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The LADY OF
the MOUNT
by FREDERIC S. ISHAM
AUTHOR OF "THE STROLLERS," "UNDER THE ROSE," ETC.
ILLUSTRATIONS BY RAY WATERS

CHAPTER I—Countess Elise, daughter
of the Governor of the Mount, has chance
encounter with a peasant boy.

CHAPTER II—The "Mount," a small
rock-bound island, stood in a vast bay on
the southwestern coast of France, and
during the time of Louis XVI was a gov-
ernment stronghold. Develops that the
peasant boy was the son of Seigneur
Desaune, nobleman.

CHAPTER III—Young Desaune deter-
mines to secure an education and be-
come a gentleman; sees the governor's
daughter depart for Paris.

CHAPTER IV—Lady Elise returns after
seven years' schooling, and entertains
many soldiers.

CHAPTER V—Her Ladyship dances
with a strange fisherman, and a call to
arms is made in an effort to capture a
mysterious Le Seigneur Noir.

CHAPTER VI—The Black Seigneur es-
capes.

CHAPTER VII—Lady Elise is caught in
the "Grand" tide.

CHAPTER VIII—Black Seigneur re-
turns, and takes Lady Elise to his re-
sidence.

CHAPTER IX—A ship might just be
discerned, a dim outline on the hori-
zon.

CHAPTER X.

The Cloister in the Air.
Irrespective of environment, the
cloister of the Mount would have been
a delight to the eye, but, upheld in
mid air, with the sky so near and the
sands so far below, it seemed more an
inspiration of fancy than a work of
hand. Dainty, delicate, its rose-col-
ored columns of granite appeared too
thin for tangible weight; the tympan's
sculptured designs, fanciful as the
carvings in some palace of a poet's
dream. Despite, however, this first
impression of evanescence, it carried a
charm against the ravages of time,
and ethereal though it was, had rested
like a crown on the grim head of the
rock through the ages.

Once a place for quiet meditation,
the cloister had, through a whirlwind
of change, become the favorite resort
of the Governor, for dejeuner, or after-
dinner dram, and, on occasions, for
the transaction of much profane
though necessary labor pertaining to
his office and private concerns. He
busied himself there now, or had been
busy himself, but paused to look up
from the large book before him, whose
pages were inscribed with items and
figures. His finger, following the men-
tal computation, remained stationary.
Fouage—tax upon fires; banvin—duties
on wine; vingtain—the lord's right to
his share of the produce; minage—his
due from each mine or half settler
of coin—consideration of these
usually all-important matters seemed
for the moment to have been forgot-
ten.

He leaned back, and as he sat thus,
the light and shadow playing on him,
the dark, steely eyes looked the more
sunken, the hard, cynical lips beneath
the white mustache the more cruel,
the spare figure the more alert and
ready, as if to grapple with some hid-
den danger.

"J'arrive en ce pays
De Basse Normandie."
At one of the apertures looking out
to the barren waste of sand stood the
Lady Elise; the words of the old Nor-
man chant she was singing in desul-
tory fashion rang softly, oddly, in that
spot, where black-clad brethren for
centuries had been wont to tread. Me-



"I—I Feel Very Well.
chanically the Governor listened, but
the voice soon ceased abruptly and
again, after the manner of one of or-
derly habits, he bent over the big
book; once more the curving finger
slid up and down, and parsimony, the
vice of the aged, had begun to shine
from his pinched features, when a
footstep rang on the marble pavement.
"Your Excellency sent for me?" The
commandant stood respectfully near.
The Governor closed the book with
deliberation; lifted his eyes. "The
prisoners that were taken last night
are safely housed?"
"Housed? Yes, your Excellency!
But we have little room. The upper
cells are all occupied; the dungeons,
fairly full! Even the In-pave and Les
Deux Jumeaux have been pressed into
service."
"Hum!" The long hand tapped rest-
lessly a moment; the cold eyes
gleamed, then shot an inquiring look.
"There are no new particulars about
last night's encounter with this—
Black Seigneur?"
"None, your Excellency, except," the
commandant drew a paper from his
breast pocket, "I have here in writing
the detailed account of the officer in
charge of your Excellency's boat, who
was wounded himself in the encoun-
ter."
"Read it."
The commandant obeyed. "Our
schooner, belonging to his Excellency,
the Governor, was returning last night

to the Mount with troops—reinforce-
ments for the garrison from St. Da-
lard—when it happened quite by ac-
cident near a ship, maneuvering at a
respectful distance from the island of
Casque. The night was dark and
cloudy, but our men got a look at her
and suspecting who she was and
knowing her armament, against our
will, we felt obliged to bear away.
She, having no reason to think us oth-
er than a fishing schooner, or that
we were freighted with troops instead
of cod, did not follow and we had
passed out of sight, and were round-
ing the island when we ran into two
small sail-boats that had just set out
from there."

