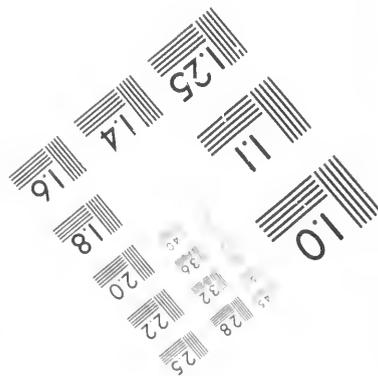
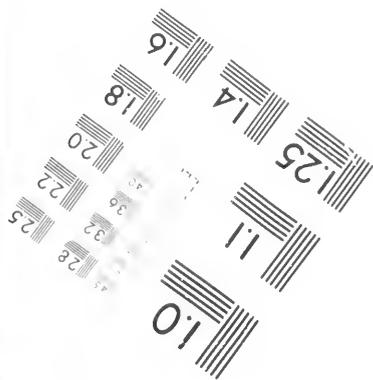
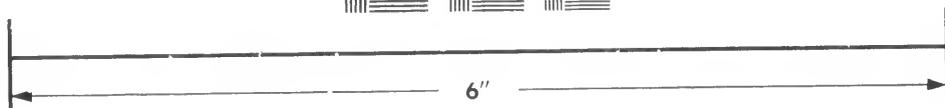
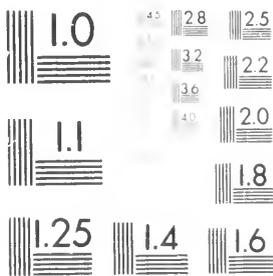


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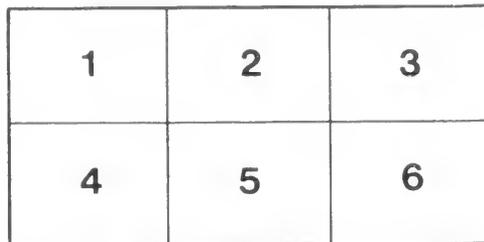
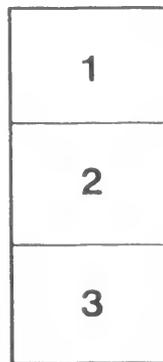
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# Legends of the Gulf:

PIERRE GODEY'S STORY. THE CAPTAIN'S STORY.

THE ISLAND OF THE DEAD.

BY

CHARLES W. <sup>inslow</sup> HALL, ✓

AUTHOR OF "TWICE TAKEN," &c.

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## PIERRE GODEY'S STORY.

**P**ACED the shores of the great Northern Gulf  
In autumn, when, beneath the harvest sun,  
The fruitful grainfields oowed their golden stalks  
To the sharp sickle; or, with sheaves lay strewn  
Like some great battle-field, where, after fray,  
A nation's dead lie graveless. In the woods,  
The leaves were dying, but, in dying, shone  
Like saints transfigured. From the balmy south  
A languid breeze scarce stirred the turquoise lakes,  
Teeming with myriad birds, which filled the air  
With distant clamor and the whirr of wings,  
As, in huge flocks, they wheeled and swam before  
The Micmac hunters' stealthy, swift canoe.  
A lodge, 'mid the dark pines crowning the cliff,  
Sent from its fire a pillar of blue smoke,

Ascending heavenward through the dreamy air,—  
 So pure and blue and cloudless. E'en the sea  
 Scarce rippled, as its silent surges broke  
 On sandstone ledge and level of bare sand.



I, luckless sportsman, sought to kill in vain:  
 The withered reeds no longer shelter gave  
 From the quick glances of the tribes of air;  
 But 'neath the maples, in the woods above,  
 I met an agéd man, whose grandsires came  
 From fair Acadia in days long past,  
 Who laid aside his *musquet*, quaint and old,—

A relic of the fall of Beau Sejour,  
And the last siege of fated Louisbourg,—  
And, resting, told the legend, strange and rare,  
Of those Acadians who sailed away  
As into exile, leaving, far behind,  
Grand-Pré in ashes, and their flocks and herds  
Starving and masterless. How they arose,  
Slaying their guard, then northward held their way,  
And parted, some to seek their native France,  
The rest to battle with the wilds again.

“An hundred years and twelve have passed away  
Since, 'neath the chapel-roof of Grand-Pré, met  
The yeomanry of Minas, fearing much,  
But knowing naught deserving of the blow  
That fell upon them, giving their broad fields  
Back to the wilderness, themselves and theirs'  
To dreary exile in a distant land:  
Where e'en their speech was strange; their ancient faith,

Their antique costume, and their simple ways  
Unknown and hated. As stern Winslow read—  
A thousand maddening thoughts tortured each brain,  
And racked each heart. And at the close he spake  
As one who bears the summons of the Lord,  
Yet feels for him whose doom it is to die.  
Each unarmed hunter writhed with grief and rage,  
At thought of trusty weapon left concealed,  
And here and there a glaive, or pistol, flashed  
In the soft ray, that gilded with warm light  
The picture rude, which o'er the alter hung:  
Where from the cross, calm eyes seemed bent in woe.  
On those fierce faces terrible with rage,  
Convulsed with grief and agony—below.  
But madness it had been to face the steel  
Of those New Englanders, so coldly stern  
Yet pitiful, when ceased the frantic cry  
For vengeance, and their captives kneeling wept,  
And prayed before the Saviour crucified.

The guard was set, the search for arms was o'er,  
The captives wept and prayed and slept by turns,  
And near the altar, on the chancel floor,  
Reclined four, whispering among themselves:  
My grandsire Godè; Clementine Benoit,  
A hardy *coureur* of Chignecto's woods,  
Felix Durel, a fisher of the gulf,  
And one who called himself Renaud Drucour—  
Whose life was a dark riddle to all eyes;  
His beardless cheek wore not the flush of youth;  
Masses of rich dark curls hung o'er a brow  
Deep-lined by thought, or grief, or care, or crime—  
Which, no one knew; beneath it flashed his eyes;  
Keen as a basilisk's; yet quick to change  
Whene'er his cold, calm voice heightened its tone,  
Which seldom happened, except when anger stirred,  
Or when he heard some mention of the past,  
And victories won beneath the Fleur-de-lis.  
Few knew him, no one shared his lonely walks,

And, save the friendship of the parish priest,  
There was no bond to hold e'en the respect  
Of his companions, till that fatal eve,  
When he alone of all that crowd of men  
Scorned to despair. Keenly he eyed the guard:  
Then to my grandsire, as the oldest spoke,  
Asking if he could choose three men, whose souls,  
Intent on freedom, would not shrink from death;  
He answered, 'Here are Clementine Benoit,  
Felix Durel, the fisher of the gulf,  
And there lies Victor Chaisson, in whose veins  
Half the rich blood is seething with the fire  
And daring of the Abenakis braves,  
Who sing and laugh e'en at the very stake.'

"'Tis well,' said the pale stripling, 'bring them here.'  
And there upon the cross, they breathed a vow  
To follow him and trust him to the death,  
Nor breathe a syllable of his design

To any. Then Drucourt, in whispers, told  
Of weapons hidden 'neath the chancel floor,  
Brought there by night, in secret crypts concealed  
From the sharp search of the Provincial troops,  
Until the day should come when once again  
The men of Minas, 'neath the Fleur-de-lis,  
Should from their cruel thralldom free themselves—  
Sweeping the heretic from out the land.  
Now that fond hope was gone and naught could save  
Their friends from exile; but there still remained  
A hope of freedom for themselves and theirs,  
And vengeance on the author of their woe.'  
He touched a spring in the smooth floor, and slid  
A tiny panel slowly back; beneath,  
Glittered a row of barrels, long and bright,  
And the sharp blades of bayonet and axe.  
Victor, with flashing eyes, hissed through set teeth,  
'Could we but get at them and arm our friends.'  
'They are not loaded, these must serve our turn.'

