and with tenants too ready to profit by her helpless condition. I am as one encompassed by quicksands, and nigh to be swallowed up. I am tempted to say with David, 'Vain is the help of man.' Do you show me a bridge of escape?" he asked, turning to Prynne, "what is your meaning? I pray you speak it out."

"You cannot," said his host, "have forgotten Serjeant-Major Lydcott of this Army; and how with a slender company he landed on your island six years ago. It was about the end of August, 1643, I remember well, for Sir Philip had been dead bare three days and indeed was not yet buried: and the castles of Jersey still held out for the Cartwrights. I said then that, had Lydcott but taken three hundred of our sober, God fearing soldiers, he would have established himself as master of the island on behalf of the Commonwealth. George Cartwright had never come over from S. Maloes; the pirates of S. Aubin would have been confounded and brought to nought; Sir Peter Osborne had never held Castle Cornet in Guernsey (to the shame and sorrow of the well-affected in that island), had they but been backed and aided from Jersey. Even as things were, and with no more help but what he got from you—I say it not to offend you—how much did not Lydcott do? Three days after his landing he called together the States and opened before them his commission from the Earl of Warwick, Warden of the Isles and Lord High Admiral of England. You were present and presiding, as you must needs remember, together with all but three Jurats, all the Constables save one, and nearly half the Rectors. Without a dissentient voice you administered the oath of Lieutenant-Governor to Lydcott, yourself standing forth as Bailiff and sworn the first. What hindered you then from holding fast? Nothing but want of a backbone of strength. The militia, whom you now hold malignant, swore allegiance to a man, save and except one Colonel who was broke then and there. You may say George Cartwright drove you out; but what did he do that could justify your flight? I must be plain with you: with all outward and visible signs of power you gave way before three open boats and a mouldy ruin."

"We gave way," said Lempriere with an indignant flush, "because we were forsook by them on whom we leaned."

"I know it," pursued Prynne, "I say it not to blame you, but to blame the lukewarm weakness of those who held authority there on the part of the Commonwealth: for had Lydcott been ever so able

and willing he lacked support from hence. We had our hands full of graver business. Only I neither desire nor expect such things should be done a second time. There be those now in power that will take better order. The future of your islands, the ties that bind them to us, were not known six years ago; and our friends—as I have already said—had other matters, more pressing, to attend to. But now is not then. Now, that a violent policy that I cannot altogether undertake to defend hath shorn the strength of tyranny, and that fair deceiver the late King—whom none could safely trust or utterly despise—is by that blow taken out of our path, we are free to set matters straight around us. It is therefore not to be endured that your small wasps' nest yonder should continue to infest our ambient ocean with her petty and poisonous alarms. This is the word I have to give thee—friendly meant, though thou mayest have been hitherto no friend to me. Jersey will be brought under the power of the Commonwealth, and you will be among the instruments of its reduction. I seek a word from you in return for mine."

"Sir," said the bewildered exile, "you have spoken hardly, but, I believe, with a meaning kinder than seemed: a good intent makes amends for a harsh manner, and a bitter drink may strengthen the heart, as has this day been done to mine by the mingled counsel and reproof that have been poured out for me. I seek not to pry into your affairs of State, and what I have heard Le Gallais hath heard also. I therefore make no scrutiny as touching the means to be employed; the end we will take thankfully according as promised. If the Parliament and the Lord General be so minded, I make no doubt but we shall return to our home. But as regards the word you seek from me, I would fain know to what it shall relate. You seek, I presume, to make conditions with me: let me know, in the hearing of my friend, what they be. That we of the island shall be true and faithful servants to the Commonwealth of England, not seeking to intermeddle in matters that may be beyond our concernment, I would gladly undertake for myself and for all with whom my wishes may have weight: but methinks it shall hardly need. And perchance your Honour may intend to glance at some more private matter?"

"I do so," answered the politician. "I have never hidden from you the love that I bore for good Sir Philip living, nor how dear I hold his memory now that he is dead. I would not that any who were of his party should suffer damage when the cause shall prosper in the island. You have heard of Cromwell's present doings in Ireland: all the world knows what things are being wrought in that unhappy country, where the Lord Ormonde hath been another Cartwright and hath met with an overthrow the like of which I pretell for his Jersey antitype. Cartwright is as unbending and will hold out to the last.

