

6 THE BATTLE OF THE STRONG

fires. Near by, some loitering sailors watched the yawl-rigged fishing craft from Holland, and the cod-fish-smelling cul-de-poule schooners of the great fishing company which exploited the far-off fields of Gaspé in Canada.

St. Heliers lay in St. Aubin's Bay, which, shaped like a horseshoe, had Noirmont Point for one end of the segment and the lofty Town Hill for another. At the foot of this hill, hugging it close, straggled the town. From the bare green promontory above, might be seen two-thirds of the south coast of the Island—to the right St. Aubin's Bay, to the left Grève d'Azette, with its fields of volcanic-looking rocks, and St. Clement's Bay beyond. Than this no better place for a watch-tower could be found; a perfect spot for the reflective idler and for the sailor-man who, on land, must still be within smell and sound of the sea, and loves that place best which gives him widest prospect.

This day a solitary figure was pacing back and forwards upon the cliff edge, stopping now to turn a telescope upon the water and now upon the town. It was a lad of not more than sixteen years, erect, well-poised, having an air of self-reliance, even of command. Yet it was a boyish figure too, and the face was very young, save for the eyes; these were frank but still sophisticated.

The first time he looked towards the town he laughed outright, freely, spontaneously; threw his head back with merriment, and then glued his eye to the glass again. What he had seen was a girl of about five years of age with a man, in La Rue d'Egypte, near the old prison, even then called the Vier Prison. Stooping, the man had kissed the child, and she, indignant, snatching the cap from his head, had thrown it into the stream running through the street. Small wonder that the lad on the hill grinned,