And from a nook, the nearest to his hand,  
He drew a pair of pistols, richly chased,  
And a keen dagger; these he deftly placed  
Within his vest, then to the others gave  
A keen-edged hatchet with a slender helve,  
Like the light war-axe of a Micmac brave,  
Then closed the panel on the arms, that lie  
E'en to this day, beneath the grain that nods  
Over the ashes of those hallowed walls.  
They kept his secret through the dreary days,  
And nights, made desolate with a people's woe  
That slowly followed. Then the comrades five  
Tarried until the last of those who marched  
Down to the sea, 'mid files of arméd men,  
Gazing their last on the loved scenes of home,  
And, it so happened that these five were placed  
With their own loved ones, on a bark so old  
And ill-equipped, and leaky, that she lagged  
Behind the others, and the light-armed sloops

Which conveyed them. While Drucourt waited well  
A fitting time to rise against the guard—  
A dozen men, whose sergeant, stern and old,  
Never relaxed his vigilance, but kept  
His men on guard, though fearing little harm  
From half a score of broken hearted men.

“ But Drucourt, with his pale and careworn face,  
Sought converse with him daily, speaking much  
Of his long wanderings amid the tribes  
Of the Souriquois, or the hours beguiled  
With Indian legends, mystical and strange,  
With wonders of a half forgotten past,  
Still, by the embers' red, uncertain glare,  
Told in the wigwams of a wasting race;  
And, often as he spoke of fight, Drucourt  
Would send the war-whoop pealing o'er the sea,  
Bringing some startled sentry to his feet,  
And a grim smile to the old sergeant's face.

“The crisis came. When the third morning dawned  
Around them, the blue heavens met the sea  
In one unbroken circle, and Drucourt  
Said, in the narrow passage to the deck:  
‘When peals the war-cry through the air to-day,  
It calls us, or our captors to the grave,—  
Be ready!’ and his eyes grew strangely bright,  
Like the lithe panther’s when about to spring.  
But on the deck he seemed another man,  
Yawning like one drowsy with too much sleep,  
While Godé, Chaisson, Benoit, and Durel  
Flung themselves down to leeward in the sun,  
Wrapping their cloaks around them. But, beneath,  
Each nervous right hand grasped the ready axe;  
Each anxious heart grew hot and chill by turns,  
Waiting that summons to a doubtful strife.  
Four sentries slowly paced the crowded decks:  
One by the windlass; two beside the hatch;  
The fourth guarded the guns of the relief.

Near sat the sergeant, buried in the calm  
And dreamy pleasures of his morning pipe ;  
Victor strode forward, looking o'er the sea,  
As if his thoughts were of his future lot ;  
Durel and Benoit loitered in the waist ;  
My grandsire Godé sauntered farther aft,  
And Drucourt, idly stretching, yawning wide,  
Bade 'a good morning' to the veteran scout,  
Who answered him as kindly, but bewailed  
The tardy progress of their ancient craft,  
And asked Renaud to while the hours away  
With some wild Indian legend of the past.

“ He, nothing loath, began a stormy tale  
Of a great wizard—rising from the tomb  
Of his dead mother, murdered ere his birth,  
By his own grandsire. How he grew and learned  
All knowledge under heaven ; healed the sick,  
And slew the giants, eaters of men's flesh,

And his own grandsire, chieftain of them all,  
His eyes grew brighter, his slight form erect,  
As he continued: 'How, equipped for war,  
He sought his grandsires hold, a cavern drear,  
Strewn with the spoils and bones of many men,  
How fearlessly he entered, told his name,  
And found at last the vengeance that he sought—  
Pealing the war-whoop with triumphant lips—'

\* \* \* \* \*

"As that fierce yell burst on the tranquil air,  
It found an echo in the dying moan  
Of three men of the four; while Drucourt struck  
Full at the sergeant's breast; but he had marked  
Unwonted fervour in that idle tale,  
And felt some coming danger: so the blow  
Was parried; but my grandsire with his axe  
Had felled the sentinel—a second blow  
Fell on the sergeant's head. The guns were won;  
The soldiers in the cabin all unarmed;

The crew o'erawed and trembling. Then Drucourt  
Armed the Acadiens, and bound the rest—  
Sent Felix to the helm—then reeled and fell,  
Mortally wounded by the only blow  
Of the dead sergeant's sword, still firmly grasped  
By the cold hand, which ne'er would wield it more.



My grandsire gently raised him in his arms,  
But strove to stanch the flowing blood in vain.  
Tears fell, and cries of sorrow rent the air,  
As near him the Acadien women knelt—  
Proffering rude aid, or asking grace of heaven.

But he seemed all at peace, and calmly spoke:  
'Bury me with the English; our long feud  
Shall slumber with us 'neath the wave or sod.  
Much blood my hand hath shed—I fear in vain;  
Daily the power of France dwindles away;  
And our stern foes conquer and hold the land,  
Covering with fort and blockhouse, growing towns,  
And the tall spires of an apostate faith.  
Yet well I wish your freedom had been bought  
With my own life alone, for those who sleep,  
Slain yonder at their posts, were kind, as seemed  
Consistent with stern duty; and their babes  
Will weep for them in their New England homes.  
No home is desolate because I die:  
That which I had, perished in blood and flame—  
My vengeance is appeased; henceforth I rest,  
After short sojourn here—so full of pain,  
That death is welcome.' As he slowly spoke,  
His glorious eyes grew dim; his pulses weak;

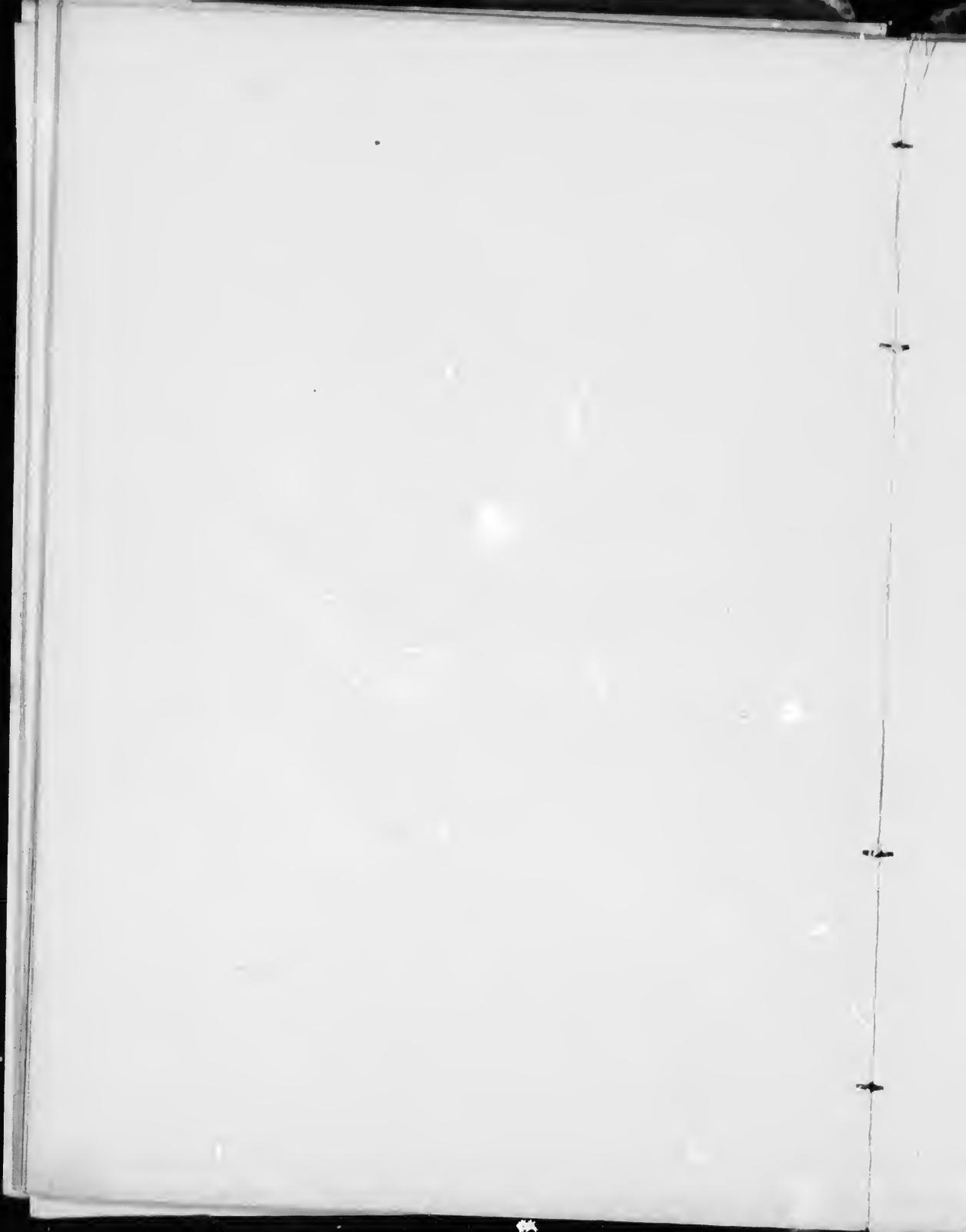
His breathing difficult, until it ceased—  
And he lay dead upon the crimson deck:  
His blood the price of freedom; while hot tears,  
A grateful tribute to his memory, fell.  
A week ago a stranger to them all—  
A martyr and a saviour ever more.

