

BOOK I

CHAPTER I

IN all the world there is no coast like the coast of Jersey ; so treacherous, so snarling ; serrated with rocks seen and unseen, tortured by currents maliciously whimsical, encircled by tides that sweep up from the Antarctic world with the devouring force of a monstrous serpent projecting itself towards its prey. The captain of these tides, travelling up through the Atlantic at a thousand miles an hour, enters the English Channel, and drives on to the Thames. Presently retreating, it meets another pursuing Antarctic wave, which, thus opposed in its straight-forward course, recoils into St. Michael's Bay, then plunges, as it were, upon a terrible foe. They twine and strive in mystic conflict, and, in rage of equal power, neither vanquished nor conquering, circle, mad and desperate, round the Channel Isles. Impeded, impounded as they riot through the flumes of sea, they turn furiously, and smite the cliffs and rocks and walls of their prison-house. With the frenzied winds helping them, the island coasts and Norman shores are battered by their hopeless onset ; and in that channel between Alderney and Cap de la Hague man or ship must well beware, for the Race