

THE FETE AT COQUEVILLE

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I

Coqueville is a little village planted in a cleft in the rocks, two leagues from Grandport. A fine sandy beach stretches in front of the huts lodged half-way up in the side of the cliff like shells left there by the tide. As one climbs to the heights of Grandport, on the left the yellow sheet of sand can be very clearly seen to the west like a river of gold dust streaming from the gaping cleft in the rock; and with good eyes one can even distinguish the houses, whose tones of rust spot the rock and whose chimneys send up their bluish trails to the very crest of the great slope, streaking the sky. It is a deserted hole. Coqueville has never been able to attain to the figure of two hundred inhabitants. The gorge which opens into the sea, and on the threshold of which the village is planted, burrows into the earth by turns so abrupt and by descents so steep that it is almost impossible to pass there with wagons. It cuts off all communication and isolates the country so that one seems to be a hundred leagues from the neighboring hamlets.

Moreover, the inhabitants have communication with Grandport only by water. Nearly all of them fishermen, living by the ocean, they carry their fish there every day in their barks. A great commission house, the firm of Dufeu, buys their fish on contract. The father Dufeu has been dead some years, but the widow Dufeu has continued the business; she has simply engaged a clerk, M. Mouchel, a big blond devil, charged with beating up the coast and dealing with the fishermen. This M. Mouchel is the sole link between Coqueville and the civilized world.

Coqueville merits a historian. It seems certain that the village, in the night of time, was founded by the Mahes; a family which happened to establish itself there and which grew vigorous at the foot of the cliff. These Mahes continued to prosper at first, marrying continually among themselves, for during centuries one finds none but Mahes there. Then under Louis XIII appeared one Floche. No one knew too much of where he came from. He married a Mahe, and from that time a phenomenon was brought forth; the Floches in their turn prospered and multiplied exceedingly, so that they ended little by little in absorbing the Mahes, whose numbers diminished until their fortune passed entirely into the hands of the newcomers. Without doubt, the Floches brought new blood, more vigorous physical organs, a

temperament which adapted itself better to that hard condition of high wind and of high sea. At any rate, they are to-day masters of Coqueville.

It can easily be understood that this displacement of numbers and of riches was not accomplished without terrible disturbances. The Mahes and the Hoches detest each other. Between them is a hatred of centuries. The Mahes in spite of their decline retain the pride of ancient conquerors. After all they are the founders, the ancestors. They speak with contempt of the first Floche, a beggar, a vagabond picked up by them from feelings of pity, and to have given away one of their daughters to whom was their eternal regret. This Floche, to hear them speak, had engendered nothing but a descent of libertines and thieves, who pass their nights in raising children and their days in coveting legacies. And there is not an insult they do not heap upon the powerful tribe of Floche, seized with that bitter rage of nobles, decimated, ruined, who see the spawn of the bourgeoisie master of their rents and of their chateau. The Floches, on their side, naturally have the insolence of those who triumph. They are in full possession, a thing to make them insolent. Full of contempt for the ancient race of the Mahes, they threaten to drive them from the village if they do not bow their heads. To them they are starvelings, who instead of draping themselves in their rags would do much better to mend them.

So Coqueville finds itself a prey to two fierce factions--something like one hundred and thirty inhabitants bent upon devouring the other fifty for the simple reason that they are the stronger.

The struggle between two great empires has no other history.

Among the quarrels which have lately upset Coqueville, they cite the famous enmity of the brothers, Fouasse and Tupain, and the ringing battles of the Rouget menage. You must know that every inhabitant in former days received a surname, which has become to-day the regular name of the family; for it was difficult to distinguish one's self among the cross-breedings of the Mahes and the Floches. Rouget assuredly had an ancestor of fiery blood. As for Fouasse and Tupain, they were called thus without knowing why, many surnames having lost all rational meaning in course of time. Well, old Françoise, a wanton of eighty years who lived forever, had had Fouasse by a Mahe, then becoming a widow, she remarried with a Floche and brought forth Tupain. Hence the hatred of the two brothers, made specially lively by the question of inheritance. At the Rouget's they beat each other to a jelly because Rouget accused his wife, Marie, of being unfaithful to him for a Floche, the tall Brisemotte, a strong, dark man, on whom he had already twice thrown himself with a knife, yelling that he would rip open his belly. Rouget, a small, nervous man, was a great spitfire.

But that which interested Coqueville most deeply was neither the tantrums of Rouget nor the differences between Tupain and Fouasse. A great rumor circulated: Delphin, a Mahe, a rascal of twenty years, dared to love the beautiful Margot, the daughter of La Queue, the richest of the Floches and chief man of the country. This La Queue was, in truth, a considerable personage. They called him La Queue because his father, in the days of Louis Philippe, had been the last to tie up his hair, with the obstinacy of old age that clings to the fashions of its youth. Well, then, La Queue owned one of the two large fishing smacks of Coqueville, the "Zephir," by far the best, still quite new and seaworthy. The other big boat, the "Baleine," a rotten old patache, {1} belonged to Rouget, whose sailors were Delphin and Fouasse, while La Queue took with him Tupain and Brisemotte. These last had grown weary of laughing contemptuously at the "Baleine"; a sabot, they said, which would disappear some fine day under the billows like a handful of mud. So when La Queue learned that that ragamuffin of a Delphin, the froth of the "Baleine," allowed himself to go prowling around his daughter, he delivered two sound whacks at Margot, a trifle merely to warn her that she should never be the wife of a Mahe. As a result, Margot, furious, declared that she would pass that pair of slaps on to Delphin if he ever ventured to rub against her skirts. It was vexing to be boxed on the ears for a boy whom she had never looked in the face!

1 Naval term signifying a rickety old concern.

Margot, at sixteen years strong as a man and handsome as a lady, had the reputation of being a scornful person, very hard on lovers. And from that, added to the trifle of the two slaps, of the presumptuousness of Delphin, and of the wrath of Margot, one ought easily to comprehend the endless gossip of Coqueville.