“They laid the dead beneath an ancient tree—  
The victor and his victims; and they raised  
A wooden cross, long since blent with the dust;  
Then, parting, sought another forest home  
In Canada, Acadie, or St. Jean.  
While others crossed the ocean, where the sun  
Ripens the purple grapes of fertile France.  
My grandsire settled here, and he and his,  
In the long evenings of the winter months,  
Often have told, and still repeat the tale,  
Of the recapture of the English bark,  
The death of Drucourt, and his unknown grave,  
Beneath the birches of a sea-worn cliff.”

We parted as the sun sank slowly down,  
Filling the West with glory, such as words  
May not describe: its beams gilding alike  
The massive cross on the cathedral dome,  
And the square belfry of the rural church;  
While on the gulf, a century ago  
Oft reddened with the conflicts of our sires,  
An hundred white-winged boats crept towards the land  
And, mellowed by the distance, rose the hum  
Of many voices raised in laugh and song—  
Acadien French and English intermixed.  
Then the old tale of vengeance and of wrong,  
Loomed, through the misty veil of bygone years,  
Like some vague memory of a troubled dream,  
As, 'neath the rising moon, I hastened home.



The Captain's Story.



## THE CAPTAIN'S STORY.

**A** STRANGE wild legend—of a simple race,  
Who, from the fishing banks of the great gulf,  
Draw half their sparse subsistence, while the soil  
Yields scanty stores of fibre, roots and grain,  
To unskilled tillage—here I offer you.

A mariner, who sailed these northern seas,  
Landed one Sabbath eve at Carraquette,  
And spent a quiet evening at the hearth  
Of an Acadien, who lived alone  
With his long-widowed sister; and their guest  
Asked of the fate of husband, mother, sire,  
And many children born beneath their roof.  
The brother answered: "All the children died  
In infancy and youth, save Marguerite,

Placide, Jean and myself. Poor Alexis—  
Marguerite's husband, and our brothers, died  
In that great gale, eleven years ago.”  
Then, by the dim light of their scanty fire,  
He told the story that I tell to you—  
As on a winter's eve I heard it first ;  
'Tis called *The Captain's Story*.

“ Long years have passed, since, on a summer morn,  
Stood out to sea the boats of Carraquette,  
To join the fleet, which, from the shores around--  
From Miscou, Shippegan, and Tracadie--  
Glided before the south-wind's gentle breath,  
To brave the surges on the Orphan bank.

“ Among them sailed two sons of Paul Belcour :  
Placide and Jean, with Alexis Marco,  
Their sister's bridegroom but a week before ;  
And the young bride had risen with her lord—  
While mystic moonlight blent with coming day—

Gave them their frugal meal; a parting kiss;  
Watched as they hastened down the narrow path,  
And disappeared among the dew-hung pines,



That skirted the still river; heard the ropes  
Splash, as the mooring buoy fell from the bows;  
The creaking blocks; the flapping of the sails;  
The cadenced dipping of their heavy oars;  
Then saw them glide from the sequestered stream,  
Into the quiet waters of the bay--  
The ripples sparkling in the silvery light;  
The east just blushing with the dawn of day.

Delaying, from the doorway, Marguerite  
Watched eagerly, until, 'mid many boats,  
She could no longer recognize the bark [couch.  
Which bore her friends; then, sighing, sought her

“ But Placide, Jean, and Alexis Marco,  
Joining the fleet, answered the merry hail  
And frequent jest which greeted each new bark,  
After the merry fashion of their race—  
The French Acadiens. Three centuries  
Of ceaseless tillage of a rugged land;  
Of voyaging upon a stormy coast;  
With years of battle for their land and faith—  
And all the ills which gall a conquered race—  
Have failed to cloud their sunny gaiety,  
Or still the laughter, light as summer breeze,  
Brought by their ancestors from sunny France—  
Which cheered the sires 'mid suffering and defeat;  
And lightens now their children's ill paid toil.

“The fishers glided down the tranquil bay,  
Borne on the ebbing tide; each heavy sail  
Listlessly waving, for the breeze was light,  
But fragrant with the sweet breath of the flowers,  
And the aroma of the distant pines.  
They swept down narrow channels, flowing free;  
Amid wide reaches of close-matted weeds—  
Whose glistening masses of long tape-like leaves  
Concealed the water and deep ooze beneath;  
Along the shallow bars and island shores  
Of Shippegan and Miscou; and at length  
Entered the gulf, and gently rose and fell  
On the e'er-throbbing pulses of the sea.

“The wind increased, until each snowy sail  
Strained the tense sheet, as doth a steed his rein.  
Each boat bent low before the swelling breeze,  
Until the glancing ripples gently kissed  
The leward gunwale, while beneath the bows,

The riven waves rolled up thick flakes of foam,  
Until the noonday sun stood overhead,  
And the whole fleet tugged at their mooring gear,  
Amid the shallows of the Orphan Bank.  
Two days they bent over their slender lines,  
Lightening toil with laughter, jest, and song;  
Seasoning coarse fare with well earned appetite,  
And sleeping soundly 'neath their scanty deck—  
After rude prayer, and simple thoughts of home.

“The third day dawned upon a glassy sea;  
And surges that had swept from world to world,  
Deserted by the winds, grew languid too:  
Scarce rocking the light shallops, as they passed,  
To break in silence on the distant sides  
Of gloomy Cape Despair, and Point Pabou:  
Which, as the sun sank westward, seemed to rise  
Amid the sunset's many tinted skies,  
So that the fishers wondered; but a few,

Whose silvered locks told of long years of life  
Amid the toils and dangers of the sea—  
Drew ominous presage thence, and shook their heads;  
Speaking among themselves of coming storms;  
Never far distant, when the massive cliffs  
Seemed thus to spurn the sea that kissed their feet.

“Then, as the twilight fell, each mariner  
Uttered the evening prayer, with reverent lips,—  
And for a while the merry jesting ceased.  
The darkness gathered, and, amid its gloom,  
The signal lanterns gleamed like fire-flies,  
Or like the stars, that here and there o'erhead  
Gleamed softly on them: for the upper air  
Was full of gathering vapors, swept along  
By gales that vexed mid-heaven, but left the sea,  
Unruffled by the breeze, in glassy calm.  
And, as the fishers slumbered, heavy clouds,  
Rugged, and black, and threatening, gathered still—

The mustering forces of the coming storm—  
Hiding the pallid crescent of the moon;  
Shutting out, one by one, the kindly stars;  
And heavy with the vapors that the sun  
Had gathered, in an hundred days of calm,—  
Destined to fall in torrents of cold rain,  
On a wild scene of tempest, wreck, and death.  
But, still, the calm continued, though the sea  
Rose high and threatening, though unruffled still;  
And the Volant, as passed the hours away,  
Strained more and more her heavy mooring gear,  
As the sea rose and the long night wore on.