"Mont Orgueil, indeed, can make no opposition to a regular siege: we are not now in the days of Du Guesclin. But it may be otherwise with Elizabeth Castle. Like her whose name she bears that fortress is a virgin, and not without a struggle will she yield. Cromwell loves not such defences. Let us be there when the hour comes, and let us combine to keep the garrison from perishing by the swords of our friends."

"Gladly will I do my best in aid of mercy," answered Lempriere, looking much relieved by the nature of the request. "If that be all that your Honour hath to ask, I can have no hesitancy in giving a hearty and honest pledge in such behalf. Jersey is no Corsica; and we love not revenge, do we, Alain?"

Alain readily endorsing his chief's assertion, Prynne continued:—

"It is not all. I have to pray you for the Lieutenant himself; misguided and grasping as you deem him, he is of my deceased friend's name and blood."

"Alack, Mr. Prynne!" answered Lempriere, "have you quite forgotten what I owe to that blood and name? And I speak not in this for myself only. There are the spirits of the Bandinels before me; unhappy victims of George Carteret's revenge. There is the shade of my friend Maximilian Messervy, judged by an unlawful and corrupt Court, executed under warrant of one who had no warrant for himself."

In his excitement Lempriere had forgotten to quote Latin; he began to pace the floor of the room. Prynne also rose and leaned by the window, looking out at the shrubs standing dark and blotted against the evening light that lay on the smooth water.

"Take not your example," he said; "from those whose deeds you abhor, neither make your enemies your pattern. Recollect who it is that hath said, 'Vengeance is mine:' and in the hour of your triumph remember to spare. Come, give me your word, willingly. I am doing much for you, more than you are aware. I call to mind some solemn words that I have heard Mr. Milton quote:—

"The quality of Mercy is not strained,
It droppeth as the gentle dew from Heaven
Upon the place beneath: it is twice blessed,
It blesseth him that gives and him that takes."

"Let your promise to bless come as freely as the dews that are falling out there on my little grass-plot. Peace is upon the world—let peace be in our hearts also!"

The vehement controversial voice changed and became musical as it uttered the words. The fervour of an unwonted mood had brought something of a mist into the speaker's eye; persuasion hung upon his gestures, and the voice of private rancour sank before the pleading of his lips. As the Jerseyman remained silent, Prynne went to the table and filled the glasses from the flagon of Rhenish wine that stood there.

"We Presbyterians," he said, "are not given to the drinking of toasts. But 'tis no common occasion. England's wars are over, may there be peace upon Israel. Let us drink one glass together, and let us join in the blessing of old, invoking it on our land:—'Peace be within thy walls and prosperity within thy palaces: for my brethren and companions' sake!'"

The guests followed their host's example, and seemed to share his mood. Then, setting down their empty glasses, the three men parted in more loving-kindness, it might well be, than what had marked some early stages of their conversation. Prynne, when left alone, called for candles and sat down to his writing-table. The Jerseymen walked together towards Temple Bar.

"Knowest thou, *mon cher*," said the Ex-Bailiff in the island language, "a heartier friend than one of these English that seem so cold?"

"But tell me, I pray thee, wherefore they call the present master of our island by an English name? For surely yonder gentleman said 'Cartwright,' which is a name not of Jersey but of England." "They are stupid, Alain, that is all; and they think to weigh the world in their own scales. But whether we call him Cartwright or Carteret, it is equally hard to pardon his voracity. He is like Time—*Edax rerum.* Nevertheless, I feel as if it was not only the sight of you and news from home that had made me of such good cheer to-night: but that I owe something of it to Mons. Prynne; aye! thanks to his schooling and a readiness to perform what he has made me promise, should Carteret ever stand at my disposal. The time may be near or it may be far; but I feel that it must come."

"And then," asked Alain shyly, "shall not I too have something to expect from thee: when thou art Bailiff again, and a man high in power, will thou still be willing to give me thy sister-in-law?"

"Parbleu!" cried Lempriere, "if maids could be given like passports. But Marguerite will have her way; it is for thee, *coquin*, to make her way thine."

Thus, jointly labouring at airy castles, the pair of islanders pricked their steps through the dirty and dimly-lighted streets till they reached a squalid row of houses on Tower Hill, where was situated the only lodging within the present means of the Seigneur of Maufant.

