

## Chapter 9

### At Sea.

The following day was somewhat calmer, although the gale still continued. The sun had, however, risen through a bank of orange clouds, tingeing with its cheerful rays the crests of the black waves. Watch was impatiently kept from the different look-outs. Towards eleven o'clock in the morning a ship, with sails full set, was signalled as in view; two others followed at the distance of about half a knot. They approached like arrows shot from the bow of a skillful archer; and yet the sea ran so high that their speed was as nothing compared to the rolling of the billows in which the vessels were plunging first in one direction and then in another. The English fleet was soon recognized by the line of the ships, and by the color of their pennants; the one which had the princess on board and carried the admiral's flag preceded the others.

The rumor now spread that the princess was arriving. The whole French court ran to the harbor, while the quays and jetties were soon covered by crowds of people. Two hours afterwards, the other vessels had overtaken the flagship, and the three, not venturing perhaps to enter the narrow entrance of the harbor, cast anchor between Le Havre and La Heve. When the maneuver had been completed, the vessel which bore the admiral saluted France by twelve discharges of cannon, which were returned, discharge for discharge, from Fort Francis I. Immediately afterwards a hundred boats were launched; they were covered with the richest stuffs,

and destined for the conveyance of the different members of the French nobility towards the vessels at anchor. But when it was observed that even inside the harbor the boats were tossed to and fro, and that beyond the jetty the waves rose mountains high, dashing upon the shore with a terrible uproar, it was readily believed that not one of those frail boats would be able with safety to reach a fourth part of the distance between the shore and the vessels at anchor. A pilot-boat, however, notwithstanding the wind and the sea, was getting ready to leave the harbor, for the purpose of placing itself at the admiral's disposal.

De Guiche, who had been looking among the different boats for one stronger than the others, which might offer a chance of reaching the English vessels, perceiving the pilot-boat getting ready to start, said to Raoul: "Do you not think, Raoul, that intelligent and vigorous men, as we are, ought to be ashamed to retreat before the brute strength of wind and waves?"

"That is precisely the very reflection I was silently making to myself," replied Bragelonne.

"Shall we get into that boat, then, and push off? Will you come, De Wardes?"

"Take care, or you will get drowned," said Manicamp.

"And for no purpose," said De Wardes, "for with the wind in your teeth,

as it will be, you will never reach the vessels."

"You refuse, then?"

"Assuredly I do; I would willingly risk and lose my life in an encounter against men," he said, glancing at Bragelonne, "but as to fighting with oars against waves, I have no taste for that."

"And for myself," said Manicamp, "even were I to succeed in reaching the ships, I should not be indifferent to the loss of the only good dress which I have left, - salt water would spoil it."

"You, then, refuse also?" exclaimed De Guiche.

"Decidedly I do; I beg you to understand that most distinctly."

"But," exclaimed De Guiche, "look, De Wardes - look, Manicamp - look yonder, the princesses are looking at us from the poop of the admiral's vessel."

"An additional reason, my dear fellow, why we should not make ourselves ridiculous by being drowned while they are looking on."

"Is that your last word, Manicamp?"

"Yes."

"And then yours, De Wardes?"

"Yes."

"Then I go alone."

"Not so," said Raoul, "for I shall accompany you; I thought it was understood I should do so."

The fact is, that Raoul, uninfluenced by devotion, measuring the risk they run, saw how imminent the danger was, but he willingly allowed himself to accept a peril which De Wardes had declined.

The boat was about to set off when De Guiche called to the pilot.

"Stay," said he: "we want two places in your boat;" and wrapping five or six pistoles in paper, he threw them from the quay into the boat.

"It seems you are not afraid of salt water, young gentlemen."

"We are afraid of nothing," replied De Guiche.

"Come along, then."