“Still the tired fishers slept,—and Alexis,  
In the deep sleep, bought with a day of toil,  
Seemed to have moored his deeply laden boat  
In the wood-sheltered cove at Carraquette.  
Marguerite met him on the beach; her arms  
Fondly embraced him; her long jetty curls

Resting upon his shoulder; her fond eyes  
Half-dimmed with memories of her futile fears,  
But radiant at his coming; while her lips,  
Half-open, uttered, 'I am glad you come,  
Alexis, for our parting has been long.'

“‘Alexis! rouse, Alexis!’ The deep voice  
Called him from dreams of loving Marguerite,  
And the calm quiet of the sheltered beach—  
To scan a starless heaven heaped with clouds;  
A sea of mountain surges, white with foam;  
Beneath him the Volant—like a young steed—  
Strained at her cable, trembling at each shock,  
Half buried by the crests of the huge waves;  
Rising, unconquered still, to meet again  
The ceaseless onset of those lines of foam.  
Yet, still the breeze was feeble,—with scarce power  
To stir a maiden's ringlets, or the leaves  
Of the light aspen,—and this strange calm gave  
New dangers, added horrors to the scene.

“Soon, through the gloom, they saw a light draw  
Now lost to view behind those angry seas— [near—  
Now gleaming on the crest of some huge wave,—  
Bearing down full upon them; by the gleam  
They saw a bark, whose sails were spread in vain,  
Helplessly drifting 'mid the furious surge.  
Her crew toiled wearily, with heavy oars,  
To keep her prow before the foaming seas,  
Which tossed her like a feather to and fro;  
And, at the helm, beneath the lantern's glare,  
Gleamed the age-silvered locks of Père Chaisson,  
Who loudly hailed them—‘ For sweet Mary's sake,  
Make fast the line!’ Then through the gloom there  
A coil that struck the mainmast, and Placide [whizzed  
Fastened the rope; beneath the added strain,  
The stout Volant sank deeper, and the seas  
Began to sweep across her. Alexis  
Called to the other—‘ If we hold you long,  
The sea will swamp us!’ Answered Père Chaisson,

' Hold us until the wind comes e'er so light,  
Then loose us, and God's holy will be done !  
Lacroix sank at his moorings, with his sons ;  
Godé parted his cable, and the waves  
Drove him against me ; I have saved his crew—  
But we are leaking badly--tell my wife !  
Then the Volant reeled 'neath a breaking surge,  
That threatened to engulf her ; but the line,  
That held the other, parted like a thread ;  
While the three fishers saw the gleaming light  
Losing itself amid that heaving waste,  
And the thick vapors of that dreadful calm.  
Naught could be done but to await the storm—  
Long since the three had double-reefed the sails ;  
Fastened the buoy, and paid the cable out,  
Till the last foot waited the ready knife.  
At last the gloom grew denser overhead ;  
Some heavy drops fell on their upturned eyes ;  
They heard a rushing as of many wings—

The tempest was upon them! with a flood  
Of blinding rain; a blast, that swept the spray  
From off the combing surges, whistling shrill  
Amid the cordage, as Alexis cried—  
'Cut loose, there, forward!' and the keen knife fell.



"The bows fell off before the raging gale—  
The boat seemed flying 'neath her scanty sail;  
And scarce a league to leeward, Alexis  
Passed, in the vale, between two giant seas,  
A boat with sails all riven by the blast;  
And, from the wreck, Père Chaisson sadly cried—

'God go with you, Alexis, tell my wife!'  
As the Volant swept on before the storm,  
Alexis halloed—'Tell my Marguerite!'  
Then the fierce tempest drowned his further words;  
His spectral sails vanished amid the gloom;  
His lantern's gleam, a little space, appeared  
High on the crest of some far distant wave;  
And then Père Chaisson, and his weary crew,  
Waited for death in their disabled boat.—  
Little suspecting that their lips must tell  
How the Volant, amid the driving mists,  
Forever disappeared from mortal eyes.

## PART II.

"On the third afternoon, fair Marguerite  
Sat at her flax-wheel, in her father's porch;  
An ancient elm before the doorway stood,  
Giving cool shadow, while its rustling leaves  
Blent with the never-ceasing drowsy hum

Of the frail life that fills the summer air.  
But as the whirring wheel and golden flax,  
Busied her hands, with cheery voice she sung  
Old songs, with ancient carols and sweet lays;  
Then last she tried the chant that Alexis,  
With her two brothers, in the chapel choir,  
Had learned the week before they sailed away,—  
But its grand solemn movement and deep tones,  
Baffled her efforts, and she, laughing, ceased.

“But, as she spun or sang, her laughing eyes  
Grew sober, as they gazed upon the sea—  
Dreamy with longing and with fond regret.  
And then she smiled and said: ‘To-morrow night,  
Or the day after, the Volant will come,  
With snowy sails, leading the lagging fleet;  
Then I shall see her anchor in the cove,  
And meet Alexis on the sandy beach.’  
The sun behind the tree-tops sank at last—

Her sire and brother, from the distant field,  
Wearily sought their simple evening meal;  
And, as the darkness gathered, welcome sleep  
Fell upon all beneath that cottage roof.

“Fair Marguerite, her chamber door ajar,  
Dreamily watched the red glare from the hearth  
Play fitfully upon the kitchen walls:  
Where hung, 'mid homespun warps of wool and flax,  
Bridles, and coats, and unused fishing gear;  
The heavy *musquet*,—brought long since from France,  
And handed down from father unto son—  
Still useful, though the hand that grasped it first,  
A century ago mouldered in dust,  
By the torn ramparts of lost Beau Sejour.  
But the night shadows deepened, as the fire  
Died out for want of fuel; Marguerite,  
From dreamy musing, lapsed into deep sleep;  
While, through the open casement of her room,

The night breeze—sweet with breath of eglantine,  
Clematis, elder flower and violet,  
With resinous fragrance of the fir and pine—  
Scarce stirred her tresses as the night wore on.

“She woke, to find her temples wet with spray,  
Storm-driven through the lattice, now fast closed  
Against the dreadful gale that raged without.  
The kitchen walls were lurid with the glare  
Of blazing fagots; and, upon the hearth,  
She heard the restless step of Paul Belcour—  
Her mother's moaning: ‘Oh! my sons, my sons!’  
And, as she robed herself in trembling haste,  
Her heart stood still with terror undefined—  
Her blood grew chill with fears of coming woe.

“She knelt beside her mother, and, in tears,  
Waited the tardy daylight's leaden dawn;  
While Paul Belcour, striving to drown his care,

Now feebly laughed at all their foolish fears—  
Now said : 'the boys are safe enough, I know!  
Long since, their boats were moored in Shippegan—  
Or 'neath the sheltering capes of fair St. Jean.'  
But still, with nervous steps, he paced the floor—  
Till, through the eastern windows, the first light  
Of that sad morning, dimly gave to view  
The fallen elm, whose crash, before the storm,  
Had broken the deep rest of Paul Belcour—  
The foaming bay, swol'n with unwonted tides—  
The forests, swaying fiercely with the gale,—  
And dimly seen at times, amid the mist,  
The Isles of Miscou and of Shippegan,  
From which the wind bore ever to their ears;  
The roaring of the surges on the bars :  
The slogan of their onset on the beach.

“ Slowly the day wore on ; but, as the light  
Grew gray, as the sun sank low behind

The clouds—that hid his glory for a while—  
The storm abated, and the driving rain,  
Fell gently on earth's bosom, as the wind  
Lost its rude strength, and came in fitful flaws;  
So when, through gathering darkness, the bright stars  
Peered from amid the fast dispersing clouds,  
The veering wind blew gently from the east—  
The storm-drenched tree-tops were again at rest;  
And but the distant thunders of the surf  
Remained of all the elemental strife,  
That gave such horrors to the night before.

“Then it so happened, as Marguerite  
Bent late at night before the Virgin's face,  
Praying—with all that agony of woe,  
Love, fear, and helplessness bring to the heart—  
She heard, afar, the cadenced dip of oars,  
Nearing the anchorage, below the pines;  
And stealing out, down to the silent beach,

Saw a half-sinking boat—with shattered masts,  
Pressed to her utmost speed by many oars—  
Steering to reach the landing at her feet ;  
And as the sinking prow touched the smooth strand,  
Père Chaisson staggered o'er the thwarts to land ;  
But seeing Marguerite, stopped—with a cry  
Of wonder—saying, 'Where is Alexis?'