"To-night thou must share my chamber, *telle quelle*," he said. "'Tis a poor one, as thou mayest suppose. *Infelix, habitum temporis hujus habe?*"

"It is all one to me," said Alain, lightly; "whether here or at Maufant thou art always good."

As they neared the door a voice came to them from the shadow of a projecting oriel:—

"Have a care, Jerseymen! You are betrayed."

They ran to the shaded corner; but the moon was young and low and gave but little light in the narrow street. A figure, seemingly that of a tall man, was seen to glide away into another street, but

they failed to recognise it or trace its departing movements. Silently, and with downcast looks they sought the entry of Lempriere's lodging, the door of which he opened with a key that he carried in his pocket. Striking a light from flint and steel on the hall table, Lempriere kindled a hand-lamp, and led the way into a small chamber on the ground floor, where they wrapped themselves in their cloaks and lay down on a pallet in the corner. The younger man, fatigued with travel, was soon asleep; Lempriere, with more to think of, passed great part of the night in wakeful anxiety. Before he finally sank to slumber he had resolved to send Alain back at once to Jersey.

ACT I.
The King

In 1649, when Charles II. was uncertain as to what steps he should take on the death of his father, it was considered that the best and safest place for his temporary residence was the Castle at S. Helier, in Jersey, known by the name of Queen Elizabeth, where he had already lived for a short time on an earlier occasion. Founded by order of the Sovereign whose name it bore, it stands on a rocky islet, once a promontory of the mainland, but long since insulated by every high tide. At low water it communicated with the town by a natural causeway of shingly rock called "The Bridge," commanded by its own guns. On the Western curve of the bay, nearly two miles off as the bird flies, was the small town of S. Aubin, guarded by a smaller fortress. The entire bay was protected, by the batteries of these two places, against the entrance of hostile shipping. Circumstances, not now entirely traceable but connected probably with defensive considerations, had taken its ancient preponderance from Gorey, on the eastern coast, which had once been the seat of administration; and thus commenced the importance of S. Helier, though in nothing like the present activity of its quays and wharves, or the throng of its streets and markets. Above the head of the "Bridge," indeed, the view from the North face of the Castle met with no buildings till it struck upon the Town Church, an ancient but plain structure of the fourteenth century, whose square central tower, although by no means of lofty elevation, formed a landmark for mariners out at sea by reason of a beacon that was always kept burning there by night. At the foot of this tower nestled a cemetery containing the tombs of "the rude forefathers" of what had been, till lately, indeed little more than a hamlet. On the southern aspect of this, facing the castle and the sea, the enclosure was marked by a strong granite breastwork armed with cannons mounted *en barbette*. These pieces were pointed, for the most part, on the bridge, or causeway leading to the Castle, into which they were capable of sending salvos of round-shot, as in fact they had often done a few years before. The rest of the cemetery was strongly walled, though without guns. To the north of the Church ran narrow streets, sloping gently upward from the seaside. The houses of these streets were built of the local granite, hewn and hammered flat and without projection or decoration, and with no other relief but what was afforded by small rectangular lattice-windows. They were usually of two storeys, crowned by high-pitched thatched roofs, with here and there a tiny dormer window. Some were shops or taverns, among which were interspersed the residences of the burgesses and the town houses of the rural gentry. Fronted by miry roadway, or at best an occasional strip of rough boulder pavement, over which wheeled carriages could rarely pass, these lines of houses had no form or comeliness, save what might be due to an occasional bit of small flower-garden before the few that were large and inhabited by persons in comparatively easy circumstances. Farther back the ground rose more rapidly and showed some scattered suburban houses. The "Town Hill" to the east, the "Gallows Hill" to the west, completed the amphitheatre. Up the main hollow ran a road leading due north to the Manor and Church of Trinity parish in the interior of the island, and terminating on the north coast in Boulay Bay, a fine natural harbour, which was the nearest point of embarkation for England. The whole island, scarcely less than the town, bore an appearance of defence, almost of inaccessibility; the manors, farm houses, and even many of the fields, being surrounded by granite walls, and capable of arresting the progress of an invader, unless in great force. Each of the twelve parish churches contained the arsenal of the local militia; and all things betokened a hardy population, ready to do battle against all intruders.