Notwithstanding, certain persons said that Margot, at bottom, was not so very furious at sight of Delphin circling around her. This Delphin was a little blonde, with skin bronzed by the sea-glare, and with a mane of curly hair that fell over his eyes and in his neck. And very powerful despite his slight figure; quite capable of thrashing any one three times his size. They said that at times he ran away and passed the night in Grandport. That gave him the reputation of a werewolf with the girls, who accused him, among themselves, of "making a life of it"--a vague expression in which they included all sorts of unknown pleasures. Margot, when she spoke of Delphin, betrayed too much feeling. He, smiling with an artful air, looked at her with eyes half shut and glittering, without troubling himself the least in the world over her scorn or her transports of passion. He passed before her door, he glided along by the bushes watching for her hours at a time, full of the patience and the cunning of a cat lying in wait for a tomcat; and when suddenly she discovered him behind her skirts, so close to her at times that she guessed it by the warmth of his breath, he did not fly, he took on an air gentle and melancholy which left her abashed, stifled, not regaining her wrath until he was some distance away. Surely, if her father saw her he would smite her again. But she boasted in vain that Delphin would some day get that pair of slaps she had promised him; she never seized the moment to apply them when he was there; which

made people say that she ought not to talk so much, since in the end she kept the slaps herself.

No one, however, supposed she could ever be Delphin's wife. In her case they saw the weakness of a coquette. As for a marriage between the most beggarly of the Mahes, a fellow who had not six shirts to set up housekeeping with, and the daughter of the mayor, the richest heiress of the Floches, it would seem simply monstrous.

Evil tongues insinuated that she could perfectly go with him all the same, but that she would certainly not marry him. A rich girl takes her pleasure as it suits her; only, if she has a head, she does not commit a folly. Finally all Coqueville interested itself in the matter, curious to know how things would turn out. Would Delphin get his two slaps? or else Margot, would she let herself be kissed on both cheeks in some hole in the cliff? They must see! There were some for the slaps and there were some for the kisses. Coqueville was in revolution.

In the village two people only, the cure and the *garde champetre*? belonged neither to the Mahes nor to the Floches. The *garde champetre*, {2} a tall, dried-up fellow, whose name no one knew, but who was called the Emperor, no doubt because he had served under Charles X, as a matter of fact exercised no burdensome supervision over the commune which was all bare rocks and waste lands. A sub-prefect who patronized him had created for him the sinecure where he devoured in peace his very small living.

2 Watchman.

As for the Abbe Radiguet, he was one of those simple-minded priests whom the bishop, in his desire to be rid of him, buries in some out of the way hole. He lived the life of an honest man, once more turned peasant, hoeing his little garden redeemed from the rock, smoking his pipe and watching his salads grow. His sole fault was a gluttony which he knew not how to refine, reduced to adoring mackerel and to drinking, at times, more cider than he could contain. In other respects, the father of his parishioners, who came at long intervals to hear a mass to please him.

But the cure and the *garde champetre* were obliged to take sides after having succeeded for a long time in remaining neutral. Now, the Emperor held for the Mahes, while the Abbe Radiguet supported the Floches. Hence complications. As the Emperor, from morning to night, lived like a bourgeois [citizen], and as he wearied of counting the boats which put out from Grand-port, he took it upon himself to act as village police. Having become the partizan of the Mahes, through native instinct for the preservation of society, he sided with Fouasse against Tupain; he tried to catch the wife of Rouget in *flagrante delicto* with Brisemotte, and above all he closed his eyes when he saw Delphin slipping into Margot's courtyard. The worst of it was that these tactics brought about heated quarrels between the Emperor and his natural superior, the mayor La Queue. Respectful of discipline, the former heard the reproaches of the latter, then recommenced to act as his head dictated; which disorganized the public authority of Coqueville. One could not pass before the shed ornamented with the name of the town hall without being deafened by the noise of some dispute. On the other hand, the Abbe Radiguet rallied to the triumphant Floches, who loaded him with superb mackerel, secretly encouraged the resistance of Rouget's wife and threatened Margot with the flames of hell if she should ever allow Delphin to touch her with his finger. It was, to sum up, complete anarchy; the army in revolt against the civil power, religion making itself complaisant toward the pleasures of the bourgeoisie; a whole people, a hundred and eighty inhabitants, devouring each other in a hole, in face of the vast sea, and of the infinite sky.

Alone, in the midst of topsy-turvy Coqueville, Delphin preserved the laughter of a love-sick boy, who scorned the rest, provided Margot was for him. He followed her zigzags as one follows hares. Very wise, despite his simple look, he wanted the cure to marry them, so that his bliss might last forever.

One evening, in a byway where he was watching for her, Margot at last raised her hand. But she stopped, all red; for without waiting for the slap, he had seized the hand that threatened him and kissed it furiously. As she trembled, he said to her in a low voice: "I love you. Won't you have me?"

"Never!" she cried, in rebellion.

He shrugged his shoulders, then with an air, calm and tender, "Pray do not say that--we shall be very comfortable together, we two. You will see how nice it is."

II

That Sunday the weather was appalling, one of those sudden calamities of September that unchain such fearful tempests on the rocky coast of Grandport. At nightfall Coqueville sighted a ship in distress driven by the wind. But the shadows deepened, they could not dream of rendering help. Since the evening before, the "Zephir" and the "Baleine" had been moored in the little natural harbor situated at the left of the beach, between two walls of granite. Neither La Queue nor Rouget had dared to go out, the worst of it was that M. Mouchel, representing the Widow Dufeu, had taken the trouble to come in person that Saturday to promise them a reward if they would make a serious effort; fish was

scarce, they were complaining at the markets. So, Sunday evening, going to bed under squalls of rain, Coqueville growled in a bad humor. It was the everlasting story: orders kept coming in while the sea guarded its fish. And all the village talked of the ship which they had seen passing in the hurricane, and which must assuredly by that time be sleeping at the bottom of the water. The next day, Monday, the sky was dark as ever. The sea, still high, raged without being able to calm itself, although the wind was blowing less strong. It fell completely, but the waves kept up their furious motion. In spite of everything, the two boats went out in the afternoon. Toward four o'clock, the "Zephir" came in again, having caught nothing. While the sailors, Tupain and Brisemotte, anchored in the little harbor, La Queue, exasperated, on the shore, shook his fist at the ocean. And M. Mouchel was waiting! Margot was there, with the half of Coqueville, watching the last surges of the tempest, sharing her father's rancor against the sea and the sky.

"But where is the 'Baleine'?" demanded some one.

"Out there beyond the point," said La Queue. "If that carcass comes back whole to-day, it will be by a chance."

He was full of contempt. Then he informed them that it was good for the Mahes to risk their skins in that way; when one is not worth a sou, one may perish. As for him, he preferred to break his word to M. Mouchel.

In the meantime, Margot was examining the point of rocks behind which the "Baleine" was hidden.

