

## A Ladder of Swords

realized also that he had offered her all he was able to offer to any woman.

She went now and put out both hands to him. "I shall ever pray God's blessing on the Lord of Rozel," she said, in a low voice.

"'Twould fit me no better than St. Ouen's sword fits his fingers. I'll take thine own benison, lady—but on my cheek, not on my hand as this day before at four of the clock." His big voice lowered. "Come, come, the hand thou kissed, it hath been the hand of a friend to thee, as Raoul Lemprière of Rozel said he'd be. Thy lips upon his cheek, though it be but a rough fellow's fancy, and I warrant, come good, come ill, Rozel's face will never be turned from thee. Pooh, pooh! let yon soldier-priest shut his eyes a minute; this is 'tween me and thee; and what's done before the world's without shame."

He stopped short, his black eyes blazing with honest mirth and kindness, his breath short, having spoken in such haste.

Her eyes could scarce see him, so full of tears were they, and, standing on tiptoe, she kissed him upon each cheek.