

A Ladder of Swords

Pirate and soldier in priest's garb had frankly taken the chances.

With a fair wind they might, with all canvas set—mainsail, foresail, jib, and foretopsail—make Rozel Bay within two hours and a quarter. All seemed well for a brief half-hour. Then, even as the passage between the Marmotier and the Ecréhos opened out, the wind suddenly shifted from the northeast to the southwest and a squall came hurrying on them—a few moments too soon; for, had they been clear of the Ecréhos, clear of the Taillepieds, Felée Bank, and the Écrivière, they could have stood out towards the north in a more open sea.

Yet there was one thing in their favor: the tide was now running hard from the northwest, so fighting for them while the wind was against them. Their only safety lay in getting beyond the Ecréhos. If they attempted to run in to the Marmotier for safety, they would presently be at the mercy of the French. To trust their doubtful fortunes and bear on was the only way. The tide was running fast. They gave the mainsail