

Perhaps no cry is more striking, than the short and simple cry of the water-carrier. "The gift of God!" he says, as he goes along with his water-skin on his shoulder. It is impossible to hear this cry without thinking of the Lord's words to the woman of Samaria: "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith unto thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldst have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water." It is very likely that water, so invaluable, and so often scarce in hot countries, was in those days spoken of, as now, as the "gift of God," to denote its preciousness: if so, the expression would be exceedingly forcible to the woman, and full of meaning.



Left on the Isle of Sands.

IN TWO CHAPTERS.

CHAPTER I.—A STRANGE EXPERIENCE.

ONE morning, in the spring of 1598, there was strange excitement in a certain poor turf cottage on the outskirts of St. Malo, in France. In this cottage dwelt the goodwife Saintine, with her two sons, Jules and Ba'tiste. With tireless labor she and her boys made a living, in some sort, by selling in the markets of St. Malo the products of her scanty garden-plot. Her husband, Christophe Saintine, was a convict, shut up for life in the St. Malo prison. He was a powerful man, a blacksmith, and had been a good citizen until, in an evil day, his violent temper had led him to strike down a man in a street brawl.

The Marquis de la Roche, a great nobleman, was about to set forth for the wilds of New France, there to found a colony; and he had authority to select, in the French prisons, such convicts as he might deem suitable for colonists.

In those days it was thought that convicts would do as well as any one for the peopling of a new land; and on the same principle, the latest and poorest grain, as a rule, was that which men saved for the next year's seeding.

On the morning on which my story opens, Jules had run home to his mother with the news that she was summoned, with her boys, to the St. Malo prison, there to bid farewell to her husband, who had been drafted by La Roche as one of the St. Malo contingent.

This little Breton city, with its vigorous and daring stock, had supplied the Marquis with nearly a third of his party; and this one morning was allowed the colonists for their leave-takings.

There were sorrowful scenes at the prison, in the glaring, grey-walled, sandy yard; but in some cases the sorrow was not without consolation. Christophe Saintine had been, for all his roughness, a good husband and father, and to his family, who, as long as he was in St. Malo, could visit him from time to time, his exile to the unknown wilderness was like a sentence of death.

But to himself it was far otherwise. In the New World there was hope for him. After a period of labor for the settlement, each convict whose behavior had been good would be given lands of his own, whereon to make a home for himself and for his family left beyond the sea.

The old look of hopeless dejection vanished from the blacksmith's face as he told the stories he had heard of the fertility and beauty of that New World, where gold and silver, as they assured him, might be picked up among the pebbles of the brooks.

As the goodwife Saintine and her boys, their farewells said, took their reluctant way homeward to the little turf cottage in the outskirts, they were weeping heavily, but a ray of hope had crept back into their hearts; and in the heart of Jules something else gleamed besides that ray of hope.

Jules Saintine was an active lad of fifteen.

mother and brother in their sleep, and stole away. There was a great lump in his throat, and he dashed angrily from his eyes the tears that would gather and overflow. In the confusion on the quay and shipboard he went upon the ship without being observed, and succeeded in stowing himself away below.

At dawn the vessel was under way.

The ship was under the guidance of one Chetod, a noted Norman pilot. Besides her crew of hardy Norman and Breton marines, she carried La Roche a band of paid soldiers, a few voluntary colonists of broken fortune, fifty turbulent convicts, a great store of provision against famine and of baubles for trading with the savages, and hopes, fears and sorrows innumerable.

Not till the ship's wide sails had carried her beyond the last glimpse of the shores of France did the Marquis take his convicts out of irons. Even then their freedom was rigidly limited.

Then it was that Jules crept out of hiding, and trembled in uncertainty as to how he would be received.

Jules was a courageous boy, but he had little bravado, or that audacity which so nearly borders on insolence. He stole shyly up to the side of a sailor whom he knew, and stood gazing in painful suspense at his own wooden shoes.

The sailor stared at him in astonishment and gave a low whistle as the readiest expression of his surprise.

"What in the world brings you here, child? en?" he exclaimed, in a moment.

"I wanted to come with my father!" murmured the culprit, for the first time realizing his guilt.

"Your father's pretty well taken care of, fancy," answered the sailor with a harsh laugh. Then, after a pause, he continued, "Well, His Excellency you must go! If he says you shall be whipped, or dropped over the rail to swim ashore, that's your own lookout. I think he will have no place for boys on a venture like this!"

The feelings of Jules on hearing this speech from the sailor, and hardly to be described. Shuffling nervously, and trying to keep his feet on the reeling deck, he started to follow the sailor into the presence of the Marquis. His Excellency, in the full splendor of his uniform which he made a point of wearing officially a certain hours every day,

was standing on the quarter-deck, and looking backward somewhat wistfully toward the sweet shores of France.

With fright, and the first qualms of approaching seasickness, Jules was now a pitiable-looking object as the eyes of the Marquis fell upon him.

A few profoundly deferential words from the sailor, who, being boatswain, approached the commander directly, made clear the situation. It was evident that the Marquis de la Roche, now Viceroy of New France, did not want boys in his viceregalty at this early stage in its development. First his face was harsh, his voice like steel, as he began to rebuke the quaking boy; and Jules felt that if he got off with a terrible thrashing from the cat o'-nine-tails he would be marvellously fortunate.

Then something in the boy's face or some homely thought seemed to touch the haughty noblemen.

"See to it that you are obedient and diligent child!"



"SEE TO IT THAT YOU ARE OBEDIENT AND DILIGENT, CHILD!"

Ba'tiste was two years younger. Jules was a St. Malo boy, filled with the restless spirit of his race, and with stories of New World wonders heard from the lips of the sailors who frequented the city quays. The ship of La Roche was to sail in two days, and Jules, whose father was his hero, resolved that he would set sail with her.

He had many misgivings at the thought of leaving his mother and Ba'tiste; but his heart being set for New France, he easily deluded himself into a belief that it was a right thing to do. Ba'tiste, he argued, would be company for his mother, who would be able to get along well enough; while he would be a comfort to his father in that far world of wonders.

Under the circumstances, and impelled by his restless spirit, it was not hard to persuade himself that the course on which he was bent was just the one he ought to pursue.

The night before the ship was to sail he kissed his