“ Poor Marguerite!—the old fear at her heart—  
Stood mute a moment, and then slowly said :  
'All the day long my eyes have watched the bay ;  
All night I've listened for the dip of oars ;  
Flapping of veering sails, or distant hail  
Of voices, on the river—but your boat  
Comes first of all the fleet, since the great storm—  
Have you no news of Alexis?' Her eyes  
Hungriily watched the old man's changing face.

“ Last night, about this time, upon the bank—  
Our heavy sails all rent by the first squall ;

With Godey's crew, saved from his sinking bark—  
We all expected death. Then the Volant,  
Her sails close-reefed, swept past us like a bird,  
Scarce her own length to windward. Alexis  
Hailed us in passing—'Tell my Marguerite !'  
Then the thick darkness hid him, and his words  
Were lost amid the howling of the storm.  
We hoisted jib, and crossed the bar this morn—  
Landing on Miscou. Far along the shore  
Were many stranded boats. We tried to save  
The lives of our poor neighbors, the Durels ;  
We joined hands in the breakers ; and Godé  
Reached for the shallop's cable, when a sea  
Drove her right over him, and soon the surf  
Swept him to land with those he tried to save.  
We brought them with us ; and the boats you see,  
Whose silent crews utter no cheery hail,  
Bear those whom God hath called unto himself ;  
With those his grace hath sheltered from the storm.

I cannot learn that the Volant is lost;  
And think Alexis kept the open straits—  
Fearing to make a harbor before dawn;  
If so, we shall not see him for some days.  
So dry your tears, or rather weep with us:  
For all our coast is filled with sobs and tears,  
And death has entered into every house!’  
Thus said Père Chaisson; first, with firm set-lips,  
That yielding as he spoke, closed with a sob—  
As the two crews bore, up the silent beach,  
The mangled Godé, and the lost Durels.

“I cannot paint the horrors of that night—  
The change from joy to sorrow—as the throng,  
That sought the beach to welcome loved ones there,  
Made the night desolate with sounds of woe,  
And piercing lamentation, as they bore  
Husband and father, sire and brother home.  
But Marguerite—through all that weary time;

Though her own fears were gnawing at her heart—  
Bore, to the mother of the lost Durels,  
The mournful tidings; and her gentle hands,  
For many hours, labored for those who wept,  
O'er those whose tearless eyes should weep no more.

“ But though she watched, and waited, till the leaves  
Grew radiant with the colors, that make death—  
Repulsive in all else—glorious in them;  
Although, by daylight, she watched every sail;  
And in the darkness sought the gloomy beach,  
At every flap of sail, or dip of oars—  
No tidings ever came, of the Volant,  
Of Jean and Placide, or of Alexis.  
And when the winter closed the straits with ice,  
And heaped the narrow roads with drifted snow,  
Marguerite gave up hoping, and the priest  
Said masses for the sons of Paul Belcour—  
As lost at sea, with Alexis Marco.

## PART III.

The springtime came at last: the fettered tides  
Broke their chill prison-walls; awhile the sea  
Bore, on its heaving bosom, icy fields,  
Pinnacled bergs and strangely shapen floes—  
That, as the spring days lengthened, from their sides  
Poured pearly drops and little limpid streams,  
As, with the wind and tide over the sea,  
They wandered like the German Water-nymph,  
Until like her they were dissolved in tears,  
And mingled with the waters; then the birds  
Came back from southern wanderings to their haunts,  
In forest, field and ocean—and their notes  
Gladdened the woods—fragrant with bursting buds;  
Then once again the farmer sought the field;  
The mariner spread wide his roving sails;  
The hardy fishermen mended their nets,  
Repaired their boats, and once again to sea,  
Swept the diminished fleet of Carraquette—

This time to southward, where the screaming gulls  
Circling in heaven and plunging in the seas,  
Told that the herring schools drew near the coast.  
The last remaining son of Paul Belcour  
Sailed with them ; and, in Tracadie's lone bay,  
They cast their nets, as sank the sun in heaven ;  
Then, as the shadows deepened, rowed ashore  
To spend an evening with some countrymen,  
Whose farms lay far beyond the ancient woods,  
Which shaded with their branches the lone beach,  
The shallop, and the glassy cove beyond.

“ Then as Jacques Belcour lightly sprang to land,  
Followed by his companions, a strange sound—  
As of a chant before some distant shrine—  
Came softly stealing down the woodland road  
That lay before them, gloomy with the night,  
And added shadow of o'erhanging pines.  
Then, as they threaded all its devious gloom,

The sounds grew deeper, louder than before,  
Until they fancied they drew near its source;  
But, as they journeyed on, the melody  
Wavered, grew faint, and slowly died away  
Behind them. As they issued from the wood,  
The hamlet lay before them; whence the glare  
Of fire and candle, through the windows, gave  
Promise of cordial welcome, such as meets  
Each French Acadien where'er he finds  
A hamlet of his people. 'There Belcour  
Asked, if there stood a dwelling in the woods?  
Or, had they met at chapel just at eve?

“They answered, that no dwelling stood between  
Their hamlet and the shore; no priest had lit  
The chapel candles since last Sunday's mass.  
But as Belcour told of the mystic chant,  
Some, present, paled with memories wild and vague,  
But answered not, for still the forest lay  
Between their guests and their far distant boat.

“The parting moment came—and as they passed  
Into the shadows of the forest road,  
Again the same weird melody arose,  
Filling the forest covers with sweet chords:  
Solemn and steady, like a sacred chant—  
Yet mournful, like the murmur of the sea—  
And plaintive, as the tones of one who talks  
Of home, and love, far from his native land;  
Then slowly sank in dreamy symphonies,  
As, through a narrow rift, they saw the bay—  
A glassy mirror of unnumbered stars.  
But, as they stepped upon the midnight beach,  
Gently the mystic chorus died away—  
And, trembling with a terror undefined,  
They sought the shelter of their anchored bark.

“But though they humbly bent the knee in prayer,  
And sought repose beneath their scanty deck,  
All the night long a terror filled each breast—

A strong desire, a longing agony,  
To know the source from which a melody  
So weird, and awful, yet so sweet, arose.  
Therefore they talked and wondered, but slept not,  
Until the sun, although not yet arisen,  
Somewhat dispersed the shadows of the night.

“Then they arose and underran their nets—  
Landing their spoil upon the pebbly beach.  
Then once again they heard the unknown sounds—  
Plaintive and sweet, and thrilling as before.  
Again they sought the wood-road cold with dew,  
Keeping straight forward as the music rose,  
But turning when it faltered—till at last,  
They entered a recess, where the strange sounds—  
Their mission ended—'neath their very feet,  
Seemed to sink downward, untill all was still.

“Panting, they rested by the blasted trunk  
Of a gigantic pine ; and, 'neath their feet,

A mound rose higher than the earth around—  
On which no tuft of grass, nor trailing vine,  
Nor clustering shrub, nor hardy arbutus,  
Grew in that little waste of barren sand.  
Turning, the fishers sought the distant farms—  
Took from the barns such tools as they desired,  
And, hastening back, toiled earnestly, until  
They found the treasures which the mound concealed.