"Father," she asked at last, "have they caught something?"

"They?" he cried. "Nothing at all."

He calmed himself and added more gently, seeing the Emperor, who was sneering at him:

"I do not know whether they have caught anything, but as they never do catch anything--"

"Perhaps, to-day, all the same, they have taken something," said the Emperor ill-naturedly. "Such things have been seen." La Queue was about to reply angrily. But the Abbe Radiguet, who came up, calmed him. From the porch of the church the abbe had happened to observe the "Baleine"; and the bark seemed to be giving chase to some big fish. This news greatly interested Coqueville. In the groups reunited on the shore there were Mahes and Floches, the former praying that the boat might come in with a miraculous catch, the others making vows that it might come in empty.

Margot, holding herself very straight, did not take her eyes from the sea. "There they are!" said she simply.

And in fact a black dot showed itself beyond the point. All looked at it. One would have said a cork dancing on the water. The Emperor did not see even the black dot. One must be of Coqueville to recognize at that distance the "Baleine" and those who manned her.

"See!" said Margot, who had the best eyes of the coast, "it is Fouasse and Rouget who are rowing--The little one is standing up in the bow."

She called Delphin "the little one" so as not to mention his name. And from then on they followed the course of the bark, trying to account for her strange movements. As the cure said, she appeared to be giving chase to some great fish that might be fleeing before her. That seemed extraordinary. The Emperor pretended that their net was without doubt being carried away. But La Queue cried that they were do-nothings, and that they were just amusing themselves. Quite certain they were not fishing for seals! All the Floches made merry over that joke; while the Mahes, vexed, declared that Rouget was a fine fellow all the same, and that he was risking his skin while others at the least puff of wind preferred *terra firma*. The Abbe Radiguet was forced to interpose again for there were slaps in the air.

"What ails them?" said Margot abruptly. "They are off again!" They ceased menacing one another, and every eye searched the horizon. The "Baleine" was once more hidden behind the point. This time La Queue himself became uneasy. He could not account for such manoeuvres. The fear that Rouget was really in a fair way to catch some fish threw him off his mental balance. No one left the beach, although there was nothing strange to be seen. They stayed there nearly two hours, they watched incessantly for the bark, which appeared from time to time, then disappeared. It finished by not showing itself at all any more. La Queue, enraged, breathing in his heart the abominable wish, declared that she must have sunk; and, as just at that moment Rouget's wife appeared with Brisemotte, he looked at them both, sneering, while he patted Tupain on the shoulder to console him already for the death of his brother, Fouasse. But he stopped laughing when he caught sight of his daughter Margot, silent and looming, her eyes on the distance; it was quite possibly for Delphin.

"What are you up to over there?" he scolded. "Be off home with you! Mind, Margot!"

She did not stir. Then all at once: "Ah! there they are!"

He gave a cry of surprise. Margot, with her good eyes, swore that she no longer saw a soul in the bark; neither Rouget, nor Fouasse, nor any one! The "Baleine," as if abandoned, ran before the wind, tacking about every minute, rocking herself with a lazy air.

A west wind had fortunately risen and was driving her toward the land, but with strange caprices which tossed her to right and to left. Then all Coqueville ran down to the shore. One half shouted to the other half, there remained not a girl in the houses to look after the soup. It was a catastrophe; something inexplicable, the strangeness of which completely turned their heads. Marie, the wife of Rouget, after a moment's reflection, thought it her duty to burst into

tears. Tupain succeeded in merely carrying an air of affliction. All the Mahes were in great distress, while the Floches tried to appear conventional. Margot collapsed as if she had her legs broken.

"What are you up to again!" cried La Queue, who stumbled upon her.

"I am tired," she answered simply.

And she turned her face toward the sea, her cheeks between her hands, shading her eyes with the ends of her fingers, gazing fixedly at the bark rocking itself idly on the waves with the air of a good fellow who has drunk too much.

In the meanwhile suppositions were rife. Perhaps the three men had fallen into the water? Only, all three at a time, that seemed absurd.

La Queue would have liked well to persuade them that the "Baleine" had gone to pieces like a rotten egg; but the boat still held the sea; they shrugged their shoulders. Then, as if the three men had actually perished, he remembered that he was Mayor and spoke of formalities.

"Leave off!" cried the Emperor, "Does one die in such a silly way?" "If they had fallen overboard, little Delphin would have been here by this!"

All Coqueville had to agree, Delphin swam like a herring. But where then could the three men be? They shouted: "I tell you, yes!"--"I tell you, no!"--"Too stupid!"--"Stupid yourself!" And matters came to the point of exchanging blows. The Abbe Radiguet was obliged to make an appeal for reconciliation, while the Emperor hustled the crowd about to establish order. Meanwhile, the bark, without haste, continued to dance before the world. It waltzed, seeming to mock at the people; the sea carried her in, making her salute the land in long rhythmic reverences. Surely it was a bark in a crazy fit. Margot, her cheeks between her hands, kept always gazing. A yawl had just put out of the harbor to go to meet the "Baleine." It was Brisemotte, who had exhibited that impatience, as if he had been delayed in giving certainty to Rouget's wife. From that moment all Coqueville interested itself in the yawl. The voices rose higher: "Well, does he see anything?"

The "Baleine" advanced with her mysterious and mocking air. At last they saw him draw himself up and look into the bark that he had succeeded in taking in tow. All held their breath. But, abruptly, he burst out laughing. That was a surprise; what had he to be amused at? "What is it? What have you got there?" they shouted to him furiously.

He, without replying, laughed still louder. He made gestures as if to say that they would see. Then having fastened the "Baleine" to the yawl, he towed her back. And an unlooked-for spectacle stunned Coqueville. In the bottom of the bark, the three men--Rouget, Delphin, Fouasse--were beatifically stretched out on their backs, snoring, with fists clenched, dead drunk. In their midst was found a little cask stove in, some full cask they had come across at sea and which they had appreciated. Without doubt, it was very good, for they had drunk it all save a liter's worth which had leaked into the bark and which was mixed with the sea water.

"Ah! the pig!" cried the wife of Rouget, brutally, ceasing to whimper.

"Well, it's characteristic--their catch!" said La Queue, who affected great disgust.

"Forsooth!" replied the Emperor, "they catch what they can! They have at least caught a cask, while others have not caught anything at all."

