

A Ladder of Swords

Buonespoir, for he knew nothing of these waters and coasts; also he was a soldier and no sailor.

They cleared Cape Carteret with a fair wind from the northeast, which should carry them safely as the bird flies to the haven of Rozel. The high, pinkish sands of Hatainville were behind them; the treacherous Taillepied rocks lay to the north, and a sweet sea before. Nothing could have seemed fairer and more hopeful. But a few old fishermen on shore at Carteret shook their heads dubiously, and at Port Bail, some miles below, a disabled naval officer, watching through a glass, rasped out, "Criminals or fools!" But he shrugged his shoulders, for if they were criminals he was sure they would expiate their crimes this night, and if they were fools—he had no pity for fools.

But Buonespoir knew his danger. Truth is, he had chosen this night because they would be safest from pursuit, because no sensible seafaring man, were he king's officer or another, would venture forth upon the impish Channel save to court disaster.