The pilot approached the side of the boat, and the two young men, one after the other, with equal vivacity, jumped into the boat. "Courage, my

men," said De Guiche; "I have twenty pistoles left in this purse, and as soon as we reach the admiral's vessel they shall be yours." The sailors bent themselves to their oars, and the boat bounded over the crest of the waves. The interest taken in this hazardous expedition was universal; the whole population of Le Havre hurried towards the jetties and every look was directed towards the little bark; at one moment it flew suspended on the crest of the foaming waves, then suddenly glided downwards towards the bottom of a raging abyss, where it seemed utterly lost. At the expiration of an hour's struggling with the waves, it reached the spot where the admiral's vessel was anchored, and from the side of which two boats had already been dispatched towards their aid. Upon the quarter-deck of the flagship, sheltered by a canopy of velvet and ermine, which was suspended by stout supports, Henriette, the queen dowager, and the young princess - with the admiral, the Duke of Norfolk, standing beside them - watched with alarm this slender bark, at one moment tossed to the heavens, and the next buried beneath the waves, and against whose dark sail the noble figures of the two French gentlemen stood forth in relief like two luminous apparitions. The crew, leaning against the bulwarks and clinging to the shrouds, cheered the courage of the two daring young men, the skill of the pilot, and the strength of the sailors. They were received at the side of the vessel by a shout of triumph. The Duke of Norfolk, a handsome young man, from twenty-six to twenty-eight years of age, advanced to meet them. De Guiche and Bragelonne lightly mounted the ladder on the starboard side, and, conducted by the Duke of Norfolk, who resumed his place near them, they approached to offer their homage to the princess. Respect, and yet more,

a certain apprehension, for which he could not account, had hitherto restrained the Comte de Guiche from looking at Madame attentively, who, however, had observed him immediately, and had asked her mother, "Is not that Monsieur in the boat yonder?" Madame Henriette, who knew Monsieur better than her daughter did, smiled at the mistake her vanity had led her into, and had answered, "No; it is only M. de Guiche, his favorite." The princess, at this reply, was constrained to check an instinctive tenderness of feeling which the courage displayed by the count had awakened. At the very moment the princess had put this question to her mother, De Guiche had, at last, summoned courage to raise his eyes towards her and could compare the original with the portrait he had so lately seen. No sooner had he remarked her pale face, her eyes so full of animation, her beautiful nut-brown hair, her expressive lips, and her every gesture, which, while betokening royal descent, seemed to thank and to encourage him at one and the same time, than he was, for a moment, so overcome, that, had it not been for Raoul, on whose arm he leant, he would have fallen. His friend's amazed look, and the encouraging gesture of the queen, restored Guiche to his self-possession. In a few words he explained his mission, explained in what way he had become envoy of his royal highness; and saluted, according to their rank and the reception they gave him, the admiral and several of the English noblemen who were grouped around the princess.

Raoul was then presented, and was most graciously received; the share that the Comte de la Fere had had in the restoration of Charles II. was known to all; and, more than that, it was the comte who had been charged

with the negotiation of the marriage, by means of which the granddaughter of Henry IV. was now returning to France. Raoul spoke English perfectly, and constituted himself his friend's interpreter with the young English noblemen, who were indifferently acquainted with the French language. At this moment, a young man came forward, of extremely handsome features, and whose dress and arms were remarkable for their extravagance of material. He approached the princesses, who were engaged in conversation with the Duke of Norfolk, and, in a voice which ill concealed his impatience, said, "It is now time to disembark, your royal highness."

The younger of the princesses rose from her seat at this remark, and was about to take the hand which the young nobleman extended to her, with an eagerness which arose from a variety of motives, when the admiral intervened between them, observing: "A moment, if you please, my lord; it is not possible for ladies to disembark just now, the sea is too rough; it is probable the wind may abate before sunset, and the landing will not be effected, therefore, until this evening."

"Allow me to observe, my lord," said Buckingham, with an irritation of manner which he did not seek to disguise, "you detain these ladies, and you have no right to do so. One of them, unhappily, now belongs to France, and you perceive that France claims them by the voice of her ambassadors;" and at the same moment he indicated Raoul and Guiche, whom he saluted.

"I cannot suppose that these gentlemen intend to expose the lives of

their royal highnesses," replied the admiral.

"These gentlemen," retorted Buckingham, "arrived here safely, notwithstanding the wind; allow me to believe that the danger will not be greater for their royal highnesses when the wind will be in their favor."

"These envoys have shown how great their courage is," said the admiral.