The Mayor shut up, greatly vexed. Coqueville brayed. They understood now. When barks are intoxicated, they dance as men do; and that one, in truth, had her belly full of liquor. Ah, the slut! What a minx! She festooned over the ocean with the air of a sot who could no longer recognize his home. And Coqueville laughed, and fumed, the Mahes found it funny, while the Floches found it disgusting. They surrounded the "Baleine," they craned their necks, they strained their eyes to see sleeping there the three jolly dogs who were exposing the secret springs of their jubilation, oblivious of the crowd hanging over them. The abuse and the laughter troubled them but little. Rouget did not hear his wife accuse him of drinking up all they had; Fouasse did not feel the stealthy kicks with which his brother Tupain ramm'd his sides. As for Delphin, he was pretty, after he had drunk, with his blond hair, his rosy face drowned in bliss. Margot had gotten up, and silently, for the present, she contemplated the little fellow with a hard expression.

"Must put them to bed!" cried a voice.

But just then Delphin opened his eyes. He rolled looks of rapture over the people. They questioned him on all sides with an eagerness that dazed him somewhat, the more easily since he was still as drunk as a thrush.

"Well! What?" he stuttered; "it was a little cask--There is no fish. Therefore, we have caught a little cask."

He did not get beyond that. To every sentence he added simply: "It was very good!"

"But what was it in the cask?" they asked him hotly.

"Ah! I don't know--it was very good."

By this time Coqueville was burning to know. Every one lowered their noses to the boat, sniffing vigorously. With one opinion, it smelt of liquor; only no one could guess what liquor. The Emperor, who flattered himself that he had drunk of everything that a man can drink, said that he would see. He solemnly took in the palm of his hand a little of the liquor that was swimming in the bottom of the bark. The crowd became all at once silent. They waited. But the Emperor,

after sucking up a mouthful, shook his head as if still badly informed. He sucked twice, more and more embarrassed, with an air of uneasiness and surprise. And he was bound to confess:

"I do not know--It's strange--If there was no salt water in it, I would know, no doubt--My word of honor, it is very strange!"

They looked at him. They stood struck with awe before that which the Emperor himself did not venture to pronounce. Coqueville contemplated with respect the little empty cask.

"It was very good!" once more said Delphin, who seemed to be making game of the people. Then, indicating the sea with a comprehensive sweep, he added: "If you want some, there is more there--I saw them--little casks--little casks--little casks--"

And he rocked himself with the refrain which he kept singing, gazing tenderly at Margot. He had just caught sight of her. Furious, she made a motion as if to slap him; but he did not even close his eyes; he awaited the slap with an air of tenderness.

The Abbe Radiguet, puzzled by that unknown tippie, he, too, dipped his finger in the bark and sucked it. Like the Emperor, he shook his head: no, he was not familiar with that, it was very extraordinary. They agreed on but one point: the cask must have been wreckage from the ship in distress, signaled Sunday evening. The English ships often carried to Grandport such cargoes of liquor and fine wines.

Little by little the day faded and the people were withdrawn into shadow. But La Queue remained absorbed, tormented by an idea which he no longer expressed. He stopped, he listened a last time to Delphin, whom they were carrying along, and who was repeating in his sing-song voice: "Little casks--little casks--little casks--if you want some, there are more!"

III

That night the weather changed completely. When Coqueville awoke the following day an unclouded sun was shining; the sea spread out without a wrinkle, like a great piece of green satin. And it was warm, one of those pale glows of autumn.

First of the village, La Queue had risen, still clouded from the dreams of the night. He kept looking for a long time toward the sea, to the right, to the left. At last, with a sour look, he said that he must in any event satisfy M. Mouchel. And he went away at once with Tupain and Brisemotte, threatening Margot to touch up her sides if she did not walk straight. As the "Zephir" left the harbor, and as he saw the "Baleine" swinging heavily at her anchor, he cheered up a little saying: "To-day, I guess, not a bit of it! Blow out the candle, Jeanetton! those gentlemen have gone to bed!"

And as soon as the "Zephir" had reached the open sea, La Queue cast his nets. After that he went to visit his "jambins." The jambins are a kind of elongated eel-pot in which they catch more, especially lobsters and red garnet. But in spite of the calm sea, he did well to visit his jambins one by one. All were empty; at the bottom of the last one, as if in mockery, he found a little mackerel, which he threw back angrily into the sea. It was fate; there were weeks like that when the fish flouted Coqueville, and always at a time when M. Mouchel had expressed a particular desire for them. When La Queue drew in his nets, an hour later, he found nothing but a bunch of seaweed. Straightway he swore, his fists clenched, raging so much the more for the vast serenity of the ocean, lazy and sleeping like a sheet of burnished silver under the blue sky. The "Zephir," without a waver, glided along in gentle ease. La Queue decided to go in again, after having cast his nets once more. In the afternoon he came to see them, and he menaced God and the saints, cursing in abominable words. In the meanwhile, Rouget, Fouasse, and Delphin kept on sleeping. They did not succeed in standing up until the dinner hour. They recollected nothing, they were conscious only of having been treated to something extraordinary, something which they did not understand. In the afternoon, as they were all three down at the harbor, the Emperor tried to question them concerning the liquor, now that they had recovered their senses. It was like, perhaps, eau-de-vie with liquorice-juice in it; or rather one might say rum, sugared and burned. They said "Yes"; they said "No." From their replies, the Emperor suspected that it was ratafia; but he would not have sworn to it. That day Rouget and his men had too many pains in their sides to go a-fishing. Moreover, they knew that La Queue had gone out without success that morning, and they talked of waiting until the next day before visiting their jambins. All three of them, seated on blocks of stone, watched the tide come in, their backs rounded, their mouths clammy, half-asleep.

But suddenly Delphin woke up; he jumped on to the stone, his eyes on the distance, crying: "Look, Boss, off there!"

"What?" asked Rouget, who stretched his limbs.

"A cask."

Rouget and Fouasse were at once on their feet, their eyes gleaming, sweeping the horizon.

"Where is it, lad? Where is the cask?" repeated the boss, greatly moved.

"Off there--to the left--that black spot."

The others saw nothing. Then Rouget swore an oath. "Nom de Dieu!"

He had just spotted the cask, big as a lentil on the white water in a slanting ray of the setting sun. And he ran to the "Baleine," followed by Delphin and Fouasse, who darted forward tapping their backs with their heels and making the pebbles roll.