The titular Governor, Lord Jermyn, was an absentee, following the fortunes of the widowed Queen, Henrietta Maria, in France. The actual administration, both civil and military, was in the hands of a naval officer of experience, Sir George Carteret, or de Carteret, cousin and brother-in-law to the Seigneur of S. Owen, a large manor on the western side of the island. This family, distinguished

in island history ever since it abandoned its fief of Carteret on the coast of Normandy to follow the fortunes of John Lackland, when the Duchy was confiscated by Philip Augustus, was by far the most powerful in the island. Its only possible rival, the house of Lempriere, of Maufant, had espoused warmly the cause of the Parliament, and had consequently met with reverses when the Carterets, who were royalist, effected the revolution mentioned in our Prologue.

It only remains to be added that the people at large were not at all warmly attached to either of the parties to the Civil War. The language of the majority was an old form of French, now reduced to the condition of a patois; the more educated classes studied the laws and language of France. The proceedings of the Courts and the services of the Church were conducted in modern French, and the sympathies of the community were divided between a mundane attachment to England, and a religious leaning to the creed of the Huguenots, of whom a great number had sought refuge on their shores. Hence the Jersey folks were indifferently submissive to royalty, the only form of English government of which, till these days, they had heard; but they by no means shared the High-Church fervour which had animated the late unfortunate King. Their ultimate motive, as is common to human nature, was for their own interests; and although the influence of the Carterets had kept them, for the most part, nominal followers of the cause of royalty, men like Michael Lempriere and Prynne had good reason for believing that they would, in the long run, favour those who seemed the best friends to Jersey. Let them not be blamed for this. Their love for England was very much founded upon fear of France. By observing the attitude of the Scottish borderers of a slightly earlier period, an Englishman of the seventeenth century could imagine the attitude of the Jersey mind towards the "Normans," by which name they were accustomed to designate their feudal and aggressive Catholic neighbours the Lords and Ministers of the French Kingdom. Even as the Grahams and Scotts of Tweedside stood at arms against each other on either bank of the dividing stream, so did the de Gruchys and Malets, the Le Feuvres and de Quettevilles, on either side the Channel. The danger that was nearest was the most formidable; and the Channel Islanders were ready to side with England much as the Saxon Scots of the Lothians came to make common cause with the Celts of the Highlands.

These explanations may appear tedious: but the reader is implored to pardon them; for without such he could not realise the passions which are exemplified in this little story. Long exposed to invasion, the Jerseymen of the middle ages had handed down to their descendants an abhorrence of France which was fomented by the stories of persecution brought to them by Huguenot refugees; and which, indeed, has hardly yet completely died out among the rural population. Thus sentiment and interest kept the islanders attached to England by a two-fold cord; careless whether their immediate leaders were Cavaliers, as in Jersey, or Parliamentarians, as in the neighbouring island of Guernsey, where the royal Governor was beleaguered in Castle Cornet.

For reasons arising out of this state of things, Carteret did not leave the protection of the King to the unaided loyalty of the local militia. Cooped up in the narrow limits of the Castle rock were no less than three hundred Englishmen and women attached to the Court, and, in addition, a strong force of Irish and Cornish soldiers who had been brought over by Charles on his former visit, as Prince of Wales, after the battle of Naseby. His Sacred Majesty—*de jure* of England, Scotland, and Ireland, King, to say nothing of France, whose lilies were blazoned on his scutcheon—was *de facto* monarch of this little island plot of 45 square miles; and his state was at least equal to his temporary sway. The accommodation of the Castle was, in truth, but small; but it was the best that the occasion afforded; the royal palace consisting of a suite of small apartments vacated for the King's convenience by the Lieutenant-Governor, Sir G. Carteret, who had removed to the lower ward. S. Aubin, on the other horn of the bay, was the seat of the naval power; here lived the families of the officers of the corsair-squadron then constituting the Royal Navy. The rest of the King's following was billetted on farm-houses in the parishes nearest to the town. Yet, as a warning that all was not their own, four frigates and two line-of-battle ships, with a commission from the rebel government of London, and flying the broad pennant of Admiral Batten, cruised between Jersey and Guernsey, never far from sight,

although giving for the most part a wide berth to both the island castles, whose gunners watched them night and day.