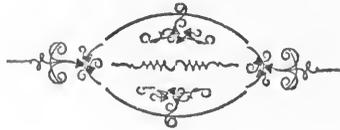


“There, little changed by reason of decay—  
Each scantily confined in his fisher's coat—

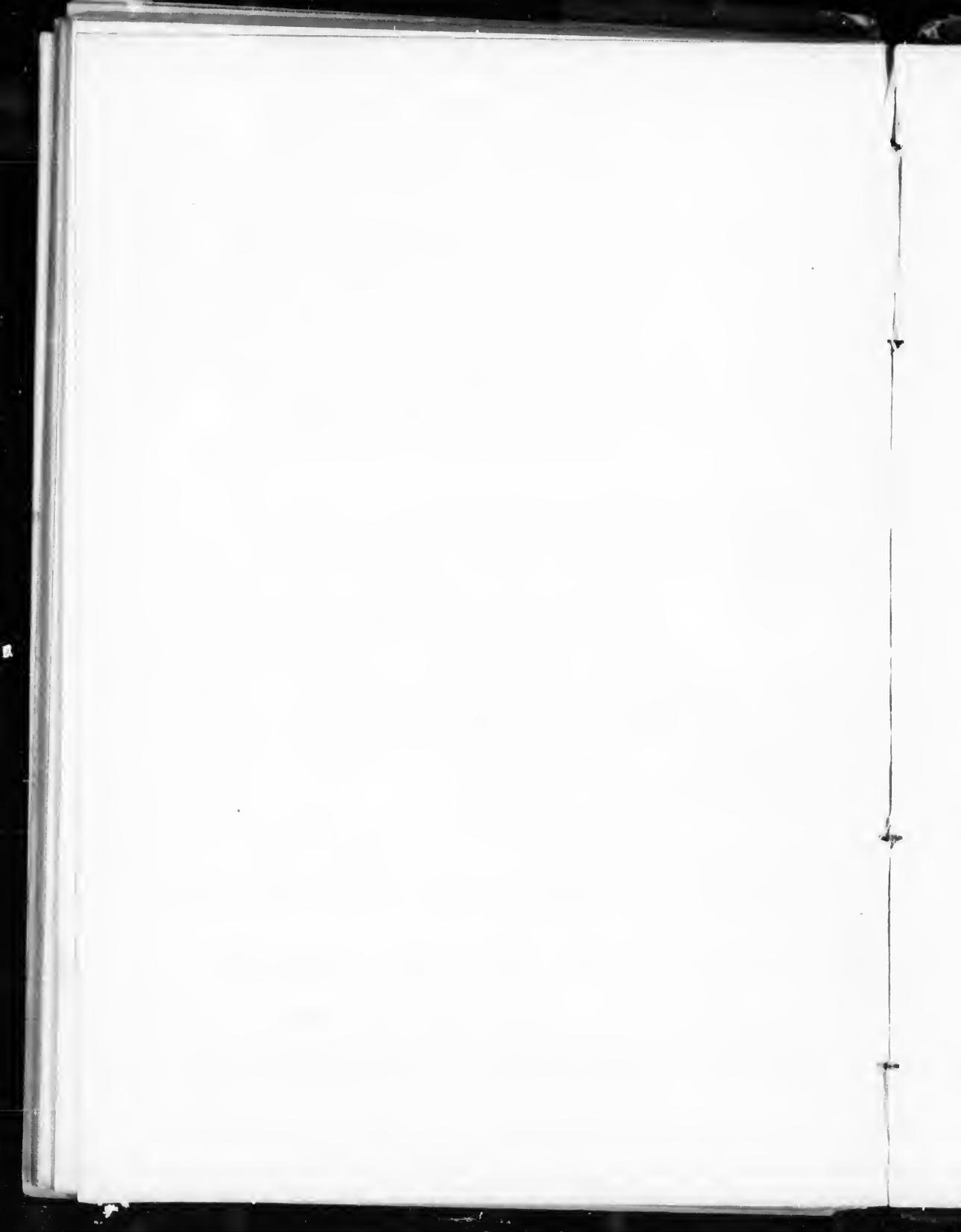
Their stiffened hands folded as if in prayer,  
Lay the three fishermen of Carraquette.  
The mystery was solved—for those who dwelt  
Upon the quiet shores of Tracadie,  
Had found their bodies after the great gale,  
And thus had buried them beneath the pines.  
Then Jacques Belcour took up the unnailed planks  
That decked his open shallop; and his men,  
Making rude coffins, placed the three therein—  
Cutting a ringlet from the head of each;  
And in the Chapel-ground of Tracadie,  
Laid them at last in consecrated earth.



“Then, sailing northward, he bore home the tale,  
That quenched poor Marguerite's last ray of hope—  
With its sure tidings of her husband's fate;  
Yet gave her still a mystical and strange,  
Yet fervent gratitude, for that which gave  
An end, at last, to all her hopes and fears.



The Island of the Dead.



## THE ISLAND OF THE DEAD:

A LEGEND OF BRITTANY.

**T**wo hundred years ago, a group of men  
Watched, silently, a deeply laden bark,  
From the tall summit of the dunes, which then  
Guarded St. Peter's haven ; through the dark  
Shadows they gazed, as blended her tall spars  
With all their tracery of sheet and stay,  
Into a dim white pyramid afar—  
Which 'mid the shadows of the evening gray,  
From their grave longing glances passed away.

Well might they gaze ! She bore their comrades home  
To sunny Brittany : where dance, and song—  
The grape's rich juices—the soft spell of love—

All that the heart desires, for which men long—  
Should well repay the weary season spent  
Among the foaming ledges of St. John.

Their busy toil had crammed the roomy hold

With fish, from deck to kelson, save where lay  
Huge bales of fur, and reeking oil casks old,

With narwhal-horn, and walrus ivory.

The coming spring, they would return again ;

But they must spend the winter, fierce and cold,  
In that lone isle, afar from christian men.

In their lone dwelling—half a blockhouse rude,

With loopoled walls, and stockades, sharp and tall,  
Falcon and swivel ever threatening stood,

On the flat roof's half-battlemented wall,  
Above a massive portal, straight, and fenced  
By hinge and hasp, with many a rivet clenched.

Within, on one side yawned the hearth, a pyre

Heaped with the limbs of huge old forest kings ;

And the rich tinting of that blazing fire  
Fell on steel-plate and splent, on scales and rings  
Of morion and cuirass—and on hilt  
Of rapiers and daggers richly gilt—  
The spoils of fox and bear, of seal and moose—  
And the huge tubes of many an arquebuse;  
While in the midst a heavy table stood—  
Whereon, in massy cups, and beakers rude,  
The mete allowance of their treasured wine,  
Each evening spread an odor of the vine,  
Calling to memory, in that islet lone,—  
The fruity zephyrs of their eastern home—  
Their fertile fields—the mild unfettered seas—  
Its wooded isles—and straw-thatched cottages—  
The vineyards green, with purple clusters crowned—  
Wide-spreading orchards, where, 'mid leaves embrowned  
Apple and pear, quince, fig, and orange, shone.  
And ever in the evenings, long and lone,  
Over their wine, they sung sweet Gallic lays,

Of love, and war, in maid's and heroes' praise;  
Or told strange tales, to lighten weary time  
In homely prose, or spirit-stirring rhyme.  
Their stalwart chief, Emile LeBlanc, by name—  
A smuggler of St. Malo; of vast frame,  
And noble face—over whose swarthy brow  
Fell waves of silken hair, which, white as snow,  
Blent with the flowing beard, which swept his chest—  
Nevertheless, seemed younger than the rest.  
Beneath his cloak a light cuirass of steel  
Gleamed with bright boss, and arabesque of gold;  
His huge Cordovan boots, from thigh to heel,  
Were seamed with silk, in colors manifold;  
The heavy poinard at his studded belt;  
With knife and pistol, gleamed at butt and hilt;  
With all that blaze of gold, and jewels shine,  
Which that stern age devoted at war's shrine.  
His eyes shone with a sad yet pleasant light,  
Save in the hour of battle, or of wreck—

For oft his hand had turned the tide of fight;  
And thrice his feet had trod a sinking deck,  
Shattered by shot, veiled by the cannon's breath,  
With woe, and carnage, face to face with death.

But 'neath his rule they passed the winter time,  
At peace with all the Abenakis braves—  
Whose winter camps, beneath the giant pines,  
A kindlier aspect to the haven gave.  
Rich were the fruits of that long winter's toil—  
Of savage barter and successful chase—  
For priceless furs; for ivory and oil,  
Of seal and walrus. Barrel, bale and case,  
Filled each rude warehouse; and the walls were hung  
With bearskins huge, and hams, and mooses' tongues;  
Wide branching horns and many a matted hide,  
Which, pierced with wounds, told how the wildeat died;  
And many a soft rich robe, whose broidered bands,  
Spoke of the patient toil of Indian hands.