The "Baleine" was just putting out from the harbor when the news that they saw a cask out at sea was circulated in Coqueville. The children, the women, began to run. They shouted: "A cask! a cask!"

"Do you see it? The current is driving it toward Grandport."

"Ah, yes! on the left--a cask! Come, quick!"

And Coqueville came; tumbled down from its rock; the children arrived head over heels, while the women picked up their skirts with both hands to descend quickly. Soon the entire village was on the beach as on the night before.

Margot showed herself for an instant, then she ran back at full speed to the house, where she wished to forestall her father, who was discussing an official process with the Emperor. At last La Queue appeared. He was livid; he said to the *garde champetre*: "Hold your peace! It's Rouget who has sent you here to beguile me. Well, then, he shall not get it. You'll see!"

When he saw the "Baleine," three hundred metres out, making with all her oars toward the black dot, rocking in the distance, his fury redoubled. And he shoved Tupain and Brisemotte into the "Zephir," and he pulled out in turn, repeating: "No, they shall not have it; I'll die sooner!"

Then Coqueville had a fine spectacle; a mad race between the "Zephir" and the "Baleine." When the latter saw the first leave the harbor, she understood the danger, and shot off with all her speed. She may have been four hundred metres ahead; but the chances remained even, for the "Zephir" was otherwise light and swift; so excitement was at its height on the beach. The Mahes and the Floches had instinctively formed into two groups, following eagerly the vicissitudes of the struggle, each upholding its own boat. At first the "Baleine" kept her advantage, but as soon as the "Zephir" spread herself, they saw that she was gaining little by little. The "Baleine" made a supreme effort and succeeded for a few minutes in holding her distance. Then the "Zephir" once more gained upon the "Baleine," came up with her at extraordinary speed. From that moment on, it was evident that the two barks would meet in the neighborhood of the cask. Victory hung on a circumstance, on the slightest mishap.

"The 'Baleine!' The 'baleine!'" cried the Mahes.

But they soon ceased shouting. When the "Baleine" was almost touching the cask, the "Zephir," by a bold manoeuvre, managed to pass in front of her and throw the cask to the left, where La Queue harpooned it with a thrust of the boat-hook.

"The 'Zephir!' the 'Zephir!'" screamed the Floches.

And the Emperor, having spoken of foul play, big words were exchanged. Margot clapped her hands. The Abbe Radiguet came down with his breviary, made a profound remark which abruptly calmed the people, and then threw them into consternation.

"They will, perhaps, drink it all, these, too," he murmured with a melancholy air.

At sea, between the "Baleine" and the "Zephir," a violent quarrel broke out. Rouget called La Queue a thief, while the latter called Rouget a good-for-nothing. The men even took up their oars to beat each other down, and the adventure lacked little of turning into a naval combat. More than this, they engaged to meet on land, showing their fists and threatening to disembowel each other as soon as they found each other again.

"The rascal!" grumbled Rouget. "You know, that cask is bigger than the one of yesterday. It's yellow, this one--it ought to be great." Then in accents of despair: "Let's go and see the jambins; there may very possibly be lobsters in them."

And the "Baleine" went on heavily to the left, steering toward the point.

In the "Zephir," La Queue had to get in a passion in order to hold Tupain and Brisemotte from the cask. The boat-hook, in smashing a hoop, had made a leaking for the red liquid, which the two men tasted from the ends of their fingers and which they found exquisite. One might easily drink a glass without its producing much effect. But La Queue would not have it. He caulked the cask and declared that the first who sucked it should have a talk with him. On land, they would see.

"Then," asked Tupain, sullenly, "are we going to draw out the jambins?"

"Yes, right away; there is no hurry!" replied La Queue.

He also gazed lovingly at the barrel. He felt his limbs melt with longing to go in at once and taste it. The fish bored him.

"Bah!" said he at the end of a silence. "Let's go back, for it's late. We will return to-morrow." And he was relaxing his fishing when he noticed another cask at his right, this one very small, and which stood on end, turning on itself like a top. That was the last straw for the nets and the jambins. No one even spoke of them any longer. The "Zephir" gave chase to the little barrel, which was caught very easily.

During this time a similar adventure overtook the "Baleine." After Rouget had already visited five jambins completely empty, Delphin, always on the watch, cried out that he saw something. But it did not have the appearance of a cask, it was too long.

"It's a beam," said Fouasse.

Rouget let fall his sixth jambin without drawing it out of the water. "Let's go and see, all the same," said he.

As they advanced, they thought they recognized at first a beam, a chest, the trunk of a tree. Then they gave a cry of joy.

It was a real cask, but a very queer cask, such as they had never seen before. One would have said a tube, bulging in the middle and closed at the two ends by a layer of plaster.

"Ah, that's comical!" cried Rouget, in rapture. "This one I want the Emperor to taste. Come, children, let's go in."

They all agreed not to touch it, and the "Baleine" returned to Coqueville at the same moment as the "Zephir," in its turn, anchored in the little harbor. Not one inquisitive had left the beach. Cries of joy greeted that unexpected catch of three casks. The *gamins* hurled their caps into the air, while the women had at once gone on the run to look for glasses. It was decided to taste the liquid on the spot. The wreckage belonged to the village. Not one protest arose. Only they formed into two groups, the Mahes surrounded Rouget, the Floches would not let go of La Queue.

"Emperor, the first glass for you!" cried Rouget. "Tell us what it is."

The liquor was of a beautiful golden yellow. The *garde champetre* raised his glass, looked at it, smelt it, then decided to drink.

"That comes from Holland," said he, after a long silence.

He did not give any other information. All the Mahes drank with deference. It was rather thick, and they stood surprised, for it tasted of flowers. The women found it very good. As for the men, they would have preferred less sugar. Nevertheless, at the bottom it ended by being strong at the third or fourth glass. The more they drank, the better they liked it. The men became jolly, the women grew funny.

But the Emperor, in spite of his recent quarrels with the Mayor, had gone to hang about the group of Floches.

The biggest cask gave out a dark-red liquor, while they drew from the smallest a liquid white as water from the rock; and it was this latter that was the stiffest, a regular pepper, something that skinned the tongue.

Not one of the Floches recognized it, neither the red nor the white.

There were, however, some wags there. It annoyed them to be regaling themselves without knowing over what.

"I say, Emperor, taste that for me!" said La Queue, thus taking the first step.

The Emperor, who had been waiting for the invitation, posed once more as connoisseur.

"As for the red," he said, "there is orange in that! And for the white," he declared, "that--that is excellent!"

