

Goron directed his steps to the second bark, where he was soon busily employed, seconded unwillingly enough by Lubert, from whom terror seemed to have taken away the little intelligence he possessed. During this time, the spectators reassembled on the pier, to communicate their fears, and condemn unanimously this rash enterprise.

The women especially, attracted by the announcement of this strange challenge, exclaimed that it was a shame thus to let Christians rush madly upon death, and endeavoured to excite the men present to oppose them, but Pierre shook his head.

'You women cannot understand these things,' he said seriously; 'it is a battle between them—their honour is concerned in it—and as for Marzou and Goron, they would sooner perish than draw back.'

His companions acquiesced in silence; but the women still declared that it was a sin in the sight of God, and endangered the soul as well as the body. At last some proposed to warn the Rector and Niette, and they immediately ran to seek them.

However, the two vessels had just put off, to gain by the oar the extremity of the jetty. They arrived there almost at the same time, and stopped to hoist their sails. This was a solemn moment for all the spectators. They looked with a feverish curiosity at the two boats, still under shelter of the mole, and separated only by a few fathoms from the furrows of the sea. When the sails rose along the masts, there was a general movement, interrupted by cries of terror. Marzou and Goron who were at the helm, turned towards the harbor, and saluted by waving their hats. Then almost at the same moment, the two boats which had passed the jetty and met the wind, set out like two race horses.

They had approached the great channel, where the current increased the danger, when Niette and the priest arrived on the pier. Perceiving the sails that were flying towards the South, the young girl uttered a cry, and clasped her hands. 'Jesus—too late,' murmured she; and leaned against the wall of the cemetery.

The old priest himself could not suppress an exclamation of grief. He soon gained from the assembled fishermen, the particulars of the challenge, and when he had heard all he asked in a low voice if the danger were indeed so imminent.

The fishermen looked at each other without replying, and shrugged their shoulders. At last, Pierre, who had followed the boats with his eyes, made a gesture of evil omen.

'Except the ebb tide aid them, all will be against them,' said he: 'the wind is still from the South, and it will be necessary for them to run with the current, or they will be in danger of foundering; without taking into account that if they approach the Isle, they will meet with squalls, and upset. As true as I have been baptized, if I were in their skins, I should have no more hope than in the mercy of the blessed Trinity.'