One stormy evening, as, around the fire,  
They heard the rattle of the driving hail  
Against the shutters—while the tempest's ire,  
Broke in wild howl, or low and moaning wail—  
Emile surveyed the fire with dreamy gaze,  
Unmindful of rude mirth, or raging storm—  
As if, 'mid glowing coals, and dazzling blaze,  
He saw some faerie scene or radiant form.  
At last his firm lips quivered, and his eyes  
Grew soft and childlike till they filled with tears;

His comrade's mirth was hushed, and awed surprise

In every swarthy face around appears.

Then he, roused by their silence, saw each face—

Where pity blent with wonder—and he said:

“I see, brave comrades, by your kindly gaze,

You marvel that Emile Le Blanc should shed

Tears like a woman. Listen! while I tell—

In guerdon of full many a pleasant hour,

Lightened with tales of love, and dangers fell—

Of the one incident, which had the power

To fill my breast with all-pervading fear—

The only memory which calls a tear.

## PART II.

“My father Athanase dwelt by the sea,

Near to St. Malo; and the ocean gave

To all our race their earliest lullaby,

Their daily food, and often too, a grave.

He knew each rock and shoal from Loire to Seine;

Could find each haven at night's darkest hour;  
And even shrouding fog and driving rain  
Scarce seemed to foil his vision's wondrous power.

“He married; and, one lonely winter's night,  
His young wife died in giving birth to me,  
His second son. The eldest, as was right,  
Bore his sire's name, and followed him to sea  
Early in life; and I, still earlier, bore  
The anxious watch—stern labor at the oar—  
The craft of helm and sail, of line and seine—  
The brunt of wind and wave, of hail and rain—  
Yet, grew in health; while brother Athanase  
Waxed pale and slender, and long weary days  
Of illness followed, when his proud soul lent  
His feeble limbs to toil beyond their strength.

“Under Ushant we lay, one stormy night,  
Late in the fall. A norther at its height,  
All day, had swept the Channel into foam.

I kept the anchor-watch. At midnight, lone,  
I heard a peal like far-off thunder! Still,  
No lightning through the dense gloom sent its flash.  
Intert, I listened for short space; a crash,  
Still nearer, followed, and my father woke.  
'May God forgive their sins,' he slowly said;  
'Man cannot save them now!' And then there broke  
Upon the midnight gloom a short lived glare:  
A single cannon shook the murky air;  
Above the roar of surf, and beat of hail,  
There rose a sullen crash, a feeble wail;  
Then to the storm my father bared his head—  
'Let us, my son, ask mercy for the dead!'

"Soon the gale lulled, and until dawn, the rain  
Fell heavily upon the lessening seas;  
Then through the mists we saw the Isle of Sein,  
With wave-worn cliffs, and gloomy forest trees—  
And on some reefs midway, the fated wreck!

One lower mast, above the wave-swept deck,  
Held in the shrouds something above the sweep

Of the relentless surges ; and my sire  
Made sail and dashed into the angry deep.

Over the surge we swept, as autumn fire  
Crosses the prairies. In scant space the lee  
Of the huge hulk we gained, and tossing lay  
Amid the wreck of spar, and sail, and stay,  
Watching three forms which, in the shrouds o'erhead,  
Hung motionless and silent as the dead.



'Then, in a moment's lull of the fierce seas,  
We ran aboard; and with a rope, I leaped  
Into the rigging, moored the boat, and crept  
Up by the sleepers. One, of princely mould,  
Clasped a young mother, whose embraces cold,  
Still twined around an infant—whose weak life,  
The tender love of husband and of wife  
Had saved by their self-sacrifice. The spray  
Found easy access to the breasts which lay  
Bared to its fury; but the child, enrolled  
In a laced cloak, and wrappings manifold,  
Still breathed, tho' feebly. Then I lowered the three  
Into our shallop, and before the sea,  
Ran for the Isle of Sein, and landed there.  
We buried, 'neath the trees, that noble pair,  
And raised a cross above them—tho' their bark  
Was English, and their customs, cold and dark,  
Seldom permit that emblem of God's grace  
To point to heaven, from man's last resting place—

But their great love seemed, to us, like to His  
Who gave His life for all men; and I wis,  
In all the generous deeds I since have seen,  
There was no nobler sacrifice than this.

## PART III.

“The child, a girl, awoke to life and strength,  
And henceforth shared my father’s loving care;  
And when she reached fair womanhood at length,  
In all St. Malo, there was none more fair  
Than our dear Marie: with her pure blue eyes,  
That shone as with the light of paradise;  
Her curls, like tendrils of the graceful vine,  
Trembled and floated in the summer breeze; [wine,  
Ripe lips, through which her breath like new-pressed  
Blent its faint fragrance with the orange trees;  
While, in her modest garb, her noble form  
Moved in such native pride, and easy grace,  
That dames of high degree forgot their scorn

Of low estate, their hatred of her race,  
To praise her virtues and her lovely face.

“I long had left the fishers’ lowly life,  
For wider roving and more daring deed;  
Had sailed the Spanish Main; in deadly strife  
Seen thousands join—and many hundreds bleed;  
Fished on Newfoundland’s banks, where dense fogs  
Eternally; languished in Moslem tower; [lower  
Slaved in Tunisian galley, pulled the oar,  
Chained to the bench—and heard the sullen roar  
Of guns that brought us freedom, oft with death;  
But through God’s grace at last in France drew breath,  
To find a welcome in old Brittany,  
From Father, Athanase, and dear Marie.

‘Twas St. John’s night! and from each lofty height  
Glared the great bonfires of that magic eve,  
On which our maidens dance a measure light,  
By blazing fagots—in the firm belief,

If by nine fires their magic round they trace,  
Each maid that year a husband shall embrace;  
And that the empty seats around them hold  
The loved and lost—who, from their slumbers cold,  
Come all unseen to hear the minstrelsy,  
And join unnoticed in the living's glee.

“Father and Athanase together stood

Watching our merriment; the beacon's glare  
Showed on each face a melancholy mood—

In brother's pain and in my father's care.  
But I was happy! for Marie had said,  
That ere another year we should be wed.  
In the dim shadow of a giant oak,

I told the secret of the love, that years  
Had gathered all unknown, until it broke

From my hot lips, and she, with happy tears  
Said, she had loved us all; but that her heart,  
O'er all the rest, had held me still apart.

“We wended home at last; and, by the fire,  
Told tales of war, and wonder, love and crime;  
And in his turn, in solemn tones, my sire  
Rehearsed the legends of the Isle of Sein:  
How oft the fishers, on that haunted shore,  
Hear late at night, the summons of the dead  
To bear them to the islet. How the oar  
And sail propel a deeply freighted bark,  
Laden with forms unseen through shadows dark;  
The boat skims silently the ocean tide,  
Until it gains the gloomy islet’s side;  
Then lightened rises, as the mournful train  
Of phantoms leave it with deep sighs of pain,  
And plaintive murmurs, which, amid the trees,  
Blend with the branches, sighing symphonies—  
And the freed mortal, with a sinking heart,  
Hastens to raise his sail, and to depart.

‘I fain would sleep beside my parents dead—  
E’en in that Isle,’ poor Marie, sighing, said.