They had to content themselves with these replies, for he shook his head with a knowing air, with the happy look of a man who has given satisfaction to the world.

The Abbe Radiguet, alone, did not seem convinced. As for him, he had the names on the tip of his tongue; and to thoroughly reassure himself, he drank small glasses, one after the other, repeating: "Wait, wait, I know what it is. In a moment I will tell you."

In the mean while, little by little, merriment grew in the group of the Mahes and the group of the Floches. The latter, particularly, laughed very loud because they had mixed the liquors, a thing that excited them the more. For the rest, the one and the other of the groups kept apart. They did not offer each other of their casks, they simply cast sympathetic glances, seized with the unavowed desire to taste their neighbor's liquor, which might possibly be better. The inimical brothers, Tupain and Fouasse, were in close proximity all the evening without showing their fists. It was remarked, also, that Rouget and his wife drank from the same glass. As for Margot, she distributed the liquor among the Floches, and as she filled the glasses too full, and the liquor ran over her fingers, she kept sucking them continually, so well that, though obeying her father who forbade her to drink, she became as fuddled as a girl in vintage time. It was not unbecoming to her; on the contrary, she got rosy all over, her eyes were like candles.

The sun set, the evening was like the softness of springtime. Coqueville had finished the casks and did not dream of going home to dine. They found themselves too comfortable on the beach. When it was pitch night, Margot, sitting apart, felt some one blowing on her neck. It was Delphin, very gay, walking on all fours, prowling behind her like a wolf. She repressed a cry so as not to awaken her father, who would have sent Delphin a kick in the back.

"Go away, imbecile!" she murmured, half angry, half laughing; "you will get yourself caught!"

IV

The following day Coqueville, in rising, found the sun already high above the horizon. The air was softer still, a drowsy sea under a clear sky, one of those times of laziness when it is so good to do nothing. It was a Wednesday. Until breakfast time, Coqueville rested from the fete of the previous evening. Then they went down to the beach to see.

That Wednesday the fish, the Widow Dufeu, M. Mouchel, all were forgotten. La Queue and Rouget did not even speak of visiting their jam-bins. Toward three o'clock they sighted some casks. Four of them were dancing before the village. The "Zephir" and the "Baleine" went in chase; but as there was enough for all, they disputed no longer. Each boat had its share. At six o'clock, after having swept all over the little gulf, Rouget and La Queue came in, each with three casks. And the fete began again. The women had brought down tables for convenience. They had brought benches as well; they set up two cafes in the open air, such as they had at Grandport. The Mahes were on the left; the Floches on the right, still separated by a bar of sand. Nevertheless, that evening the Emperor, who went from one group to the other, carried his glasses full, so as to give every one a taste of the six casks. At about nine o'clock they were much gayer than the night before.

The next day Coqueville could never remember how it had gone to bed.

Thursday the "Zephir" and the "Baleine" caught but four casks, two each, but they were enormous. Friday the fishing was superb, undreamed of; there were seven casks, three for Rouget and four for La Queue. Coqueville was entering upon a golden age. They never did anything any more. The fishermen, working off the alcohol of the night before, slept till noon. Then they strolled down to the beach and interrogated the sea. Their sole anxiety was to know what liquor the sea was going to bring them. They waited there for hours, their eyes strained; they raised shouts of joy when wreckage appeared.

The women and the children, from the tops of the rocks, pointed with sweeping gestures even to the least bunch of seaweed rolled in by the waves. And, at all hours, the "Zephir" and the "Baleine" stood ready to leave. They put out, they beat the gulf, they fished for casks, as they had fished for tun; disdainingly now the tame mackerel who capered about in the sun, and the lazy sole rocked on the foam of the water. Coqueville watched the fishing, dying of laughter on the sands. Then in the evening they drank the catch.

That which enraptured Coqueville was that the casks did not cease. When there were no more, there were still more! The ship that had been lost must truly have had a pretty cargo aboard; and Coqueville became egoist and merry, joked over the wrecked ship, a regular wine-cellar, enough to intoxicate all the fish of the ocean. Added to that, never did they catch two casks alike; they were of all shapes, of all sizes, of all colors. Then, in every cask there was a different liquor. So the Emperor was plunged into profound reveries; he who had drunk everything, he could identify nothing any more. La Queue declared that never had he seen such a cargo. The Abbe Radiguet guessed it was an order from some savage king, wishing to set up his wine-cellar. Coqueville, rocked in mysterious intoxication, no longer tried to understand.

The ladies preferred the "creams"; they had cream of moka, of cacao, of mint, of vanilla. Marie Rouget drank one night so much anisette that she was sick.

Margot and the other young ladies tapped the curacao, the benedictine, the trappistine, the chartreuse. As to the cassis, it was reserved for the little children. Naturally the men rejoiced more when they caught cognacs, rums, gins, everything that burned the mouth. Then surprises produced themselves. A cask of *raki* of Chio, flavored with mastic, stupefied Coqueville, which thought that it had fallen on a cask of essence of turpentine. All the same they drank it, for they must lose nothing; but they talked about it for a long time. Arrack from Batavia, Swedish eau-de-vie with cumin, tuica calugaresca from Rumania, slivowitz from Servia, all equally overturned every idea that Coqueville had of what one should endure. At heart they had a weakness for kummel and kirschwasser, for liqueurs as pale as water and stiff enough to kill a man.

Heavens! was it possible so many good things had been invented! At Coqueville they had known nothing but eau-de-vie; and, moreover, not every one at that. So their imaginations finished in exultation; they arrived at a state of veritable worship, in face of that inexhaustible variety, for that which intoxicates. Oh! to get drunk every night on something new, on something one does not even know the name of! It seemed like a fairy-tale, a rain, a fountain, that would spout extraordinary liquids, all the distilled alcohols, perfumed with all the flowers and all the fruits of creation.

So then, Friday evening, there were seven casks on the beach! Coqueville did not leave the beach. They lived there, thanks to the mildness of the season. Never in September had they enjoyed so fine a week. The fete had lasted since Monday, and there was no reason why it should not last forever if Providence should continue to send them casks; for the Abbe Radiguet saw therein the hand of Providence. All business was suspended; what use drudging when pleasure came to them in their sleep? They were all bourgeois, bourgeois who were drinking expensive liquors without

having to pay anything at the cafe. With hands in pocket, Coqueville basked in the sunshine waiting for the evening's spree. Moreover, it did not sober up; it enjoyed side by side the gaities of kummel, of kirsch-wasser, of ratafia; in seven days they knew the wraths of gin, the tendernesses of curacao, the laughter of cognac. And Coqueville remained as innocent as a new-born child, knowing nothing about anything, drinking with conviction that which the good Lord sent them.

