

When about to embark he was accosted by a mariner, by name Thomas, who having approached the king, presented him with a handsome gift, and thus addressed him:—“Sire, my name is Thomas, the pilot, and my father Stephen also followed the same occupation. He has served your Majesty well and long.—When William the conqueror sailed from this port, it was he who conducted the ship which bore your illustrious father across the sea; he fought under his banner; he aided him in the conflict, and under the blessing of heaven helped to achieve the victory. Permit me, then, oh gracious king, to have the same post which the good King William bestowed upon my father. I have at your royal service a brave ship; she is stout, newly built, and manned by fifty vigorous and expert seamen.” The king answered him—“Friend, I have already chosen a ship, and cannot change it; but, in order to testify our sense of your loyalty, and of the fidelity of your family to our royal house, we will confide to you the charge of transporting to our kingdom our two sons William and Richard, and our dearest daughter Adele. Guard them as you would ourselves—they are dearer to us than our life! You will likewise have a number of our principal nobility and courtiers, and the bulk of my treasure. Go now—be vigilant and be careful!”

The gallant bark which carried the monarch of Britain shortly after got under weigh. She was soon out of sight, and reached Northampton in safety early next morning.

The *Le Blanche Nef* unhappily remained behind; the sailors overjoyed at their good fortune in having so rich a freight, gave themselves up to all kinds of merriment, and to expressions of extravagant joy. Unfortunately a large quantity of wine was distributed among them. They surround the young princes, and testify their attachment and their pleasure by dancing and singing. At length the princes retire to rest, but the revelry and mirth continued on deck for some time after.

The signal for departure is given, and the ill-fated vessel is seen at last to sail. She shoots like an arrow through the water. She grows less and less distinct, and is lost at length in the receding distance. Besides the two princes and their sister Adele, she had likewise on board as passengers eighteen ladies of the court, the wives or daughter of the most considerable of the nobles and learned men, and other distinguished persons, one hundred and four barons and chevaliers, the flower of the armies of Normandy and England, in all about three hundred persons.

There were many, however, more provident and wise, who absolutely refused to embark in the *Le Blanche Nef*. They would not consent to commit their lives to the keeping of men who were either insensible to the calls of duty, and seemed deprived of their reason—who, said the historian, instead of attending to the adjusting of the sails and trimmings of the ship, listlessly lolled upon the benches or took possession of the coffers that incumbered the deck.

At the given signal she starts with ardor from the quay. The *Le Blanche Nef* recedes rapidly from the shore, amidst the acclamations of the people: but in the moment of entering the bay of Catte, now Gatteville, whilst the rowers, in a state of complete intoxication, employed all their strength to overtake the king, which they made it a point of honor to do, the left side of the ship struck against a rock with such force that the sea immediately entered and covered a great part thereof. The rock was called *Quillebœuf*; the summit of it was round and white, and could be seen at the ebbing of the tide. A cry of distress was uttered the same moment from all the passengers. It rose over the waters—it was heard on the shore—but no succor came, because none could divine its cause. Dismay took possession of every mind, the stoutest heart was appalled, darkness brooded over the scene, and the utmost confusion prevailed on board. Thomas the pilot, the ill-starred author of this great disaster, sought for the princes; he hurries them into a boat—he is about to has-