Such was the position of affairs on a Sunday towards the end of September, a few days later than the events related in the Prologue. The morning had been wet and windy, and the sacredness of the day had joined to keep the men of those simple times from all activity save that connected with the services of religion. But, in spite of the weather, it had been judged wise and proper that Charles should show himself at Church on this, the first Sunday of his kingship in Jersey: and he accordingly attended worship at the Town Church of S. Helier's. The tide was low, and the royal cortège, muffled in their cloaks, rode or walked slowly along the causeway, and up the *glacis* that led to the entrance. The Rector was absent, his opinions being displeasing to the autocratic Carteret; but the Rev. Mr. La Cloche, Rector of S. Owen (the Carteret parish) was in charge; he was the Lieutenant-Governor's private Chaplain; and under strict orders had made splendid preparation for the illustrious congregation. The old temple had been swept and garnished. Laurel boughs and the beautiful flowers and fruits of the season hung from every arch and decorated every pillar. The aisles were covered with a thick natural carpet of fragrant rushes; before the pulpit were chairs for the King and his brother the Duke of York, and the space they stood on was tapestried with glowing colours. Cushioned tables supported the gilded bibles and prayer-books for the royal worshippers, who arrived precisely at eleven followed by their numerous train. Throwing off his wringing roquelaure Charles entered, plumed hat in hand, a young man of middle stature, erect and well-knit for his years—which were but nineteen—and with a countenance which, though even then wanting in flesh and bloom, was not unpleasing: framed in natural curls, and showing (to sympathetic observers) a noble and pleasing dignity often, it must be avowed, contrasting strongly with the mingled frivolity and cynicism that marked his words. Being in mourning for the event of January he was clothed in purple velvet without lace or embroidery. Over his doublet hung a short cloak with a star on the left breast, under which was a silk scarf, cloak and scarf being all of purple. The famous ribbon of the Garter round his left knee was the only bit of other colour visible. James, a few years younger, was similarly attired. Besides the two Princes the only other Knight of the Garter was the Earl of Southampton. The rest of the Lords and Gentlemen in Waiting were also in Court-mourning, and all without the smallest decoration.

After the conclusion of the Service the clergyman ascended the pulpit in his black gown. He took his text from the second book of Chronicles, c. 35, the end of the 24th verse:—"And all Judah and Jerusalem mourned for Josiah."

The turn of Mr. La Cloche's discourse may be in great measure anticipated. Setting forth the heinousness of rebellion and regicide, he dwelt upon the virtues of the Royal Martyr, his courage, his patience, his devotion to the Church. As was but natural in the circumstances, there followed an application to local politics. They were there, he informed his hearers (as the old lattices, shaken by the gale, rattled their accompaniment to his monotone) in the character of Englishmen; but he had to notice that to the existing rulers of England they owed no obedience. The so-called Parliament which had judged and murdered the late lamented Monarch, and which now claimed the right of ruling in his stead, was no divinely appointed head of affairs, not even representative of one Estate of the realm. Where were the Peers, the Lords Temporal who had ever formed part of the Government of England, the Lords Spiritual who represented the Church of Christ? The House of Lords was now represented to them, there in the presence of the Honourable Sir George Carteret, Knight and Baronet, whom that High Chamber had set and appointed to bear rule in that Island. Still more had they before them their Sovereign, the Anointed of the Lord, without whose assent all Acts of State must ever be futile and rebellious. Yes, he was there, that Sacred head, covered and guarded by the loyal hearts and arms of one—only one—of his Norman Isles.

As the sermon came to an end the storm without showed signs of abatement; and by the time the blessing had been pronounced and the King and Prince had mounted their richly caparisoned horses, the wind had lulled and the September sun gleamed brightly out upon the attentive and orderly crowd.

On returning to the Castle Charles sate down to dinner, and a select portion of the more loyal Jersey society was admitted into the Hall to see the King at table. Only two places were set; and after a Latin grace had been pronounced by the Court-Chaplain, the dishes were taken, one by one, to the King and his brother, and whatever meats were approved were taken to the side-board and carved. The royal youths had stood with uncovered heads while grace was being said; but they replaced their hats when they sate down, and wore them throughout dinner. After they had dined the Page-in-waiting, a tall and handsome youth, richly attired, brought each of them a ewer and basin of parcel-gilt silver, with a fringed damask napkin; and after they had washed their hands a butler served them with Spanish and Gascon wines. Dessert having been placed upon the table and tasted, the princes withdrew; and then the hungry courtiers sate down to finish the repast.