It was on Friday that the Mahes and the Floches fraternized. They were very jolly that evening. Already, the evening before, distances had drawn nearer, the most intoxicated had trodden down the bar of sand which separated the two groups. There remained but one step to take. On the side of the Floches the four casks were emptying, while the Mahes were equally finishing their three little barrels; just three liqueurs which made the French flag; one blue, one white, and one red. The blue filled the Floches with jealousy, because a blue liqueur seemed to them something really supernatural. La Queue, grown good-natured since he had been drunk, advanced, a glass in his hand, feeling that he ought to take the first step as magistrate.

"See here, Rouget," he stuttered, "will you drink with me?"

"Willingly," replied Rouget, who was staggering under a feeling of tenderness.

And they fell upon each other's necks. Then they all wept, so great was their emotion. The Mahes and the Floches embraced, they who had been devouring one another for three centuries. The Abbe Radiguet, greatly touched, again spoke of the finger of God. They drank to each other in the three liqueurs, the blue, the white, and the red.

"*Vive la France!*" cried the Emperor.

The blue was worthless, the white of not much account, but the red was really a success. Then they tapped the casks of the Floches. Then they danced. As there was no band, some good-natured boys clapped their hands, whistling, which excited the girls. The fete became superb. The seven casks were placed in a row; each could choose that which he liked best. Those who had had enough stretched themselves out on the sands, where they slept for a while; and when they awoke they began again. Little by little the others spread the fun until they took up the whole beach. Right up to midnight they skipped in the open air. The sea had a soft sound, the stars shone in a deep sky, a sky of vast peace. It was the serenity of the infant ages enveloping the joy of a tribe of savages, intoxicated by their first cask of eau-de-vie.

Nevertheless, Coqueville went home to bed again. When there was nothing more left to drink, the Floches and the Mahes helped one another, carried one another, and ended by finding their beds again one way or another. On Saturday the fete lasted until nearly two o'clock in the morning. They had caught six casks, two of them enormous. Fouasse and Tupain almost fought. Tupain, who was wicked when drunk, talked of finishing his brother. But that quarrel disgusted every one, the Floches as well as the Mahes. Was it reasonable to keep on quarreling when the whole village was embracing? They forced the two brothers to drink together. They were sulky. The Emperor promised to watch them. Neither did the Rouget household get on well. When Marie had taken anisette she was prodigal in her attentions to Brisemotte, which Rouget could not behold with a calm eye, especially since having become sensitive, he also wished to be loved. The Abbe Radiguet, full of forbearance, did well in preaching forgiveness; they feared an accident. "Bah!" said La Queue; "all will arrange itself. If the fishing is good to-morrow, you will see--Your health!"

However, La Queue himself was not yet perfect. He still kept his eye on Delphin and leveled kicks at him whenever he saw him approach Margot. The Emperor was indignant, for there was no common sense in preventing two young people from laughing. But La Queue always swore to kill his daughter sooner than give her to "the little one." Moreover, Margot would not be willing.

"Isn't it so? You are too proud," he cried. "Never would you marry a ragamuffin!"

"Never, papa!" answered Margot.

Saturday, Margot drank a great deal of sugary liqueur. No one had any idea of such sugar. As she was no longer on her guard, she soon found herself sitting close to the cask. She laughed, happy, in paradise; she saw stars, and it seemed to her that there was music within her, playing dance tunes. Then it was that Delphin slipped into the shadow of the casks. He took her hand; he asked: "Say, Margot, will you?"

She kept on smiling. Then she replied: "It is papa who will not."

"Oh! that's nothing," said the little one; "you know the old ones never will--provided you are willing, you." And he grew bold, he planted a kiss on her neck. She bridled; shivers ran along her shoulders. "Stop! You tickle me."

But she talked no more of giving him a slap. In the first place, she was not able to, for her hands were too weak. Then it seemed nice to her, those little kisses on the neck. It was like the liqueur that enervated her so deliciously. She ended by turning her head and extending her chin, just like a cat.

"There!" she stammered, "there under the ear--that tickles me. Oh! that is nice!"

They had both forgotten La Queue. Fortunately the Emperor was on guard. He pointed them out to the Abbe.

"Look there, Cure--it would be better to marry them."

"Morals would gain thereby," declared the priest sententiously.

And he charged himself with the matter for the morrow. 'Twas he himself that would speak to La Queue. Meanwhile La Queue had drunk so much that the Emperor and the Cure were forced to carry him home. On the way they tried to reason with him on the subject of his daughter; but they could draw from him nothing but growls. Behind them, in the untroubled night, Delphin led Margot home.

The next day by four o'clock the "Zephir" and the "Baleine" had already caught seven casks. At six o'clock the "Zephir" caught two more. That made nine.

Then Coqueville feted Sunday. It was the seventh day that it had been drunk. And the fete was complete--a fete such as no one had ever seen, and which no one will ever see again. Speak of it in Lower Normandy, and they will tell you with laughter, "Ah! yes, the fete at Coqueville!"

V

In the mean while, since the Tuesday, M. Mouchel had been surprised at not seeing either Rouget or La Queue arrive at Grandport. What the devil could those fellows be doing? The sea was fine, the fishing ought to be splendid. Very possibly they wished to bring a whole load of soles and lobsters in all at once. And he was patient until the Wednesday.

Wednesday, M. Mouchel was angry. You must know that the Widow Dufeu was not a commodious person. She was a woman who in a flash came to high words. Although he was a handsome fellow, blond and powerful, he trembled before her, especially since he had dreams of marrying her, always with little attentions, free to subdue her with a slap if he ever became her master. Well, that Wednesday morning the Widow Dufeu stormed, complaining that the bundles were no longer forwarded, that the sea failed; and she accused him of running after the girls of the coast instead of busying himself with the whiting and the mackerel which ought to be yielding in abundance. M. Mouchel, vexed, fell back on Coqueville's singular breach of honor. For a moment surprise calmed the Widow Dufeu. What was Coqueville dreaming about? Never had it so conducted itself before. But she declared immediately that she had nothing to do with Coqueville; that it was M. Mouchel's business to look into matters, that she should take a partner if he allowed himself to be played with again by the fishermen. In a word, much disquieted, he sent Rouget and La Queue to the devil. Perhaps, after all, they would come tomorrow.

