

12 THE BATTLE OF THE STRONG

the sea, then she bent her head and said to herself that this would not be a good night, that ill-luck was in the air. "The mother or the child will die," she said to herself. A longshoreman, reeling home from deep potations, was conscious of it, and, turning round to the sea, snarled at it and said *yah!* in swaggering defiance. A young lad, wandering along the deserted street, heard it, began to tremble, and sat down on a block of stone beside the doorway of a baker's shop. He dropped his head on his arms and his chin on his knees, shutting out the sound and sobbing quietly.

Yesterday his mother had been buried; to-night his father's door had been closed in his face. He scarcely knew whether his being locked out was an accident or whether it was intended. He thought of the time when his father had ill-treated his mother and himself. That, however, had stopped at last, for the woman had threatened the Royal Court, and the man, having no wish to face its summary convictions, thereafter conducted himself towards them both with a morose indifference.

The boy was called Ranulph, a name which had passed to him through several generations of Jersey forebears — Ranulph Delagarde. He was being taught the trade of shipbuilding in St. Aubin's Bay. He was not beyond fourteen years of age, though he looked more, so tall and straight and self-possessed was he.

His tears having ceased soon, he began to think of what he was to do in the future. He would never go back to his father's house, or be dependent on him for aught. Many plans came to his mind. He would learn his trade of shipbuilding, he would become a master-builder, then a shipowner, with fishing-vessels like the great company sending fleets to Gaspé.

At the moment when these ambitious plans had