'And I beside thee,' murmured Athanase.  
The quick blood mantled in my swarthy face;  
But father's brow bore the dull look of care,  
As slow he answered, 'We shall all sleep there,  
If true the legend; but some little fee  
The fisherman should have who carries me.  
No churl of Finisterre shall wakened be,  
If an old comrade sails that haunted sea;  
And he shall know me by this sign, that I  
Am pilot ne'ertheless, although I die.'  
'And I,' said Athanase, 'will trim the sail—  
As oft in life in many a fearful gale.'  
'I,' said Marie, more softly, 'then will kiss  
He who dare claim reward—that on his lips  
No sinful kiss may press while he shall live;  
And when death nears, its memory shall give  
Him strength to meet his doom.' 'A truce to this,  
Said I, uneasily; though sweet a kiss  
From such fair lips—though none can reef and steer

Better than you—I should feel mortal fear  
With such companions, in the stanchest bark  
That sails the Channel.’ Then all laughed.  
I sought repose—nor wakened until morn;  
But Athanase had risen with the dawn,  
To search his nets; and Marie’s busy wheel  
Hummed merrily without. The mellow peal  
From distant shrines called monks devout to prayer.  
My father entered, and, with solemn air,  
Kissed me and said, ‘I give God thanks, Emile,  
For thy dear life, preserved from wave and steel;  
I heard last night the love you two expressed;  
I know the pure calm joy that fills your breast—  
But cannot join you. Should your brother know  
Your happiness, a fell and crushing blow  
Would fall among us. He has loved her long,  
Nor dared to tell her. So his passions strong,  
And the sure canker of a slow decline,  
Mark him for death in wiser eyes than mine.

Your presence troubles him—he does not know  
Of your betrothal—but O! Emile, go!  
And let your brother dream his last fond dream  
Of love and life—for death's last solemn scene  
Will bring him peace too soon. Then, dear Emile,  
You can enjoy your love, nor sadly feel  
A brother's life embittered by your bliss—  
Be brave and generous to him in this.'

“So, in short space, I went again to sea,  
Bound for the warm Levant; but, off Sallee,  
Fought with a pirate all one summer's day;  
And—our ship sinking—after bloody fray,  
Took her by boarding; and our venture gone,  
We freed her slaves and sailed for Perpignan.  
There soon our prize was sold, and overland

I sought St. Malo. Long the weary road—  
And preyed upon by many a robber band—  
But thankfully at last, I slowly rode

In through the town, and sought my father's cot,  
And tried the doorlatch—but it opened not.

“A neighbor told me that two days before,  
My father's bark at dawn had left the shore—  
Bound for the Loire, with Athanase, whose strength  
A milder clime might renovate at length.  
Marie had joined them. But a storm had burst  
Upon the coast that night. I feared the worst—  
And in another shallop followed fast.  
Long since the wind had veered—no chilling blast  
Vexed the smooth surges. All that anxious night  
I held my course, until the morning light  
Showed me afar the dim isle of Ushant;  
And, ere high noon, I set my sails aslant  
The eastern breeze, and running under Brest—  
Near Douarnenez at evening lay at rest.  
The sun sank slowly in a lurid west,  
Where a dark levin-cloud was gathering fast;

Sullenly black the gloomy vapours crept

Up the blue sky before the coming blast.

As from a barren cliff I scanned the sea—

Toward dim Ushant I spied a distant sail;

Her canvass trim familiar seemed to me—

And a vague fear lent to the coming gale

A deeper gloom. Folly it seemed, indeed,

To wait in her the coming of my sire—

Still far before me, from anxiety freed.

I sought my bark's rude shelter, from the ire

Of the fierce tempest. On the surgeless brine,

In blinding torrents fell the beating rain;

The lightning gleamed in flashes serpentine;

The thunder echoed ceaselessly: in vain

I sought repose—a vague fear seemed to fall

And fold around my couch like a black pall.

“E'en when asleep I dreamed of sinking wrecks—

Of shattered masts, rent sails and reeling decks.

At last I slept—but with a start awoke.

A flood of moonlight through the vapours broke—  
Silvering, here and there, the foam-capped waves,  
Which, why I know not, seemed to me like graves!  
Afar, I saw the gloomy Isle of Sein,  
Where once the Druids knelt to gods malign,  
With rites unholy. Then my blood ran chill,  
As, in the midnight radiance, lone and still—  
I heard a sad familiar voice, that said,  
'Arise, Emile, and ferry o'er the dead!'  
Resist I could not, for the boat sank low,  
As if o'er-crowded; and a plaintive wail,  
A murmured sigh, arose, as at the bow,  
Hands all unseen, unmoored; and as the prow  
Of my swift boat dashed 'mid the roaring seas,  
From a still port to face an angry breeze,  
Skilled fingers held the helm, and 'trimmed the sail,  
As oft before in many a fearful gale.'  
Terrible memory! how those accents rung [sung  
Through my dazed brain. The fierce blasts shrilly

Through the strained rigging, and, beneath our lee,  
Against the black rocks, broke the foaming sea;  
But with rare skill, our phantom pilot steered,  
Though wind and tide opposed, the isle we neared;  
And then I heard a plaintive murmur—‘ I  
Am pilot ne’ertheless, although I die.’

“Then suddenly I was no more alone—  
Like the pale seafire that, ’mid ocean’s foam,  
Marks the swift course of shark or albicore—  
Shone my weird comrades, as I reached the shore;  
All indistinct at first they left the bark;  
But as they reached the forest-shadows dark,  
I saw full many a gallant cavalier,  
With stately dames and swarthy buccaneer.  
Then a wild fancy seized me, and I said—  
‘ Gain I no guerdon for such passage dread—’  
The last shade neared me, and a frozen kiss  
Fell on my lips—but sweet it was, I wis—

And a voice murmured, 'I your guerdon give—  
My last on earth--that while you here must live,  
No kiss unholy shall your spirit part  
From her, whose love on earth secured your heart  
From passions banished from that deathless shore,  
Where love ineffable reigns evermore.'

Then, 'neath the branches of a giant tree,  
Athenase, father, and my lost Marie,  
Seemed calmly gazing on me, and to fade  
Into the shadows of the leafy glade.

And I—I fainted. \* \* \* \*



“Worn and weak I woke,  
Beneath a fisher’s roof. The sun’s rays broke,  
Through a dim window, on a plankless floor.  
And evermore the surge’s sullen roar  
Came up the cliff, beside the humble door.  
From my kind host I learned no more than this :  
‘Close to death’s door your feet have trod, I wis,  
Since first we saw your boat near Douarnenez ;  
And, boarding, found you, as you tossing lay  
In wild delirium. And since that time,  
Often of passing to the Isle of Sein,  
With unseen passengers, and phantoms drear ;  
With stately dame, and stalwart buccaneer—  
You raved delirious. In good sooth, I fear  
I bring sad tidings. For the night before  
We found you sick, a fierce squall swept our shore—  
An unknown corsair founded off Morlaix—  
An Indiaman, outside St. Matthew’s bay,  
Struck on the reefs ; of seventy souls or more,

Scarce twenty living ever reached the shore ;  
While I, next morning, with two lads of mine,  
Scarce a league northward of the Isle of Sein,  
Found at ebb-tide a man, whose locks were grey,  
With fisher's garb ; and, not far distant, lay  
Amid the seaweed, on a half sunk reef,  
A younger man, who, in my firm belief,  
Had given life for one whose slender arm  
Still clasped his neck ; while her long sunny hair  
Swept over his bared shoulders ; other harm  
Than loss of life they showed not, but they lay  
In undisfigured beauty, in that calm  
Dreamless repose which falls when death holds sway.

“We raised them from the sea.

Ere eventide,  
In a dim glade upon the Isle of Sein,  
We buried them beside a broken cross—  
Which, as I deem, was raised to mark a loss

Of life like unto theirs long years ago,  
For legend it bore none.' In accents low  
And weak, I murmured thanks to him who gave  
Succor to me—and to my dead, a grave.  
My blood-bought gold his friendly care repaid;  
Quimperlé's monks full many a death-mass said  
For those who sleep in yonder haunted Isie—  
Forever free from sorrow, pain and guile.

“Since then my lips have known no maiden's kiss;  
My heart no woman's love; and thrice, I wis,  
When o'er my head the pirate's sabre hung—  
When in mid-ocean to a spar I clung—  
When at the stake I felt the leaping spire,  
Of the revengeful Huron's torture-fire—  
I have made mock of pain and scorned to fear,  
When life seemed passing and when death drew near;  
For then she seems so close, and life's eclipse,  
Will bring to me the rich wine of her lips—

Her warm sweet breath, her loved tones low and clear,  
And all the bliss that I have longed for here.  
Comrades, good night."

The huge fire dimly burned,  
As to his couch each silent hunter turned,  
After rude prayer, and soon their breathing deep  
Told all had found forgetfulness in sleep.

THE END.