"To join the ship of this outlaw!"
interposed the Governor. "Go on!"
shortly.

"We hailed; their answer was un-
satisfactory; we ordered them to halt,
whereupon they tried to sail away. We
followed and overtaking them, com-
manded them to surrender. Their
leader, who was the Black Seigneur
himself, refused, and we attacked—"

"Bien! We attacked! But what
then? Eh, what then?"
"With fury they responded; in
spite of their inferiority of numbers
tried to board us. Bravely our men
repulsed them; yet still they persist-
ed; led by their captain, the Black
Seigneur, had gained the deck when a
chance shot struck him. As he fell
back, the others tried to escape; one
boat was sunk—"

"And the other, bearing their lead-
er, got away?" interrupted the Gov-
ernor harshly.
"In the confusion—yes, your Excel-
lency."

The Governor waved his hand im-
patiently.
"By this time the ship of the Black
Seigneur had drawn nearer and our
men put about and made for the
Mount with a number of prisoners.
Several shots were sent after us, but
we managed to reach port."

"The officer in charge of the troops
thinks this fellow, their leader, was
wounded severely—fatally perhaps?"
"He thinks it most probable, your
Excellency."

For some time the Governor, with
frowning brows, sipped silently from
a glass of liquor at his elbow, and,
stiff, motionless, the commandant
waited; close at hand, a dove plumed
itself on the roof of the cloister walk;
beyond, the girl again began to sing
fitfully.

Out of the corner of his eye the com-
mandant dared look at her, leaning
now against the wall, the clear-cut,
white features outlined against an il-
limitable blue background.

"Les amours—"

Involuntarily he started to raise a
hand to his warlike mustache, when
abruptly was his wandering attention
recalled. "The man ashore I spoke to
you about, has been taken into cus-
tody?"

"Yes, your Excellency; and is now
at the barracks."
"Send him here. One moment—"

The commandant paused, vaguely con-
scious the girl had moved away from
the wall. "You spoke of there being a
lack of room—these new prisoners
must be confined in the dungeons; if
necessary, crowd more of the others
in the upper cells, and—there is still
the Devil's Cage."

"The Devil's Cage?" Through the
rose-tinted columns, above the Gov-
ernor's head, the commandant could
discern the figure of the Lady Elise,
who had approached and now was
gazing inquiringly at them. "Your Ex-
cellency would use that? One can
neither lie down in it, nor sit in it, up-
right?"

"Well," the cold eyes flashed, "it is
not intended for upright people! But
the man you were ordered to arrest!"
with sudden sharpness; "the man from
the shore! Send him to me!"

"At once, your Excellency!" And
responding promptly to his superior's
mood, the commandant saluted briskly,
and retired.

"What man?" The drapery of her
gown drawn back, the Lady Elise
stood poised on the court's low coping
between the fairy-like pillars.

"No one you know, my dear."
"Which means—it is none of my
concern?"

"Not at all." His voice was now
perfunctory; and his expression, as he
surveyed her, slightly questioning.
"You are looking somewhat pale to-
day?"

"Am I?" carelessly. "I—I feel very
well." As she spoke, she went to him
and leaned over the back of his chair.
"Mon pere, won't you do something
for me?"
"Whatever?"

"The grand tide—it came in so fast
—and made so much noise—"

"It frightened him! Well, fortunate
it was, indeed, you were not on his
back; that you had already reached
the point, and had had time to dis-
mount! An unpleasant experience,
nevertheless—with the water separ-
rating you from the Mount, and a
great curve of land to be walked be-
fore you could arrive at a human
habitation!"

"I—it wasn't a very comfortable
feeling," she acknowledged, flushing.
"And if the fisherman hadn't subse-
quently seen you and taken you
across in his little boat, you would
have been more uncomfortable later."

"Poor Saladin!" she breathed, with
averted glance.
"He got his deserts!" answered the
Governor harshly. "An ugly trick that
of his—to bolt and leave you stranded
at the extreme point of the mainland
where the bay swings around!"

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