The next day, Thursday, neither the one nor the other appeared. Toward evening, M. Mouchel, desperate, climbed the rock to the left of Grandport, from which one could see in the distance Coqueville, with its yellow spot of beach. He gazed at it a long time. The village had a tranquil look in the sun, light smoke was rising from the chimneys; no doubt the women were preparing the soup. M. Mouchel was satisfied that Coqueville was still in its place, that a rock from the cliff had not crushed it, and he understood less and less. As he was about to descend again, he thought he could make out two black points on the gulf; the "Baleine" and the "Zephir." After that he went back to calm the Widow Dufeu. Coqueville was fishing. The night passed. Friday was here. Still nothing of Coqueville. M. Mouchel climbed to his rock more than ten times. He was beginning to lose his head; the Widow Dufeu behaved abominably to him, without his finding anything to reply. Coqueville was always there, in the sun, warming itself like a lazy lizard. Only, M. Mouchel saw no more smoke. The village seemed dead. Had they all died in their holes? On the beach, there was quite a movement, but that might be seaweed rocked by the tide. Saturday, still no one. The Widow Dufeu scolded no more; her eyes were fixed, her lips white. M. Mouchel passed two hours on the rock. A curiosity grew in him, a purely personal need of accounting to himself for the strange immobility of the village. The old walls sleeping beatifically in the sun ended by worrying him. His resolution was taken; he would set out that Monday very early in the morning and try to get down there near nine o'clock.

It was not a promenade to go to Coqueville. M. Mouchel preferred to follow the route by land, in that way he would come upon the village without their expecting him. A wagon carried him as far as Robineux, where he left it under a shed, for it would not have been prudent to risk it in the middle of the gorge. And he set off bravely, having to make nearly seven kilometers over the most abominable of roads. The route was otherwise of a wild beauty; it descended by continual turns between two enormous ledges of rock, so narrow in places that three men could not walk abreast. Farther on it skirted the precipices; the gorge opened abruptly; and one caught glimpses of the sea, of immense blue horizons. But M. Mouchel was not in a state of mind to admire the landscape. He swore as the pebbles rolled under his feet. It was the fault of Coqueville, he promised to shake up those do-nothings well. But, in the meantime, he was approaching. All at once, in the turning at the last rock, he saw the twenty houses of the village hanging to the flank of the cliff.

Nine o'clock struck. One would have believed it June, so blue and warm was the sky; a superb season, limpid air,

gilded by the dust of the sun, refreshed by the good smell of the sea. M. Mouchel entered the only street of the village, where he came very often; and as he passed before Rouget's house, he went in. The house was empty. Then he cast his eye toward Fouasse's--Tupain's--Brisemotte's. Not a soul; all the doors open, and no one in the rooms. What did it mean? A light chill began to creep over his flesh. Then he thought of the authorities. Certainly, the Emperor would reassure him. But the Emperor's house was empty like the others. Even to the *garde champetre*, there was failure! That village, silent and deserted, terrified him now. He ran to the Mayor's. There another surprise awaited him: the house was found in an abominable mess; they had not made the beds in three days; dirty dishes littered the place; chairs seemed to indicate a fight. His mind upset, dreaming of cataclysms, M. Mouchel determined to go on to the end, and he entered the church. No more cure than mayor. All the authorities, even religion itself had vanished. Coqueville abandoned, slept without a breath, without a dog, without a cat. Not even a fowl; the hens had taken themselves off. Nothing, a void, silence, a leaden sleep under the great blue sky.

Parbleu! It was no wonder that Coqueville brought no more fish! Coqueville had moved away. Coqueville was dead. He must notify the police. The mysterious catastrophe exalted M. Mouchel, when, with the idea of descending to the beach, he uttered a cry. In the midst of the sands, the whole population lay stretched. He thought of a general massacre. But the sonorous snores came to undeceive him. During the night of Sunday, Coqueville had feasted so late that it had found itself in absolute inability to go home to bed. So it had slept on the sand, just where it had fallen, around the nine casks, completely empty.

Yes, all Coqueville was snoring there; I hear the children, the women, the old people, and the men. Not one was on his feet. There were some on their stomachs, there were some on their backs; others held themselves *en chien de fusils* {3} As one makes his bed so must one lie on it. And the fellows found themselves, happen what may, scattered in their drunkenness like a handful of leaves driven by the wind. The men had rolled over, heads lower than heels. It was a scene full of good-fellowship; a dormitory in the open air; honest family folk taking their ease; for where there is care, there is no pleasure.

3 Primed for the event

It was just at the new moon. Coqueville, thinking it had blown out its candle, had abandoned itself to the darkness. Then the day dawned; and now the sun was flaming, a sun which fell perpendicularly on the sleepers, powerless to make them open their eyelids. They slept rudely, all their faces beaming with the fine innocence of drunkards. The hens at early morning must have strayed down to peck at the casks, for they were drunk; they, too, sleeping on the sands. There were also five cats and five dogs, their paws in the air, drunk from licking the glasses glistening with sugar.

For a moment M. Mouchel walked about among the sleepers, taking care not to step on any of them. He understood, for at Grandport they, too, had received casks from the wreck of the English ship. All his wrath left him. What a touching and moral spectacle! Coqueville reconciled, the Mahes and the Floches sleeping together! With the last glass the deadliest enemies had embraced. Tupain and Fouasse lay there snoring, hand in hand, like brothers, incapable of coming to dispute a legacy. As to the Rouget household, it offered a still more amiable picture, Marie slept between Rouget and Brisemotte, as much as to say that henceforth they were to live thus, happy, all the three.

But one group especially exhibited a scene of family tenderness. It was Delphin and Margot; one on the neck of the other, they slept cheek to cheek, their lips still opened for a kiss. At their feet the Emperor, sleeping crosswise, guarded them. Above them La Queue snored like a father satisfied at having settled his daughter, while the Abbe Radiguet, fallen there like the others, with arms outspread, seemed to bless them. In her sleep Margot still extended her rosy muzzle like an amorous cat who loves to have one scratch her under the chin.

The fete ended with a marriage. And M. Mouchel himself later married the Widow Dufeu, whom he beat to a jelly. Speak of that in Lower Normandy, they will tell you with a laugh, "Ah! yes, the fete at Coqueville!"