Retired to his private sitting-room, Charles lay back on a window-seat, tooth-pick in hand, and looked out indolently on the sea. The waves scintillated and broke into white foam, among the brown rocks, which disappeared gradually under the rising tide; and the wings of glancing gulls shone out against a rain-cloud which was bearing off the recent storm. Below the dark pall the sky of the horizon glowed bright and clear as jade over the deepening line of the distant waters. At the King's feet sat the page who had served the princes at dinner, a bright rakish-looking young fellow named Thomas Elliot; apparently absorbed in the preparation of fishing-tackle, he was heedfully watching the face of his royal master out of the corner of his dare-devil eyes.

"Where is James, Tom?" asked presently the King.

"Gone to feed the hawks, Sir."

"One's own flesh-and-blood is poor company, he finds. By the Lord, Tom, this is no life for a Christian, be he man or boy. To be lunged round my good mother at the length of her apron-string seemed but dull work, and making love to the Grande Mademoiselle was indifferent pastime. But, odsfish, I would willingly be back there. In this God-forgotten corner you cannot see a petticoat on any terms, save the farthingale of Dame Carteret or her ancient housekeeper, as they cross the courtyard to give corn to the pigeons. James and I went out fishing yesterday, as far as S. Owen's pond; but no sport had we there but the chance of a broken head from a Puritan farmer."

"Why, what a plague did they want by laying hands on our anointed pate?"

"Ah! look you," said Charles, in his languid drawl, "We did but beg a cup of cider from his daughter. James hath a long face and a dull tongue for a boy of his age; but I warrant I spoke the wench fair for my part; and in French that had passed muster at Versailles. But 'tis a perverse and stiff-necked generation. The wench screamed in some language not understandable by us—Carribee it may be—but faith there was no difficulty about the farmer's meaning: he conjugated his fists, but we declined the encounter; and so we were quit as to grammar."

The manner of the speaker was in such dry and droll contrast with his matter that Elliot had no difficulty in according the sympathetic smile which is the tribute of the jovial and manly sycophant to a superior he wishes to please.

"And this is then, the escapade for which the *gros bonnets* down there have determined that you are not to stir out of this charming retreat without a guard, or suffer your sacred person to meet the air of the island without the hedge of an escort. But I have a plan to defeat them...."

Whatever projects the young men might be disposed to form for the purpose of eluding the prudent precautions of their seniors were for the moment cut short by a knocking at the door, which made them start aside like the disturbed conspirators that they were.

"Quick! vanish," muttered the King sharply; "behind the bureau there. If the comer be Nicholas let him not see thee here. He bears thee no good will."

As Elliot hurriedly obeyed, the door slowly opened, giving entrance to the Rector of S. Owen. The worthy clergyman still wore the gown and bands in which he had preached in the forenoon, and carried in his hand the four-cornered but boardless college-cap which formed part of the clerical costume of those days. Bestowing upon the youthful King a look whose awestruck humility was

at curious variance with the respective ages and appearance of the two, and making an awkward obeisance, Mr. La Cloche spoke:—

"I crave your pardon, Sir. Receiving no reply to my knock I presumed to enter, deeming mine errand an excuse."

Charles pointed to a seat and drew himself up with dignity:—

"It needs no further excuse, reverend Sir, say on, and fear nothing." La Cloche seated himself on the corner of the chair.

"It is my humble duty to warn your Majesty that Jersey is no suitable place for your residence," he said.

"We are very much of your mind," answered Charles, "but how made you the mighty discovery?"

"I have been dining," answered the clergyman, "in company with the Honourable Sir Edward Nicholas, Knight, Secretary of State to your Majesty. Certain of your Majesty's affectionate servants and well-wishers were of the party, as also the Lieutenant-Governor, who was the host. The discourse was grave; and albeit without permission of the gentlemen—yet, in virtue of mine office, I hope I but anticipate their humble duty to your Majesty, if I take upon myself to lay their thoughts before you."

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.