"You may have observed that there was a great number of persons on shore who did not venture to accompany them. Moreover, the desire which they had to show their respect with the least possible delay to Madame and her illustrious mother, induced them to brave the sea, which is very tempestuous to-day, even for sailors. These gentlemen, however, whom I recommend as an example for my officers to follow, can hardly be so for these ladies."

Madame glanced at the Comte de Guiche, and perceived that his face was burning with confusion. This look had escaped Buckingham, who had eyes for nothing but Norfolk, of whom he was evidently very jealous; he seemed anxious to remove the princesses from the deck of a vessel where the admiral reigned supreme. "In that case," returned Buckingham, "I appeal to Madame herself."

"And I, my lord," retorted the admiral, "I appeal to my own conscience, and to my own sense of responsibility. I have undertaken to convey Madame safe and sound to France, and I shall keep my promise."



"But, sir - " continued Buckingham.

"My lord, permit me to remind you that I command here."

"Are you aware what you are saying, my lord?" replied Buckingham, haughtily.

"Perfectly so; I therefore repeat it: I alone command here, all yield obedience to me; the sea and the winds, the ships and men too." This remark was made in a dignified and authoritative manner. Raoul observed its effect upon Buckingham, who trembled with anger from head to foot, and leaned against one of the poles of the tent to prevent himself falling; his eyes became suffused with blood, and the hand which he did not need for his support wandered towards the hilt of his sword.

"My lord," said the queen, "permit me to observe that I agree in every particular with the Duke of Norfolk; if the heavens, instead of being clouded as they are at the present moment, were perfectly serene and propitious, we can still afford to bestow a few hours upon the officer who has conducted us so successfully, and with such extreme attention, to the French coast, where he is to take leave of us."

Buckingham, instead of replying, seemed to seek counsel from the expression of Madame's face. She, however, half-concealed beneath the thick curtains of the velvet and gold which sheltered her, had not listened to the discussion, having been occupied in watching the Comte de

Guiche, who was conversing with Raoul. This was a fresh misfortune for Buckingham, who fancied he perceived in Madame Henrietta's look a deeper feeling than that of curiosity. He withdrew, almost tottering in his gait, and nearly stumbled against the mainmast of the ship.

"The duke has not acquired a steady footing yet," said the queen-mother, in French, "and that may possibly be his reason for wishing to find himself on firm land again."

The young man overheard this remark, turned suddenly pale, and, letting his hands fall in great discouragement by his side, drew aside, mingling in one sigh his old affection and his new hatreds. The admiral, however, without taking any further notice of the duke's ill-humor, led the princesses into the quarter-deck cabin, where dinner had been served with a magnificence worthy in every respect of his guests. The admiral seated himself at the right hand of the princess, and placed the Comte de Guiche on her left. This was the place Buckingham usually occupied; and when he entered the cabin, how profound was his unhappiness to see himself banished by etiquette from the presence of his sovereign, to a position inferior to that which, by rank, he was entitled to. De Guiche, on the other hand, paler still perhaps from happiness, than his rival was from anger, seated himself tremblingly next to the princess, whose silken robe, as it lightly touched him, caused a tremor of mingled regret and happiness to pass through his whole frame. The repast finished, Buckingham darted forward to hand Madame Henrietta from the table; but this time it was De Guiche's turn to give the duke a lesson. "Have the

goodness, my lord, from this moment," said he, "not to interpose between her royal highness and myself. From this moment, indeed, her royal highness belongs to France, and when she deigns to honor me by touching my hand it is the hand of Monsieur, the brother of the king of France, she touches."

And saying this, he presented his hand to Madame Henrietta with such marked deference, and at the same time with a nobleness of mien so intrepid, that a murmur of admiration rose from the English, whilst a groan of despair escaped from Buckingham's lips. Raoul, who loved, comprehended it all. He fixed upon his friend one of those profound looks which a bosom friend or mother can alone extend, either as protector or guardian, over the one who is about to stray from the right path. Towards two o'clock in the afternoon the sun shone forth anew, the wind subsided, the sea became smooth as a crystal mirror, and the fog, which had shrouded the coast, disappeared like a veil withdrawn before it. The smiling hills of France appeared in full view, with their numerous white houses rendered more conspicuous by the bright green of the trees or the clear blue sky.